

# OUR CHURCH

A Brief History of  
St. Paul's

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S ALMONTE

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Welcome to St. Paul's Anglican Church, Almonte. Erected in 1863, we are Almonte's oldest continuous use church.

Members of St. Paul's will always pay tribute to the founders who put so much effort into getting this beautiful stone church started in 1863. Although in 1963 St. Paul's celebrated the anniversary of the building of the Church one hundred years before, the parish history goes back twenty years earlier to 1843 when the services of the Church of England were first brought to one family in a log school house by the Rev. Dr. Boswell. Dr. Boswell was appointed to the Mission of Carleton Place in 1833 by the Bishop of Montreal in whose Diocese the whole of Upper Canada (as Ontario was then named) was included.

During most of the period before St. Paul's was built, Anglican services were held in the Temperance Hall on Union Street. The records tell us that "music for the Church of England and Ireland services were supplied by Mr. Bennett Rosamond who brought a small melodeon to the Temperance Hall from his own home". At this time there were twelve families attending, including that of Mr. Joseph Symington Sr. whose mother was the first person buried in the St. Paul's cemetery. Until 1863 Anglicans in Almonte were confirmed in St. George's, Ramsay or in Carleton Place.

By 1862 the congregation was ready to erect a Church. It was decided to build the Church beside the Mississippi River, close to the centre of Almonte. With the land, the building and the bell, the Church was to cost \$4,500. Campaign chairman James Rosamond laid the first stone on May 7<sup>th</sup>. 1863 and work began.

Mr. Rosamond's original notebook of the building campaign, carefully preserved by St. Paul's, shows each man's contribution entered in the diary beside his own signature. Mill owner, James Rosamond started it off himself, with \$400. William Rosamond gave \$200. The Rev. Dr. Boswell, former pioneer missionary and by this time Rector of Prescott, gave \$20 and the Rev. J. A. Matlock who held services in Almonte between 1846 and 1851 gave \$10. Business firms in Montreal sent \$156, friends in Perth gave \$100 and The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.), of London, England, gave \$100. Several people are recorded as giving \$10 each but the entries mostly of \$5.00, \$2.00 and \$1.00 – big enough money in those days. Some well-known Almonte names are shown in the diary: Thompson, Gemmill, Naismith and others familiar to St. Paul's parishioners today.

The Church building was ready for occupancy in 1864 but could not be consecrated until it was paid for. On June 20 1864, James Rosamond entered in his diary the following notation:

**Whole amount from other subscribers: \$1,369.00**

**The amount paid by myself \$3,279.00**

The Church, under the Rev. Edwin Slade, was consecrated on St. Peter's Day, 1864 by the Bishop of Ontario. The Rev. Slade, whose stipend of \$200 per annum was probably average for the period, ministered to Almonte and Clayton parishes (very soon after St. Paul's was built, Almonte and Clayton became separate self-supporting parishes). He served until 1867 when the Rev. J. W. Burke took over at St. Paul's.

Prices seem very low in those days compared to present levels. For example, there is a note in the records that in 1869 G. Thompson paid \$14.50 for ten cords of wood and 50 cents was paid for one gallon of coal oil. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that when the stone rectory was built behind the Church in about 1879, the rectory cost more to construct than the original Church. The reason? When the Church was built stone masons earned \$1.00 a day, whereas when the rectory was built, stone masons were earning \$2.50 a day.

At the Vestry meeting of 1866, a parsonage building committee was appointed to collect funds for a parsonage. In 1875 Dr. William Mostyn, offered to sell his house (the large Greystone house at the corner of Queen and Clyde Streets) as a parsonage but the congregation preferred to build closer to the river on the site of the original churchyard. The Parish was still paying rent of \$80 per year in 1876 to a Mrs. Smail for a parsonage, presumably the dwelling located on Martin Street. The parsonage must have been built in 1878 or 1879 because in 1880 the building committee was adjourned until further notice. However, contributions towards the cost of the building must have continued for in 1880 Bennett Rosamond was named Treasurer of the parsonage building fund.

In 1886 they mortgaged the rectory (first reference to “rectory” rather than “parsonage”) to obtain funds to enlarge and repair the Church. Money troubles were somewhat of a problem then too. In 1887, the worship space of the Church was altered to add the east and west transepts and the chancel enlarged. A stone to this effect was set high in the west transept wall.

Modern lighting was put in the Church during the period 1924 to 1934 (electric lighting of an earlier style had been installed earlier), the basement was renovated and a kitchenette added. The Church was roofed with asbestos shingles, and the flues were rebuilt. The Church sheds were roofed and the grounds enlarged and fenced. Running water was put in the rectory and its basement repaired. Improvements all came to \$3,000, yet in spite of the depression, all obligations were met, and in addition the congregation gave \$1,391 to the Rosamond Memorial Hospital. Indeed, it is remarkable to note that in 1933 the parish subscribed \$534 (\$390 in cash) for the missionary work of the Church. Now that sounds as though they had started a pledging campaign!

A proposed plan for enlarging the Church basement was introduced by Mr. G. E. Gomme at the Vestry of 1950. Plans and blueprints for the proposed work had been drawn up and these were explained to the Vestry by Mr. Gomme and Mr. G. M. Dunfield. The following year, the existing basement facility was renovated at a cost of \$9,843.31 and was honoured with the name Parish Hall. The renovations included a new oil heating system for the Church and Hall, new plumbing, new handicapped entrance, new wiring and remodeling of the kitchen.

The expanse of lawn on the west side of the Church which sets off the building so beautifully was the gift of Mr. W. R. Pierce and Mr. E. S. Winslow-Spragge in 1952. Mr. Winslow-Spragge bought the land between the Church and the present Almonte Riverside Inn (then the Almonte Armouries), and Mr. W. R. Pierce the land between the late Dr. Frank Murphy's home and the Church..