

NOTES ON
ST. MARK'S CHURCH
PORT HOPE

BY AGATHA SIMISTER



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High on the East hill of Port Hope, stands St. Mark's Anglican Church — a land mark for the past one hundred and forty years. An early Anglican service in the town was conducted sometime prior to 1822, by the Right Reverend Jacob Mountain, First Bishop of Quebec. This service was held in the Ward house, which, with additions, is now The Lodge of Trinity College School.

The land on which the Church stands, was part of a grant, made by the Crown in 1797, to Jonathan Walton of Schenectady, N.Y., and Elias Smith of New York City. The latter, at his own expense, built a church on his half of the land in 1822, retaining possession of it for a time.

According to an old document, in 1824, after the death of Elias Smith, his son, David Smith, of Fayetteville, North Carolina, by his attorney, John David Smith, conveyed "to David Smart, Esq., and Thomas Ward, Esq., land and the Episcopal Church thereon erected, in trust for the Right Reverend Jacob Mountain, Lord Bishop of Quebec, and his successors". It is important to note that John David Smith did not build the Church, as has been erroneously stated at times. At about the same time Jonathan Walton gave a quit claim to his share of the land, as well as the Church bell.

Called the Church of St. John the Evangelist, it was the first church in Port Hope, and was under the care of the Cobourg Rector, Rev. A. N. Bethune, who conducted service every Sunday afternoon.

The young Church early began to take its place in the community, as is indicated by a newspaper notice in 1831. "With much pleasure we beg to direct the attention of our readers to the following announcement. It is the first development of a taste which has too long been neglected in this country, though we trust it will be found only to have needed an introduction. On Saturday next, a selection of sacred music will be performed in the Church at Port Hope, to commence precisely at one o'clock, at which the attendance of all interested in this essential part of Divine worship is respectfully solicited". Evidently this was appreciated, for, under the leadership of Mark Burnham, Esq., it was repeated the following year.

In January of 1843, a bazaar, commencing at 10 a.m. was held, to raise funds for the purchase of an organ. "A great variety of useful and ornamental articles", were offered. The admittance fee was 7½d — children free. No mention was made of where this took place, but a Cobourg newspaper reported, "we are rejoiced to learn that the Port Hope Bazaar proved so successful. To the ladies of Port Hope much credit is due for the industry they evinced. The sum of £150 was raised".

The Parish grew apace with the years, so that at a vestry meeting in the 1840's, it was considered "highly expedient and necessary that the Church should be lengthened towards the East, and additional pews to be constructed". This project did not get underway until July, 1851.

Meanwhile the ladies had organized a sewing society, in order to raise funds, through a monthly sale of articles.

The alterations were quite extensive, such as "raising the ceiling, altering the windows, rounding the galleries on each side into the transept, erecting chimneys, making pews, new painting, a number of lamps of the best construction".

Orange Church parades were a part of the life of the Parish by 1853, when "after marching around the town", the Orangemen went, at 12 o'clock noon to the Church, "where they were joined by the Cobourg brethren". Five hundred were in the Church, another five

hundred outside. Rev. Jonathan Shortt conducted the service. What was referred to as a "magnificent gift of 8 acres of land, in the immediate vicinity of the town", was presented in 1854 by Dr. William Smith, for the Church's endowment.

Coming events began to cast their shadows before them, in 1859, when a letter published in the Guide opened the question of "two places of worship for the Church of England in Port Hope" — one on each side of the town as the West side was growing more than the East side. The problem was only partly solved when the majority moved to the West side in 1869 and built a new church, closing the Church on the East side. From the beginning, to the time of closing, the following had been rectors:— Rev. A. N. Bethune, Rev. James Cogan, Rev. Jonathan Shortt, Rev. T. A. O'Meara.

With the closing of the old Church many of its members felt keenly the severance of old ties — ties that bound them to their pioneer days, when they had carved a home for themselves and their descendants, in the new country. The Early Canadian style of architecture in which the Church was built, was a symbol to them of much that lay deep in their affections.

This sentiment led to a movement to reopen the Church on the hill. By 1873 definite action was taken when R. C. Smith, Esq., representing a group of interested parties, offered five hundred dollars, to the vestry of St. John's Church, for the old building. This offer was readily accepted, so in May of that year, the Church was reopened, with the name of St. Mark's. Rev. Charles Paterson was Rector; the wardens, Messrs. G. C. Ward and R. W. Smart. The delegates to the Diocesan Synod were James Calcutt, Charles Whitehead and G. C. Ward.

Once more the bell rang out for service — the bell that had lain buried for four years, in a nearby orchard, where a devoted warden had hidden it, declaring that it would never ring in any other church.

The Church resumed a life of service that has since continued without interruption.

At the first Easter vestry meeting it was reported to be entirely free of debt, with "a handsome balance on hand". The first annual festival and Sunday School picnic was held a year after the reopening, in the grove of Mr. Allaire Smith, on Francis Street, now the property of Mrs. W. R. Jex. The affair opened with a short service in the Church at 2 p.m., after which the children, one hundred and seventy in number, preceded by their banner, and singing "Onward Christian Soldiers", accompanied by the band of the 46th Battalion, marched to the grove.

A garden party at Idalia, home of Mr. Charles Seymour was such a success that it was repeated a week later. Chinese lanterns decorated the grounds. The next year it was held at Mr. Calcutt's, which is now Mr. Hibbard's place on Elgin Street.

During those early years the Church of England Temperance Society had a large following. Meetings were held in the engine house of the East End Chemical Company, which stood on the South side of what is now Dr. Vivian's property.

In 1925, what might have been a crushing blow was sustained when a serious fire damaged the Church. However, the flames had hardly subsided before the wardens called a meeting to devise plans for immediate restoration. Many offers of assistance were received. Services were held in the basement of the Public Library. A Sunday School Christmas Treat was held at Trinity College School, through the kindness of the Headmaster, Dr. Orchard. Miss Gertrude Petry entertained the children with readings.

On the first day of Spring, 1926, the Church was reopened, the Rector, Dr. Rigby, conducting the service. The event was marked by

a tea, the following Tuesday, at Mrs. S. Bennett's, under the auspices of St. Mark's W. A. The restored Church was re-dedicated by the Bishop of Toronto on the 15th April of the same year.

During World War I St. Mark's experienced serious financial difficulties, of such a serious nature that the Church might have been closed, had it not been for assistance by masters from Trinity College School, who, being ordained clergymen, undertook the services for several months. With the War's end a regular incumbent was once more in charge.

In 1949, Mrs. Thomas Ambrose gave the house at No. 50 King Street, for a rectory, in memory of her husband. In 1956, this property was sold, to be replaced by No. 53 King Street, together with considerable land, on which the new Parish Hall was built, the sod for which was turned by the Rector, Canon Boulden, on 16th October, of that year. Prior to that a former Presbyterian Church on Mill Street had served as Parish Hall. This new compact arrangement of Church, Parish Hall and Rectory is a great convenience.

For a few years St. Anne's Church, Bewdley, was under the care of St. Mark's Rector, who held service there each Sunday. In 1956 this was changed, St. Anne's joining the Churches at Gore's Landing and Harwood.

A long to be remembered event in the life of St. Mark's took place on the 26th July, 1959, when Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth and His Royal Highness, Prince Philip attended morning service. This was on the occasion of their weekend visit to Batterwood House, as guests of the Governor-General, the Right Honourable Vincent Massey. It was not a State visit. Simply as guests of a parishioner of St. Mark's, the Royal couple accompanied their host to morning service. This was a deeply moving experience — Sovereign and people professing a common Faith, joining in the worship of the Book of Common Prayer. Brass plaques mark the pews occupied by the Queen, Prince Philip and the Governor-General.

Following the occasion, Her Majesty granted permission to the Choir of St. Mark's to wear cassocks of the Royal Livery colour — scarlet. These were presented by a friend of the Parish. The Royal couple presented signed portraits to the Church, and Mr. Massey presented one of himself in vice-regal dress.

The Battle and Regimental Colours of the 136th Battalion, which served in the First World War, as well as those of the Midland Regiment, with service in both the North West Rebellion of 1885 and the Second World War, are deposited in the Church.

Within recent years some generous gifts have been made to St. Mark's; including redecoration of the Church and installation of the Triptych, by the late Mrs. Massey; installation of chimes and renovation of the organ, by Mr. George Gladman; complete renovation and redecoration of the Chapel, by Mr. Michael Freeman, in memory of his wife, Shirley Emily Cockerill. These are only a few of the many benefactions by devoted members.

Another instance of devoted service was that of Mr. Norman Choate who served as organist and choirmaster, gratis, for twenty-five years, during which time he brought the choir up to a high state of efficiency.

Since 1873 the following have served as rectors of the Parish — Rev. Charles Paterson, Rev. J. S. Baker, Rev. Gerald Fitzmaurice Hibbard, Rev. C. B. Kenrick, Rev. E. G. Dymond, L.Th., Rev. William Alfred Gustin, M.A., Rev. Arthur F. J. Cobb, B.D., Ph.D., Rev. J. Revington Jones, Rev. Henry Montgomery, Rev. Ernest Voorhis, Rev. A. N. McEvoy, M.A., Rev. Canon Oswald Rigby, M.A., LL.D., Rev. W. B. Jennings, B.A., B.D., Rev. G. B. Snell, M.A., Ph.D., Rev. T. P. Crosthwait, M.A., L.Th., Rev. Canon C. H. Boulden, M.B.E., M.A., and Rev. G. E. Moffatt, M.A., B.D., the present incumbent.

Thus, the white Church on the hill has stood these many years; its gilded Cross a symbol of its influence in the life of the COMMUNITY.