

History Of St. Paul's Church Hr. Grace

HARBOUR GRACE—In last week's notes, reference was made to extensive repairs which are presently being made on the tower of the oldest stone church of this province viz. St. Paul's Anglican Church at Harbour Grace.

It has been suggested that the history of a structure which has stood for nearly a century and a quarter could have interest for many readers, among whom there are undoubtedly many who once worshipped there. It would take more than one article to complete the picture of St. Paul's from the year 1784 when the first church was built up to the present time of the third and more substantial structure.

Earliest records show that at least two wooden churches stood where the present edifice now stands. The first which was built in 1784 was a quite small building and was enlarged in the early part of 1816 at a cost of nearly two thousand and twenty pounds. Just a few months later, on August 29th, 1816, it was totally destroyed by fire. This was thought to be the work of incendiaries and a reward of One Hundred Pounds was offered by Rev. F. Carrington, and Mr. James McCauley for their apprehension and conviction.

The second church was started in 1817 but before its completion it was blown down by a heavy gale, and the task of creating another was undertaken. It was finished at a cost of Three Thousand, Eight Hundred and Seventy Pounds. It was a more commodious building, having a spire and minarets, and ten windows on each side. The great fire of 1832 which destroyed the major part of the town swept this church to destruction.

Both these churches would appear to have beenarrison churches and this fact is borne out by the functioning of two Masonic Lodges in Harbour Grace between the years 1783 and 1832. . . . There were supposed to have been regimental lodges, and as such would have their own chaplains.

As also the mission of Harbour Grace at that time extended from Grates Cove to Harbour Main. It is probable that the priest would often be away and the chaplain of the regiment would officiate at church services in his absence. The Royal Coat of Arms which has adorned the West gallery of St. Paul's may not be only the oldest stone church but may also be the oldest Garrison church.

A record of church land measurements shows them to be forty eight yards from east to west, bounded on the east and west by the path leading to the church; one hundred and thirty seven yards from south to north, bounded on the north by Charlotte Pike's house adjoining the path and on the north by John Davis Garsian's meadow. This is verified by John Stark, Clerk of the Northern District.

The records also show that in 1830 extensive repairs had been made to the church and it was agreed that every second window be made to open so as to admit of the free ventilation of the church, the doors entering the body of the church to be hung on the inside. Altering the doors cost One Poun Ten, opening twelve windows Six Pounds, contingencies Fifteen Pounds and sextons salary, coals and candles, Twenty Pounds.

Among the last records of the wadden church (which was destroyed by fire in 1832) we find, "Owing to the defective state of the plastering and to prevent accident occurring by the falling of any piece of the ceiling carnicies it was agreed that immediate repairs be given and that an assessment be levied this season of 25 shills on double and 17.6 pence on each single pew in the church."

In the short space of seventy years two churches had been built through the efforts and contributions of the people and these had both been destroyed by fire. It was then deemed advisable to erect a stone church and the foundation of this was laid on 28th July, 1835, the cost of the completion of which was estimated to be Eighteen Hundred Pounds.

Events leading up to the laying of the corner stone, etc. will be related in the next article.

Historical Notes

St. Paul's Church, 125th Year. HR. GRACE—As St. Paul's Church at Harbour Grace will in July of this year celebrate its 125th anniversary of the laying of its corner stone, it is our purpose to write some of the history of this, the oldest church in the Province.

In the year, 1784, the first church was built in Harbour Grace. In the year 1816 an increasing population made its enlargement necessary and this was done but the church was destroyed by fire during the same year.

A second church was commenced but a heavy wind-storm blew it down before its completion and another was started in 1817 and was completed at a cost of nearly 4000 pounds. In 1832, the terrible conflagration which razed the town destroyed this edifice.

Both churches had been built of wood and destroyed by fire, so it was deemed advisable to use stone for the new church. This stone was brought from Kelly's Island, and on July 28th, 1832, the corner stone was laid on the same site as the previous churches by His Excellency, Governor Prescott, Esq. in a very impressive ceremony.

The calendar of an old almanac tells that the church was opened for Divine Worship on July 30th, 1837, and was consecrated on Tuesday, July 2nd, 1841. Just previous to the consecration the following memorandum is noted: "Received from John Stark, Chairman, Thomas Hildley, Alfred Mayne, Wm. Stirling, Thomas Goddell, Joseph Soper, Jacob Moore Samuel Bennett, John Kingwell, Mansel Alcock, Wm. Andrews, being a committee to build the new stone church, the key of the only outside door of that church."

Many changes have naturally taken place in the course of 124 years. The building in the main remains practically unchanged. The tower seems to have been added after the nave was built and not having been securely fastened has required a great deal of repair during later years. Six feet were added to it when being repaired in 1897.

In 1837, a wall was built around the churchyard, the stove was repaired and a quantity of copper tunnelling was imported from England through Mr. Thomas Ridley whose name appears frequently in records concerning the church in its early days.

Up to 1830, the church had no vestry and it was agreed to erect one on the East side to communicate therewith by an entrance behind the reading desk. The Royal Arms was placed during that year and a bell was procured from England. It was agreed that the time for the ringing of the bell be at eight o'clock in the morning and an hour before the time for Divine Worship on the Lord's Day.

HARBOUR GRACE—St. Paul's Church having been completed, dedicated and consecrated, with its tower, the upper course of which with the battlements of white limestone stood and remains today after a century and a quarter as an outstanding memorial to the architectural skill of its builders.

From a history of St. Paul's Church which was compiled by the late Thomas G. Ford in 1933 at the time of the celebration of the church's centenary, we find a copy of an address presented to the first Bishop of the Diocese, His Lordship Bishop Aubrey Spencer who arrived in Newfoundland in 1840. From this copy we take the following: "Your Lordship will find a zealous and pious clergy placed under you in this Diocese and equally with ourselves attached to the Church without detracting at all from the merits of others, we think it incumbent on us especially to recommend to your Lordship's personal consideration our esteemed Rector, the Rev. Mr. Burt senior Missionary in Newfoundland whom your Lordship will not find one more devoutly rigid in the right discharge of his most sacred duties. The death of our much esteemed late Rector, the Rev. Mr. Carrington has caused a vacancy at St. John's hitherto conferred on the next Senior Missionary and without attempting to interfere with your Lordship's patronage, we humbly request your Lordship will not pass over Mr. Burt's claims and long service etc."

The names of those signing this address may have some interest for those of their descendants who remain in this or other towns of the province and are Robert Lee Whiting, John Charles Nuttall (Churchwarden) John Stark, J. James Bayley, Thos. Danson, Thos. Ridley, Joseph Soper, Chas. A. Thorne, Wm. Stirling Jr. Jonathan Martin, Thos. Godden, Jas Lampen, E. E. Brown, Nath. Davis, Geo. Kitchener, Wm. Henderson, John Smith, William Dow, Sam'l Bennett.—Harbour Grace, Nfld., the 6th, June 1840.

The recommendation of these members of the late congregation bore fruit for on June 19th, 1841 the Vestry received a letter from Bishop Spencer saying that Rev. Mr. Burt had been appointed as Rural Dean of the Northern District of the Diocese and Commissary to His Lordship.

This necessitated the departure of Rev. Mr. Burt from Harbour Grace and Rev. H. J. Fitzgerald was placed in temporary charge of the parish and district.

On June 2nd, very full and interesting account of a visit to Harbour Grace of the Right Rev'd the Lord Bishop of the Diocese is recorded during this visit a Mr. Smith was ordained to the Diaconate, a confirmation was held at which 166 inhabitants received the laying on of hands, His Lordship also visited the Sunday School in which were assembled 124 children.

(Continued)

HARBOUR GRACE—We read that in 1863, a bill of sale was made between the trustees of the Presentation Church and Rev. Bertram Jones, rector of St. Paul's, James Lampen and Joseph Godden, church wardens for the purchase of a piece of ground for fifty pounds, being part of a parcel of ground sold by Jane Sarah Mayne to the trustees of the said Presbyterian Church. The bounds are particularly stated and this is what for sixty or more years as the old cemetery but is now so filled that only an occasional burial is made there. This cemetery was consecrated in November 1864 and the old graveyard around the church was closed for interments in 1865.

In 1865, the clarionettes, violins and viols were discontinued and a harmonium was installed. The amount of fourteen shillings was paid to Mrs. Jones for freight and other expenses in connection with it and a vote of thanks was tendered to Miss Garner for playing the harmonium in church.

That year also saw the rector, Rev. B. Jones, in ill health and he was granted a protracted leave of absence and sailed for England to receive expert treatment. As soon as his health permitted he undertook light duties in a village church so as not to be a burden on relatives. It was understood that he should obtain a pension from the S.P.B. he would not return to Newfoundland. The Bishop being reluctant at first to make any appointment for St. Paul's the church services became very irregular. Rev. Mr. Hoyle gave as much time as he could spare from his duties at Carbonar and between himself and Mr. James Gardner, a licensed layreader, did the best they could under existing circumstances.

The Bishop visited England in 1866 and intimated that if St. Paul's people could guarantee a salary of two hundred pounds per annum, he would endeavour to select a rector for St. Paul's while in England.

Many of the parishioners being away at Labrador at that time, those who were home would not be answerable for those who were away, but they gave the guarantee of a salary of two hundred and fifty pounds with free house and land.

It would seem in the light of what happened later that it would have been better if the Bishop had consulted Mr. and the S.P.G. before making any engagement for his doctor said that a warmer climate would be necessary if Mr. Jones was to return to duty. He did not succeed in getting his pension, but meanwhile Rev. Mr. Cooper had been interviewed in England by the Bishop and an agreement was reached whereby he would become rector on the Bishop's approval and steps were taken and an amount was raised to pay the transportation charges from England to Newfoundland on his effects. Upwards of one hundred and ten pounds being subscribed, but the arrangement was cancelled when the clergyman's mother refused permission for her son to come to this country.

The Bishop having meanwhile arrived back, he notified the wardens that arrangements had been made that Archdeacon Kelly would assume the rectorate of St. Paul's and this news was hailed with delight. In addition to becoming rector he was to make the northern and western visitations.

Extensive repairs were being made to the rectory and the sum raised for Mr. Cooper's transportation was used for that purpose so that it would be ready available for the coadjutor Bishop's residence.

Just then the Bishop received a letter from Mr. Jones' sister in England saying that as he had not been successful in getting his pension he was returning to Newfoundland to take up his duties again. He had been absent for nearly two years and the news was not welcome.