

HISTORY OF THE PARISH

1881 - 1961

1881 - 1981 ^{NEW!}

THE PRESENT CHURCH

RECTORS TO 1881

THE WINDOWS

THE ORGAN

THE CARILLON

PICTURES

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EARLY DAYS: 1881 - 1961

From a pamphlet-sized document titled ***80 Years of Ministry 1881 - 1961***, supplied by Marilyn Shortt, a long-time member of the parish and written by her father, we have extracted the following:

In 1879 — Mrs. B. W. Murray, then living in what is now Swansea, disturbed about the lack of Church and Sunday School facilities in the sparsely settled area later to be West Toronto Junction, held Sunday School in her living room during summer for children in the district. Later in the same year arrangements were made to hold services for parents in Mr. McGregor's home, located at the corner of Elizabeth (now Runnymede) and Annette Sts.

The first vestry meeting was held Dec. 19, 1879, with Rev. J. H. McCollum of St. Thomas' Church presiding. Subsequently, service were held in a building at the corner of Elisabeth and Louisa Sts., now Runnymede Rd. and St. John's Road.

Two years later a **wooden church** was erected on a triangle of land donated by Messrs. Finken and Wadsworth, and situated at the junction of St. John's Rd. and Dundas St. The cost of the church was \$700 and it was formally opened by Bishop Sweatman on **November 20, 1881**. Shortly after Mr. McCollum had to give up charge of the mission and the church was attached to St. Mark's, Carlton (now West Toronto). The ministry was carried on by divinity students and many prominent Wycliffe College graduates received their early training in St. John's.

West Toronto Junction was expanding rapidly as a railroad centre and in 1887 St. John's became a separate parish with Rev. A. C. Miles as the first rector. Plans were laid for the erection of a larger church and on January 26, 1890, **the new brick church** seating 350 was opened. The new church cost \$8,737 and the frame building became the Church Hall.

In 1892, Mr. Miles was succeeded by Rev. (later Canon) R. P. McKim and he in turn was followed by Rev. P. McKim and he in turn was followed by Rev. F. H. (later Archbishop) Duvernet in 1895. Under these two rectors the parish flourished and became the missionary minded Church it still is. In 1903 the church was enlarged and in 1904, Mr. Duvernet was elected Bishop of Caledonia. His successor at St. John's was Rev. T. Beverley Smith.

The Rev. T. Beverley Smith was rector from 1904 - 1917 and during his incumbency great expansion and many changes took place. In the early part of his rectorship, the Junction, as it was called, was just emerging from a heart breaking business slump caused by the rerouting of the railroad down the Don Valley. During the period from 1905 - 1914 there was a great influx of people from the Old Country and the Junction rapidly spread out along Annette St. to Jane and up Runnymede Rd. To St. Clair. Many of these new people were Anglicans and to meet the needs of the expanding area, missions were opened at St. Clair and Runnymede, and on Annette St. near Jane St. These missions are now the parishes of the Church of the Advent and St. Paul's Runnymede. To accommodate the large Sunday School and the many flourishing organizations of St. John's, a new parish hall was built. This parish hall (now the YWCA building) at St. John's Rd. and Dundas St., was opened in 1913 and was an active centre of parochial life. With the advent of war in 1914 the duties of the rector became even more onerous and in 1917, Mr. Smith was forced to give up and Rev. R. MacNamara, a returned chaplain, was chosen as rector.

The Major, as he was affectionately know to many, came to St. John's as rector when another major change was taking place in the "Junction", now known as Ward 7 and part of Toronto. Bloor St. had been opened up as a main traffic artery and many new homes had been built south and west of the older area. The church was now on the edge of the parish rather than in the centre.

After much prayer and discussion the present rectory was erected on High Park Ave. and a site for a church purchased at the corner of Quebec and Humberstone — the geographical centre of the parish. The corner stone of the new church was laid May 5, 1923, by Bishop Sweeney and **the church opened on November 4** of the same year.

The beautiful **Ascension window**, a memorial to those who made the supreme sacrifice in the first Great War, was dedicated a week later by Bishop Reeve. At that time, there was a large group of young people in the parish and Bible classes, AYPAs and all phases of parish life were given a great impetus by the new church. Of course the building had to be paid for and the story of St. John's over the next 20 years was one of continual effort to reduce the debt. Mr. MacNamara's health finally broke down and he retired in 1935 after 18 years of inspirational and devoted leadership.

As successor to Mr. MacNamara, St. John's was fortunate in securing Rev. (now Bishop) H. R. Hunt. He brought to us a driving zeal which, combined with his organizing ability, resulted in a clearance of the debt by November, 1944, despite the outbreak of the Second World War and the tail end of the depression. On St. Luke's day in 1944, Mr. Hunt sat in the church to receive the gifts of the people and by evening over \$10,000 had been received. This was sufficient to retire the balance of debt and on Sunday, November 19, 1944, the church was consecrated by Archbishop Owen.

Mr. Hunt continued to serve as rector until 1949 when he was called to be rector of the Church of the Redeemer where he continued to give dynamic leadership. He was succeeded by Rev. Clinton Cross and under his leadership our Church Hall was remodelled and subsequently the church itself was renovated to the present beautiful House of God in which we worship. In 1955, Mr. Cross was asked by the Bishop to accept the rectorship of St. George's, Ottawa, which, owing to the long illness of its rector had not been progressing as well as it should.

Our new rector, Rev. Reginald Stackhouse, assumed his duties in February 1956. Under his leadership St. John's kept forging ahead. New problems due to a changing district and the influx of many new Canadians, some of whom had no church affiliation, presented a challenge which had to be met. That challenge is with us yet. St. John's is no longer a suburban church but is still in the heart of a large residential district and has the opportunity for service presented by such districts.

In late 1959, we purchased the house at the corner of High Park and Humberstone. It was completely redecorated and refurbished, and is now a useful addition to our facilities, providing separate rooms for Sunday School classes and numerous organizations. English classes for new Canadians and the Friendly Corner Group for Senior Citizens are some of the social service projects using the house.

In 1960, Mr. Stackhouse decided to take further theological studies to prepare for a teaching career. After prayerful consideration and consultation he regretfully resigned as rector, leaving us in August.

Rev. Gordon Philpotts accepted the invitation to become our new Rector. He and his family joined us in September, 1960. Already we have felt the impact of his leadership. We look forward to many years of — to use the AYPAs motto — "Worship, Work, Fellowship and Edification" with him to guide us.

Our slogan for this 80th anniversary year so well points to our duty — "Salute the Past, Lay Hold of the Future."

Over the 80 years of our parish life we have been blessed with good leadership. Two of our rectors — Rev. F. H. Duvernet and Rev. H. R. Hunt — were elected Bishops as were also two of our assistants, Rev. Walter Barfoot — later Primate of all Canada, and Rev. Stephen Wong — now serving in China.

Down through the years many of our young men have entered the ministry. Others have served the church in other capacities. Several of our women have also served in "far places of earth" and others are, or have been, active in social service work locally.

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CENTENNIAL: 1881 - 1981

From a booklet titled ***THE FIRST CENTURY, 1881 - 1981***, also supplied by Marilyn Shortt, and compiled by Thirza C. Donovan, we have extracted the following [**a few editorial comments have been added, marked by red text!**]:

In a footnote to a letter of congratulations from Bishop Garnsworthy on the occasion, dated March 24, 1981:

- Speaking of Bishops ...

St. John's parish has played a part in the development of four Bishops. The first to go on to this further field of service was Incumbent Rev. F. H. DuVernet. After serving St. John's from 1895 to 1904, he was called to be Bishop of Caledonia, B.C. Later a Curate became better known as Most Reverend W. F. Barfoot, D.D., Primate of all Canada. Another Curate, Stephen Wong, returned to his native China after graduation and was made Bishop. Still later, the Right Reverend H. R. Hunt, D.D., left his parish work to remain in the Diocese as Suffragan Bishop.

Regarding the **Rev. H. R. Hunt**, who was Rector of the parish from 1935 to 1949, the following notes are made:

- While at St. John's, a 1939 Vestry report attests to his tireless concern for his parishioners: 779 personal calls, 952 sick visits, 437 meetings, 238 sermons.
- In the Sacristy there is a chalice bearing the inscription:

In thanksgiving for the ministry of the Rt. Rev. H. R. Hunt, D.D., 1935 - 1949.

THE BEGINNING:

- It all began in August of 1879, when Mrs. B. W. Murray (nee Julia Henry) hitched her horse to the buggy and drove through the bush of Runnymede and Swansea, stopping at the scattered homes along the way.
- The children of those homes became Mrs. Murray's passengers to her modest house south of Bloor Street, there to begin the first Sunday School of the area. The road traveled that day became the nucleus of a parish to be later known as St. John's, West Toronto.
- A plaque to the memory of Julia Henry Murray, on the east wall of the present church, testifies that "through her devoted energy and her great love for little children, the foundation of the parish of St. John's was laid."

THE MISSION CHURCH:

- The first official house of worship was planned in 1880, the cost not to exceed \$700. **A simple wooden structure, without a cornerstone, was dedicated on November 20, 1881**, by Bishop Arthur Sweatman, and served the congregation for eight years.
- Classified as a Mission Church, it was designated St. John's Church, Runnymede, and was served by students of Wycliffe College. The clergy include such names as Canon Ardill, Cooper Robinson, J. Macqueen Baldwin, A. Gaviller and R. A. Sims.
- By April of 1881 the Mission was referred to as St. John the Baptist ...
- In November there was a meeting to discuss the opening of the new building. ...
- A six-month stipend of fifty dollars was offered to a Wycliffe student, for Sunday services and one weekly visiting day, with provision for his horse while there.

WIDENING HORIZONS:

- In 1886, the Bishop was requested to set apart a Mission, bounded on the north by Davenport Rd. east by Keele and Dundas, south by Lake Ontario and west by Jane Street. ...
- On March 31, 1888 the acting minister, Rev. Arthur Chipman Miles, was officially appointed Incumbent.
- The need for expanded quarters became urgent, and in April plans were formulated for a new building, to cost no more than \$2500. This was later revised to \$8000.
- The organ in use, owned by Mr. Murray, was donated to the congregation, provided that the services were conducted in evangelical methods, periodic checking to be done by the Chairman of Wycliffe Board of Management. If any deviation from evangelical influence appeared, the organ would revert to the owner.

THE SECOND CHURCH:

- On May 11, 1889, a cornerstone was placed to begin **a new building at St. John's Rd. and Dundas St.** An attempt was made to limit the cost to \$2500, providing a seating capacity of 350 souls. The old frame building became the Church Hall, and the Rev. R. P. McKim was inducted as Rector. Eventual cost of the structure amounted to \$8737. By 1894 the congregation had grown to include twenty-four Confirmation candidates.
- The turn of the Twentieth century brought an influx of British immigrants to the parish, drawn by the railway industry and the annexation of the Junction as Ward Seven of Toronto. Enlargements and renovations of Church facilities developed under the leadership of Rev. F. H. Duvernet and Rev. T. Beverley Smith.
- The new Parish Hall, built in 1913, was later sold to the Y.M.C.A. and used in Y programmes until its demolition in 1980.
- Thirty-four years later the cornerstone was moved to the site of the present building at Humberstone and Quebec Avenues, where it stands as a tribute to 100 years of fellowship and ministry.

NEW CENTURY GROWTH:

- In spite of enlarged quarters at St. John's Road and Dundas, the needs of the expanding parish could not be met from one location, and a mission was set up at St. Paul's [on Willard, now St. Paul's Runnymede] on December 5, 1909. Another was established as the Church of the Advent [on Pritchard Ave.] on February 26, 1912.
- Rev. T. Beverley Smith carried on a burdensome ministry through the war years until his premature death in 1918. During his last year of service, a Rectory was erected on High Park Avenue [**206 High Park Ave.**], the geographical centre of the parish. ...
- **On May 5, 1923, the cornerstone of the present edifice was laid** -- a building designed to hold 600 people. November 4, 1923 was a red-letter day for the people of St. John's, when the magnificent new building was dedicated by Bishop Sweeney. ...
- Following the discharge of the mortgage in 1944, arrangements were made for a formal consecration. The service was conducted on Sunday, November 19, 1944 ... with the Most Rev. D. T. Owen, Archbishop of Toronto, officiating. ...
- A dedication of new work on the building took place in 1953, during the incumbency of Rev. Clinton D. Cross. The renovations included a new Holy Table and reredos, a mid-week chapel in the North Transept, a Baptistery in the South Transept, redecoration of the Nave, and completion of the Narthex. ...
- The purchase of the Parish House [**204 High Park Ave., now the location of the Holy Cross Priory**] in 1959 extended the facilities for parish activities.

IN HIS SERVICE: RECTORS TO 1981:

A.C. Miles, B.A.	1887 - 1892	
R.P. McKim, M.A.	1892 - 1895	Later Canon
F.H. DuVernet, D.D.	1895 - 1904	Later Bishop
T.B. Smith, B.A.	1904 - 1917	
R. MacNamara, L.Th.	1917 - 1935	
H.R. Hunt, M.A., D.D.	1935 - 1949	Later Bishop
C.D. Cross, B.A., L.Th.	1949 - 1955	Later Canon
R.C. Stackhouse, M.A., B.D., Ph.D.	1956 - 1960	Later Principle, Wycliffe
G. Philpotts, L.Th., Th.M.	1960 - 1964	
M.P. Poole, B.A., B.D.	1964 - 1981	Canon

MEMORIAL WINDOWS:

YEAR	TO THE GLORY OF GOD	IN REMEMBRANCE OF
1904	Sermon on the Mount	Most Rev. F. DuVernet
1917	The Good Shepherd	Sarah Griffin
1917	Fishers of Men	Rev. T. Beverley Smith
1923	Jesus, Mary and Martha	Martha Ann Hinde
1923	Ascension	Fallen Comrades
1924	Blessing the Children	Mary Elizabeth Cooper
1930	Christ the Healer	R. Rutt Hopkins, M.D.
1931	Crucifixion	50th Anniversary
1943	The Empty Tomb	William H. Dixon
1945	The Boy Jesus	Bible Class Boys
1957	The Virgin Mary	Marjorie Ethel Stokes
1962	Adoration of the Shepherds	Hilda May
1968	Christ Breaking Bread	Samuel Ryding and Wife
1969	Behold I Stand at the Door	H. Harrison and Wife
1976	The Rising Eagle	Five Bible Classes

THE ORGAN:

- In 1891, a Vocalion, believed to be a reed organ, manufactured by mason and Risch, was accepted on a trial basis. A decision was made to purchase the instrument, thereby creating a constant problem with payments. ...
- It was decided in 1893 to inform Mason and Risch of the inability to keep up the ten-dollar [per month] payments. A house-to-house collection was made by the women to reduce the debt. In the meantime, a delegation was directed to look into another type of organ. ...
- By 1903 Miss Harris was earning \$100 per year as organist, and \$120 as Deaconess. In 1904 the salary of the "organ blower" was increased from \$13 to \$20 per year. ...
- The subject of the organ is absent from the records until 1909, when a vestry report states that "the balance owing on the pipe organ is due, and the church from which the organ was purchased is pressing for the amount of \$450."
- David Legge has provided information relating to this instrument. It was built by the Lye Organ Co., Toronto. Mr. Lye Sr., played the bells at St. James Cathedral for many years. Air pressure for playing the pipes was provided by volunteers working a pump handle. Usually a choir boy did the pumping, and the choice rested with the one who showed up first. ...
- In 1910, the Vestry voted \$200 to provide motive power for blowing the pipes. Also, in appreciation for the great strides in achievement, "a grant of fifteen dollars is to be made and set apart to banquet the choir." By the year 1911, the Women's Guild was able to provide \$250 for the installation of a motor. It is said that if Percy MacDonald [Organist and Choirmaster for 40 years, from 1923 to 1963] had run out of gum and string the whole organ would have fallen apart. ...
- In 1923 the organ was moved to its present location. The work was done by C. Franklin Legge Co., who have been in charge of maintenance, alteration and rebuilding ever since [i.e. to at least 1981].
- 1947 saw the replacement of choir pews by Globe Furniture, Kitchener. The pipe organ was rebuilt, using the old pipes and case work, with new working parts. The console was moved from the Epistle side to the Gospel side in 1950.
- A set of Warren Organ Co. Trumpets was added in 1953. This set had been made in Woodstock, Ontario, for Augustine Methodist Church, Winnipeg, about 1910.
- The twelve 16-foot Trombone pipes came to St. John's by a circuitous route. The belonged originally to Warren organ, installed in Erskine Methodist Church, Montreal, about 1906. In 1936, this instrument was replaced by a new Legge organ. The Warren organ was purchased by Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto. There it was dismantled in 1956, and the Trombones came to St. John's.
- The Chimes, operated from the console, were given in 1961 by Alex Ogden, in memory of Ada Gertrude and Colin Ogden.
- Other additions to the organ:
- 1959 - cleaning, building frames, Swell shutters
 - - Casavant Melodia from Renfrew
 - - Oboe from Saskatoon, made in the mid-twenties
 - - Dulciana and Gamba basses
 - - changing of Celeste
- 1961 - Deagon Chimes from Chicago, no longer available
- 1962 - replacement of Chancel case
 - - new pipes from Heyhusan, Holland
 - - Trumpets, made in Germany, from St. George's on the Hill
- 1966 - Choir Organ, in memory of Percy Wicker MacDonald
 - - voiced Clarinet and new Piccolo
- 1981 - Pedal Dulciana, Breckels and Matthews, 1911, from Parkdale United.

THE CARILLON:

- An option in the architect's plans included a belltower to house ten bells. It was decided to follow this plan during construction, and the bells were purchased from England, with the assistance of Dr. Jackson and T. W. Chadburn. The extra footings required used up the budgeted moneys, leaving the Narthex and Gallery to be finished later.
- The Carillon was installed in 1924 and dedicated in April. The bells range in size from 50 inches to 18 inches in diameter. The "broom handle" keys are played by fist or open hand to ring the inside clappers. The outside clappers are operated by an electric clockwork system. The clappers were repaired in 1974, under the supervision of Gordon Slater, now Dominion Carillonneur in Ottawa.
- The Carillon was first heard on Easter Day, April 20, 1924. The bells are classified as carillon because they are so assembled that they can be operated by one person, as opposed to individual change ringing. A modification of change ringing is provided by an electric drum, assuring that the heavy tenor bell finishes the ring change of the other nine.
- The bells were cast by Gillett and Johnston, Croydon, England, and arrived in Toronto aboard the S.S. Bosworth. The largest bell weighs 2700 pounds. A companion set is housed in the tower of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Buffalo. Over the years, carillonneurs of the two churches have exchanged keyboard recitals.
- In 1974, to mark the 50th anniversary of the installation of the bells, a series of recitals was held each Sunday in September during the noon hour. Homebound churchgoers throughout the area were able to enjoy the stirring tones of the Bells of St. John's.

PICTURES

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