

The  
Romance of St. Paul's  
Orillia

The United Church of Canada



"The World is  
My Parish" --Wesley

The EDITH and LORNE PIERCE  
COLLECTION of CANADIANA



Queen's University at Kingston

To  
My good friend  
Walter E. Scott Esq.

With Compliments

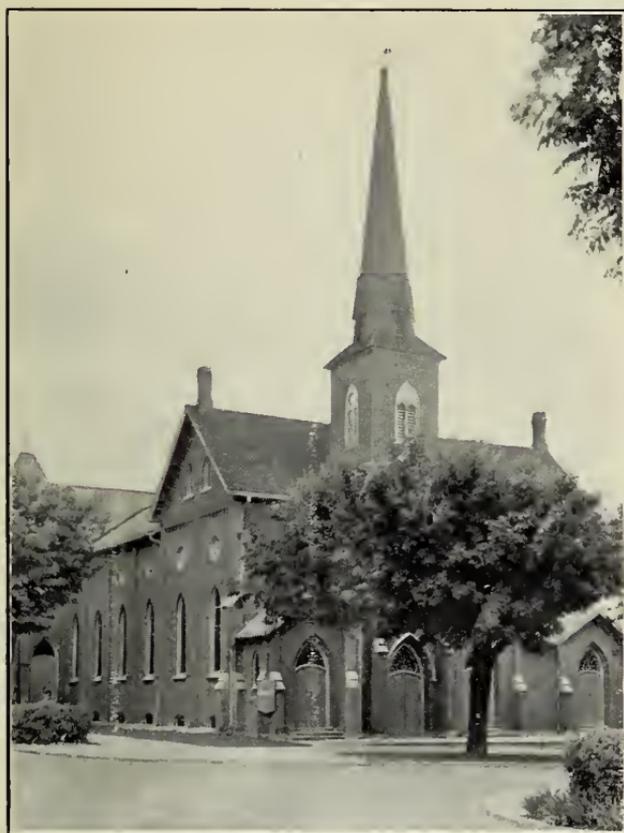
W. E. Scott

"Leobrac"  
July 8/36.

420  
10  
20

# The Romance of St. Paul's Orillia

The United Church of Canada



The Reverend W. Ernest Baker, Minister

1832 - CENTENARY CELEBRATION - 1932

By  
WILLIAM SWORD FROST

Printed by Authority of the Official Board,  
St. Paul's Church, Orillia  
1932.

## *foreword*

---

It is desired to express to Mr. A. B. Thompson, M.P., East Simcoe, grateful appreciation for the privilege of making extracts—relating to the district of which Orillia is now the centre—from copies of valuable documents in the possession of The Dominion Archives, Ottawa.

The memories and sketches of the Reverend Thomas Williams, the Reverend John Gray, D.D., and writers of unknown identity have been freely consulted and quoted.

“Lochbrae.”

Orillia, July 14th, 1932.

**S**T. PAUL'S should be—as it is—a missionary church, for its line of descent may be clearly traced from the mission field of the long ago. Indeed, few congregations within the pale of The United Church of Canada have a more treasured or glorious lineage.

In tracing the origin and development of this congregation, one's mind reverts to fast fading landmarks, which as time goes by, become concealed by the dust of forgetfulness, crowded out and forgotten by the daily cares and interests of our times and only a few of those who laid the foundation of the complex structure of school, church and community linger long in our memory.

May we not go back in imagination to that remote period when the eyes of another race rested on the landscape which we to-day behold; when this region was the dwelling place, hunting ground and battlefield of Huron and Iroquois; when the smoke of council fires floated over the evening air in quiet repose, or when the piercing war-whoops of Indians broke the dense silence of primeval forests, and night grew lurid at the decree of war? With devastating conflicts, concluding around 1649, these ancient Indian tribes seem to have vanished from this region, and of its history little or nothing is known for a century or more. Some say with the passing of the Hurons the Iroquois possessed the land. Others that the Chippewas gradually drifted down from the Sault Ste. Marie region, slowly settling this country. This we do know, early in the Eighteenth century the Chippewas of this district—once a central seat of Indian power—were, by the British authorities, under the provisions of treaties made with their chiefs in 1827 and 1828, grouped in tribal bands, on Crown Reserves, one of which covered the site of the present town of Orillia.

This Reserve, consisting of 9,800 acres, extended from Lake Couchiching to the Georgian Bay with "Posts" at "The Narrows," as Orillia was then called, and at "Coldwater." Couchiching is an Indian word, meaning the mouth of the outlet, or lake source of a river.

The Chippewas of Lakes Huron and Simcoe, in three bands, under Chiefs Yellowhead, Aisance and Snake, were in 1830 settled here by Sir John Colborne, Lieuten-

ant-Governor of Upper Canada, the Reserve being under the supervision of Capt. T. G. Anderson, of the Indian Department.

These Indians had been as early as 1828 under the care of devoted Wesleyan missionaries and teachers, and expressed a desire to be admitted to Christianity and adopt the habits of civilised life.

"The Narrows Village" stood on the hill overlooking lake Couchiching, a few hundred yards from the shore. There were sixteen log houses built to accommodate two families each, a Methodist meeting house and school house, both united in one, and the Methodist minister's house, which was built by the Rev. Gilbert Miller. There were also a number of log shanties and a few bark wigwams scattered about the village, one of which was used for a time by Mr. Law, a Methodist teacher, as a schoolhouse. The meeting house, or council hall, was built in the centre of the village, the houses branching off on each side, forming two sides of an obtuse triangle and commanding a beautiful prospect of the lake, islands and distant shore.

There were at this time forty families in the village, thirty-seven of whom were Indians. The others were the Methodist minister, the teachers and Mr. Jacob Gill, who occupied one of the Indian houses. In addition to these there was at this time a large frame house being erected for Chief Yellowhead "Musquakie," whose Indian name is perpetuated in the "Muskoka" of to-day, also in that he was one of the Ojibway chiefs to sign the treaty with the British and counselled the representative of the King in many matters.

Musquakie's home was on the site of the present Anglican rectory, Neywash-street. The council hall, or meeting house, was located where St. James's church now stands, and the Methodist minister's home, known as "The Mission House," was built on the rising ground facing the lake—in the rear of the Orillia post office. The council hall and Chief's house, were both framed at Holland Landing, and brought here in sections, either in raft formation, or on scows. In addition to this, there was, outside the precincts of "The Post," a scattered fringe of log structures, used by the incoming white settlers. Some of these remained as landmarks until quite recent years. The pity is that one or two of them had not been preserved for the eyes of future generations. Some of these log structures were quite imposing and substantially built; the average shanty was, in size, fourteen by eighteen feet. The logs were from ten to twelve inches in diameter. The covering was basswood scoops or troughs, chinked with moss and clay, which gave a fairly good substitute for the modern tile roof. In the end of these was frequently built a fireplace of field stone. These buildings could not be called handsome,

but they were warm and comfortable, and many of the best pioneer Canadian families got their start in the old scoop-roofed shanties.

At "The Narrows" some sixty acres were, at this time, under cultivation, under the supervision of Mr. Gerald Alley, Government Instructor to the Indians. Between the Narrows and Coldwater there was a good trail known as "The Portage Road," connecting Lake Simcoe with Lake Huron waters. This is the Coldwater road of to-day.

The population of the Reserve, according to the census of 1831, was 534, of which all but about one hundred came under the care of the Methodist Church.

The nucleus of Methodism west of Lake Simcoe, was to be found on "Yellowhead Island" (known as Chief's Island), in Lake Couchiching; later at "The Narrows," as Orillia was then called, and at Coldwater.

The first missionaries to this district began their labours on a field consisting of several townships, in the year 1828, when the Rev. John Beatty was appointed by the Wesleyan Conference of Upper Canada to the Lake Simcoe Mission. The Rev. John Atwood served in 1829, the Rev. Cyrus Allison and the Rev. James Currie during 1830, while the Rev. Gilbert Miller was in charge in 1831 and 1832. During his ministry there was erected the large, very substantial and commodious cottage-roofed log house already referred to as the "Mission House." This was the missionary's home, and that also of the teachers associated with him in the spiritual oversight and education of the Indians. What a home that must have been—a world behind, possibly at that time the one white abode farthest north of civilisation in this region. Yet a place where Christian ideals and service went hand in hand.

From the latter part of 1832, 1833 and 1834, the Rev. Samuel Belton was in charge of the Mission. Mention of these frequent changes among those who had the responsibility of leadership only serves to emphasise the "itineracy" common in the Methodist Church of those and later days.

As to this system there might be some difference of opinion, the fact remaining, however, that whatever its weak points, there were corresponding advantages. Sufficient to say the Wesleyan Church of that distant period, to the everlasting credit of these pioneer preachers and teachers who blazed their way through the forest, who followed lake and stream, who faced privations, trials and dangers with stout hearts and dauntless courage, that they might carry to sparsely settled regions, without regard to race or colour, an open Bible and the message of the Gospel.

The Sunday services were outstanding in the life of this little Indian village nestling on the sloping hillside. Sunday-school came first, under the direction of the teachers connected with the Mission. At eleven o'clock a strong lunged Indian would take his place outside the door and with a long tin horn produce trumpet-like sounds. There would be a stir at the door of every house, and the Indians would begin to move slowly toward the meeting place to join in holy worship.

These services were, of course, designed and maintained for the Indians, but white people were welcome if they desired to attend. The greater part of the service was in the Indian language. The preaching was in English, then interpreted, the minister as a rule presiding. He was frequently assisted by young men beginning their life work. Among those serving in this capacity at that time, was the Rev. Dr. Samuel Rose, father of Dr. S. P. Rose, in after years a much beloved minister of this church.

It was in 1832 that Miss Mercy Miner Manwaring, after having served in the Bay of Quinte district, accepted the duty of missionary teacher to the Indians at "The Narrows." There was at that time a staff of two teachers, Mr. Hannibal Mulkins arriving at the same time to join Miss Manwaring in taking over the work from their predecessors, Mr. Swartz and Miss Brinke. Miss Manwaring is, however, the only one of these early missionaries to leave a permanent mark on the community.

From Holland Landing, to which she had come by stage coach, she continued her tedious and dangerous journey, under the care of Indian guides, across Lake Simcoe to her new field of labour, where she was welcomed by the Mission household and others connected with "The Post," among whom was the Rev. Thomas Williams, a regular attendant at the Sabbath services and deeply interested in the mission to the Indians.

At this time Mr. Williams was acting as Governmental Guide under Mr. Wellesley Richey, in the locating of pioneer settlers on the lands of the surrounding townships. Later he taught school at Orillia and Craighurst. One of his pupils at the latter place was the Rev. John McDougall, celebrated as a preacher and pioneer missionary to the West.

When nearly twenty-nine years of age, Mr. Williams entered the Methodist ministry, in which he laboured indefatigably for fifty-five years. When between sixty and seventy he was Superintendent of Methodist Missions on Lake Superior, performing labours that might well have overwhelmed a much younger man. On accepting superannuation he retired to Orillia, connecting himself with the congregation that

was in its earliest inception in 1832, his first love. In 1899, in the ninety<sup>th</sup> year of his age, he passed to his reward.

Miss Manwaring's term of service proved to be the exception to the general rule, in that, while others had come and gone, she remained, and to her belongs the distinction of being the first among that group of devoted missionaries in that distant period to become a resident, predestined, it would seem, as we scan the records of a century, to be the personality around whose teaching, leadership, wise council and exemplary life there gathered those steady, well considered influences, which attracted and bound together a little company in a prayer and study group, and upholding the hands of those who ministered in sacred things. She was the link between the past and present, the bond between the mission field and the organised church.

In 1833, Mr. Andrew Moffatt was attached to the Mission staff as assistant teacher. In 1834 Mr. Moffatt and Miss Manwaring were married, continuing, however, their duties as teachers to the Indians. To Mr. Moffatt belongs the honour of conducting the original "Post-office," which served this district. Mail matter was kept in a little birchbark basket of Indian workmanship, and carefully stowed away in a cupboard. When occasion required the postmaster would take the basket out to a log in front of the house, on which he would sit and chat with the applicant for mail, while tumbling over the basket's contents. What little mail there was, came addressed to "The Narrows, Lake Simcoe," and the operation of the office was in connection with the Methodist Mission to the Indians.

Subsequently Mr. Gerald Alley had a Government postoffice established here, which was called "Newtown" at first, but soon assumed the name of the township, "Orillia."

In 1834 the Indians built a wharf and store at "The Narrows." Mr. Gerald Alley resigned, and was succeeded by Mr. John Fletcher. Mr. Alley applied for a license of occupation on a site in front of the Indian village, on which to build an inn. The plan, filed with the Dominion Archives, shows a bar room. On the 15th of January, 1835, there was a petition sent in to the Department against the sale of intoxicating liquor at the Narrows, in all probability the first temperance petition ever circulated and signed in this part of the world.

In 1836, the Chippewas surrendered their lands between Coldwater and The Narrows, and a new reserve of 1,621 acres was purchased with their funds for the use of Chief Yellowhead and his band of 184 Indians, at Rama. Chief Aisance and his band, numbering 232, went to Beausoleil Island, and Chief Snake (Bigwin) and his following of 109 Indians settled at Snake Island.

Chief Yellowhead and his band moved to Rama in 1838, where houses were built for them, and where they continue to the present day. It may be of interest to say that "Musquakie" rests in St. James's church yard, Orillia.

With the transfer of the Indians to other locations, Mr. and Mrs. Moffatt were faced with perplexing problems regarding their future. Finally they decided to remain amid the familiar scenes of their past labours, and with the white community so rapidly developing on the site of the former Indian village.

Here Mr. Moffatt built the first frame house for civilian occupation, within the bounds of the former Indian village. This house, which is on Mississauga-street, near the Hotel Champlain, is still in use.

To changed conditions, Mr. and Mrs. Moffatt readily adapted themselves, quickly becoming foremost in business and farming circles. But their chief interest remained as before, in the intellectual, moral and religious life of the community.

In this they had the fullest fellowship and co-operation with those of other communions, for among the good, bad and indifferent of that far-off period, and there were all of these, this district was singularly favoured in the fine type of people who, in the main, pioneered this region—men and women who brought with them from the old land, or other parts of the new land, the family altar, well thumbed Bibles and a reverence for the Sabbath day, and coupled with these great principles the set purpose of giving to the young of their homes the fullest educational advantages within their power.

In 1891, after a life full of years and crowded with activities, Mrs. Andrew Moffatt—her husband having predeceased her by eighteen years—passed to her rest. She was a servant of God who responded to a mighty challenge and a life of continuous and steady endeavour marked her as a founder of which St. Paul's may be justly proud. She was a mother in Israel—a woman who walked with God.

In 1839 the white settlers petitioned to have the former Indian village location surveyed and sold in lots. This was accomplished by Mr. Samuel Richardson, who completed the survey, and this plan is dated 1840.

Shortly after the opening of the village for white settlement, the former "Council Hall" was acquired by the Church of England, as a place of worship, the Presbyterians of the immediate district uniting in providing the necessary seating. The first incumbent was the Rev. John McIntyre, and the first Vestry Clerk was Mr. Thomas Dallas, a revered Presbyterian.

Prior to that time, from 1832 onwards, occasional services had been held by the Rev. Chas. Crosby Brough, an English Church clergyman, who had settled near Jarratt, (after whom Brough's Creek is named), and by the Rev. George Hallen, who became incumbent of St. George's, Medonte, in 1835.

A few years later the Presbyterian community met for worship in the "Green Bush Inn" on Coldwater and Matchedash-streets, and very soon after in the living room of the original "Orillia House" on Mississaga-street. It was in this room, in 1851, the beloved Rev. John Gray, D.D., began his ministry. 1852 saw the first church building in the village opened for worship.

In 1857, the Anglicans completed the old stone church that graced for so many years, the site of the present edifice.

Methodist Church services were continued from time to time in the old log "Mission House," the school house, and later in a large and commodious frame house still standing on Matchedash-street; to be followed some time later in the newly erected "Temperance Hall," just opposite, on the same street.

This hall was the community centre of that period for all sorts of meetings, entertainments, lectures, debates, tea-meetings and preaching services. It was here too, that the electorate recorded its will by open vote. Those were great days, and that was a wonderful place. The activities of the village surely circled about that spot. It was here, too, that George McDougall, the great missionary, frequently preached to overflowing congregations. Stated services were taken by ministers connected in the vicinity, the missionary from the reserve assisting, as required.

After the trials and vicissitudes common to the lot of most of those who pioneer in a worth-while cause, this little company of Wesleyans, undismayed, toiled on. The line must have been hard to hold. It must have wavered in times of discouragement, but it never broke. Their Church identity was never lost. Better days began to dawn, a seeming reward for their patience and steadfast loyalty to the tenets of their faith, and the Church of their choice.

In 1859 this little congregation dedicated for the public worship of God, the "White Church," which was situated on Peter-street south, exactly opposite the present post office.

In ten years' time this little building was quite outgrown by a steadily increasing congregation. Another location had, meantime, been secured on the corner of Peter and Coldwater-streets, and a brick parsonage

built. In 1869 a substantial brick church was erected on the corner of this property. The only regret at this distant day is that a very much larger area had not then been secured.

This building, after repeated alteration and enlargement, and with the addition of a commodious church school and banquet hall, is the church home of the congregation of to-day, having a membership of eleven hundred communicants; a Session of thirty-six Elders; a Board of twenty-one Stewards; an Official Board of sixty-five members; a Church School with a membership of eight hundred and sixty-four engaged in Bible study; a Women's Missionary Society, Ladies' Aid Society, Young Women's Auxiliary, Young People's Society, Canadian Girls in Training, Mission Band, Baby Band, and a church choir of over fifty voices. The budget for the year 1931 amounted to the sum of \$25,192.19, of which almost one half was spent for purposes outside of the local congregation.

In making a retrospect from the mountain peak of a century, marking the genesis of St. Paul's, it would be difficult indeed to conclude this sketch—in which no attempt has been made to enter into detail—without recording, with those who cradled this cause in its infancy, in succeeding and more recent years, the names of Mr. Samuel Wainwright, Mr. Joseph Wallace, Mr. William Todd, Mr. Thomas Bond Mitchell and Mr. George Henry Clark, who, with many others, rendered this church outstanding and distinguished service.

Within the bounds of Canadian Methodism distinct progress had been marked in the several Unions consummated within its own pale, to be followed after lengthy and considered negotiation by the greater union of 1925, when the Congregational Churches of Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Methodist Church became from sea to sea "The United Church of Canada," our own congregation being re-organised on the Basis of Union, as St. Paul's church, Orillia.

Behind, is the past, fraught with achievement—before, is the inscrutable future, teeming with opportunity for larger service within the congregation, and Communion, with which we are privileged to be associated.



## Methodist Ministry

- 1828—Rev. John Beatty.  
1829—Rev. John S. Atwood.  
1830—Rev. Cyrus R. Allison and  
Rev. Jas. Currie.  
1831—Rev. Gilbert Miller and  
Rev. Jas. Currie.  
1832—Rev. Gilbert Miller.  
1833-1834—Rev. Samuel Belton.  
1835—Rev. Jonathan Scott.  
1836—Rev. Jonathan Scott,  
Rev. David Hardie  
Rev. G. Miller.  
1837—Rev. Jonathan Scott,  
Rev. Thos. McMullen.  
1938—Rev. Jonathan Scott,  
Rev. Wellington Jeffers.  
1839-1842—Rev. Sylvester Hulburt.  
1843—Rev. Thomas Hulburt.  
1844—Rev. Samuel Beldon.  
1845—Rev. Horace Dean,  
Rev. John Crawthorn.  
1846—Rev. William Graham.  
1847—Rev. William Graham,  
Rev. Joseph Hill.  
1848-1849—Rev. Horace Dean.  
1850-1851—Rev. William Steer.  
1852—Rev. Lewis Warner.  
1853—Rev. John Douse,  
Rev. Andrew Edwards.  
1854—Rev. Jabez Keough.  
1855—Rev. Stephen Brownell,  
Rev. Alexander R. Campbell.  
1856—Rev. Alexander R. Campbell,  
Rev. Andrew Millikin.  
1857—Rev. Andrew Millikin,  
Rev. Peter Campbell.  
1858—Rev. Alexander R. Campbell.  
1859—Rev. Thomas D. Pearson.  
1860-1862—Rev. John L. Kerr.  
1863—Rev. Charles Turver,  
1864-1865—Rev. Charles Turver,  
Rev. Marmaduke Pearson  
1866—Rev. Thomas Feather,  
Rev. James Woodworth.  
1867—Rev. Thomas Feather,  
Rev. Jeremiah A. Chapman.  
1868—Rev. Robert Mark, M.D.  
1869—Rev. Robert Mark, M.D.,  
Rev. William Pearce.  
1870—Rev. Robert Fowler, M.D.,  
Rev. Joseph Deacon.  
1871-1872—Rev. Robert Fowler, M.D.  
1873-1875—Rev. Kennedy Creighton.  
1876-1877—Rev. John B. Armstrong.  
1878-1880—Rev. Arthur Browning.  
1881-1882—Rev. Samuel P. Rose.  
1883—Rev. Samuel P. Rose,  
Rev. Thomas Williams.  
1884—Rev. John Shaw,  
Rev. Thomas Williams  
1885-1887—Rev. William Galbraith, LL.B.  
1888—Rev. Thomas Manning, B.A.  
1889-1890—Rev. Thomas Manning,  
Rev. Thomas Williams.  
1891-1892—Rev. N. Wellwood, F.R.H.S.  
1893-1896—Rev. W. R. Barker.  
1897-1900—Rev. R. N. Burns.  
1901-1903—Rev. John Locke.  
1904-1907—Rev. Joseph Odery.  
1908-1911—Rev. Jos. J. Ferguson, B.A. B.D.  
1912-1914—Rev. Charles M. Marshall.  
1915-1917—Rev. F. E. Malott.  
1918-1920—Rev. W. B. Smith.  
1921-1924—Rev. J. R. Patterson.

### The United Church of Canada

- 1925—Rev. J. R. Patterson,  
Rev. Johnston J. Black, B.D.  
1926-1928—Rev. W. E. Pescott, B.A., D.D.  
Rev. L. R. Ballantyne, B.A.  
1929-1932—Rev. W. Ernest Baker.

