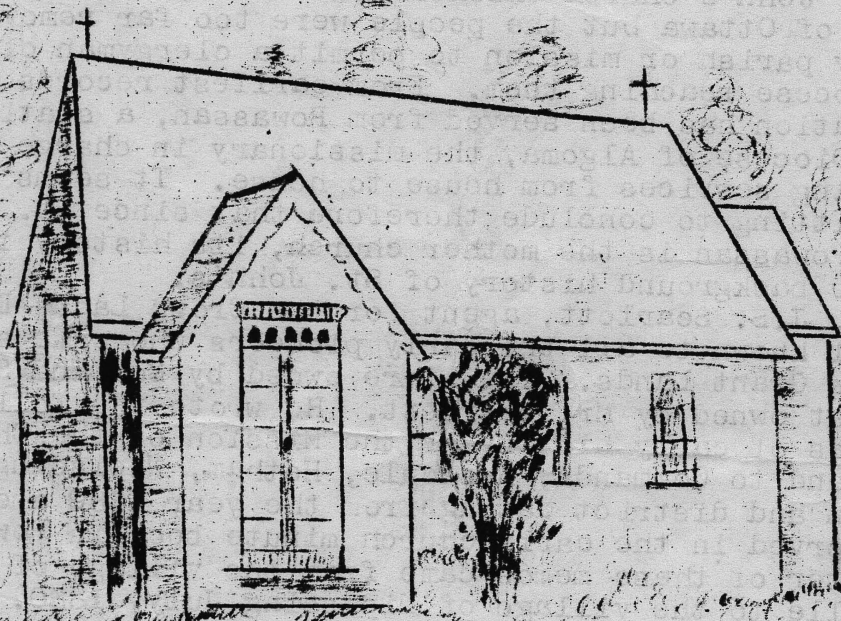


THE HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

CHISHOLM



Commemorating
The 50th. Anniversary
1910 ————— 1960

St. John's Church

Although we are celebrating in 1960 the fiftieth anniversary of the building of St. John's church, the spiritual work of the church dates back much farther than 1910.

St. John's church Chisholm was really in the Diocese of Ottawa but the people were too far removed from any parish or mission to permit a clergyman of that Diocese reaching them. From earliest records the congregation has been served from Powassan, a station in the Diocese of Algoma, the missionary in charge conducting services from house to house. It seems quite fitting to conclude therefore that since St. Mary's Powassan is the mother church, its history is also the background history of St. John's.

Mr. J.S. Scarlett, agent for the Crown Lands Dept. was well known to all the early pioneers who came seeking Free Grant Lands. The store owned by Cox and Sons was first owned by Mr. Scarlett. He wrote the following memos of early history of the Mission of the Church of England to Commanda, Restoule, Hotham, Nipissing, Powassan and district dating from the year 1880 and it is preserved in the early church minute book in Powassan. The writer of these memos came from the village of Huntsville to the village of Nipissing July, 1880.

"My earliest recollection of church work was a visit from Rev. M. Crompton, whose headquarters was at Aspdin near Huntsville in Muskoka District. The territory covered by this aged missionary from England compassed all the townships south of Powassan as far as Port Sydney church, nearly 100 miles square. On a return visit to Huntsville I met Mr. Crompton and urged him when he was at his most northerly station to continue his trip to Nipissing village which was 34 miles further north than Magnetawan where he had a church. He was faithful to his promise and came up and we had a service in a school house in Nipissing village which was the supply point for all the surrounding country for you will bear in mind that the C.P.R. or the G.T. Railway was not built then nor were the crown lands opened up to settlers until July 1880.

In that year I found a strong church community around Nipissing village which controlled the whole business of this section of the country. In fact Forth McLeod, a Hudson Bay depot, now known as Sturgeon Falls, was supplied by the merchants of this place. There were 22 families favourable to the Church of England. This community was at Nipissing 22 years previous to my date and had a postal service from Mattawa once a month in 1860 carried by bark canoe, using water stretches and numerous portages. Rev. M. Crompton only came once and we had a crowded school house to see a live Missioner, the first in this section.

Our second Missioner was Rev. Gowan Gilmour, who was chaplain to the forces under, now Sir Gamet Wolsey, in the Red River Rebellion in the North West. This God fearing man was appointed by Bishop Sullivan to take charge of the spiritual welfare of the men on the works relative to the construction of the C.P.R. who found opportunities to give us a service. Truly this man's parish seemed to me to be from east to west, from north to south and as high as Heaven. North Bay was then only a hamlet and Mr. Gilmour's headquarters. He was the only Missioner between Mattawa and Sault Ste. Marie, ever moving and on foot. His name was a household word. I frequently accompanied him with my Indian ponies. We often had a service at Commanda and occasionally as far east as Powassan. No family was left unvisited. This was in the years 1881 and 1882.

Mr. McLeod was the next Missioner, a Wycliffe college student, married and having Nipissing as his headquarters. He visited Commanda, Restoule, Nipissing Hotham and Powassan. All his work was done on foot. I scarcely know how he accomplished so much as he was anything but a strong looking man. After Mr. Gilmour's great popularity one would have thought Mr. McLeod scarcely able to fill the position but his zeal for christian work manifested itself. Mr. McLeod often preached here, also Mr. Gilmour. Services were held in Mr. W.F. Clarke's house. Mr. McLeod returned to this mission a second time. He collected in Toronto and Kingston for a church at Nipissing, \$53.00. However Nipissing congregation in later years purchased

the Methodist church for \$100.00 instead of building. Rev. McLeod left here in 1889.

The only road I may say in this country up to this time was the exploration road from Rosseau to Nipissing village built principally to colonize the then unknown wilderness. The first steam boat was placed on Lake Nipissing in 1881 and built at Nipissing.

Rev. Geo. Gander, a deacon in our church located near South River (before the railway, Eagle Lake Settlement), was sent by Bishop Sullivan to take charge of Restoule, Commanda, Nipissing and Powassan. Services were about once a month but some places didn't have one once in six months. Rev. Gander had charge of Sundridge (Stoney Lake Settlement), Trout Creek, and Mucunama or Bummer's Roost as it was nick-named.

Mr. W.C. White, a Wycliffe student, was placed in charge of this mission in 1890 and Powassan became headquarters owing to its proximity to the railway and its apparent prosperity. It could not claim this privilege for the number of church people it contained. A great change will take place if it ever fills the small church. Powassan, St. Mary's church, was built in 1890 and Rev. White was the first clergyman to preach in that church and was also the first to come in to Chisholm to hold services in the homes. He left in 1881. For a number of months there was no regular minister and the people were looked after by Archdeacon Llwoid of Huntsville, Mr. Parcey of Burk's Falls and Mr. Young of North Bay and Mr. Johnson of Magnetawan.

Mr. Franz Ulbricht, recommended to Bishop Sullivan as having business training and desirous of taking upon himself Church Orders, aged 21, healthy and strong looking, came in 1892. The township of Chisholm was opened for actual settlement by the Ontario Govt. as free grant lands and Mr. Ulbricht had added territory. He was the first missionary to turn East in the Creed. The first vestry meeting in Powassan was held in his time. He wore long rubber boots to travel on foot over the rough trail to Chisholm and getting his feet wet developed muscular rheumatism. His feet swelled so badly his rubbers had to be cut off. He was very ill and was transferred to Huntsville to be convenient to

the hospital. He left Powassan in December, 1894.

In 1895 Rev. Hunter was appointed by Bishop Sullivan. In 1896 Rev. C.H. Buckland followed. He left the mission in Aug. 1898 for Burks Falls and Rev. A.J. Cobb was appointed. On Sept. 10, Rev. David Johnston came to us from Magnetawan. Rev. Harold G. King came in 1904 and Rev. E.M. Roland in 1906."

The author of these early church records, Mr. J.S. Scarlett, died in April, 1909.

With Mr. Scarlett's memos we have followed the expansion and work of the church northward, westward and eastward. Let us turn our attention now more closely to Chisholm. Between 1885 and 1906 when Rev. Roland came. Several families favourable to the Church of England had settled here. Some of these were M. Boxwell - 1885, E. Topps and H. Wraight - 1888, H. Skinner 1891, J. Parkin and Jim Anderson - 1894, A. Beech - 1892, G. Johnston and J. Price - 1903. They all had families.

Life was rugged for these early settlers, who literally hewed their homes from the virgin forest of pine, hemlocks and birch. As there were no roads, the supplies for the family were generally carried on their backs in the earliest years over the rough bush trails that led from Powassan or Bonfield. As early as 1889 Mrs. Wraight with the help of Mrs. Topps and Florrie Topps carried her baby, Will, over this rough trail to Powassan to have him baptized. The earliest record of services held in Chisholm was 1890 - 1891 during Rev. White's time. The minister travelled on foot, coming in to Chisholm one day and returning to Powassan the following day. Services were first held at the Topps home and later at Boxwell's and Wraight's. Rev. Roland was probably the first to conduct a service on Sunday in Chisholm when he was able to travel with a horse and rig. When roads would not permit the use of a horse and rig he would come on horseback.

Bishop Thornloe conducted the first Rite of Confirmation in Chisholm in 1908, at the Boxwells home for a class of seven candidates namely, Lizzie and Mary Boxwell, Isobel McInnis, Ethel and Myrtle Price, Phoebe and Annie Wraight.

These brave pioneers with young families growing up longed for the influence of a church in their homes and community. It was during the incumbency of Rev. Roland that it was decided that a church was needed to properly carry on the work. At the invitation of His Grace Dr. C. Hamilton, Archbishop of Ottawa, Mr. Roland went to Ottawa in Dec., 1909 and collected enough money from the church people there to justify the erection of the building.

Plans progressed steadily. The first vestry meeting recorded, "Matters concerning church building were discussed and several things decided on." On Feb. 17, 1910 a church building meeting was held at the Boxwell home. The building committee proposed consisted of: E. Topps, H. Wraight, W. Boxwell, H. Topps and Rev. Roland. Mr. H. Wraight and Mr. T. McCormick each offered a site for the new church but the one on the Wraight farm was chosen.

Under the capable direction of Mr. E. Topps who was a carpenter by trade and who had built the Anglican churches at Powassan and Callander, the church was built with the congregation providing the labour and material. Picnics were held in Wraight's bush for a number of years and these proved a great help financially besides being a happy event which was enjoyed by the community in general. They became an annual event from about 1905 to 1914 when world war 1 broke out.

Mr. Stanley Topps made the Lectern. The first organ and Altar came from Pembroke. Some furnishings were sent as gifts from friends in England.

The church was duly opened. It was officially dedicated by the Right Rev. Geo. Thornloe, Bishop of Algoma on March 12, 1911. In his remarks Bishop Thornloe described it as "The prettiest and best finished church of its size in the Diocese". Miss Alice Topps was the organist for the occasion and she faithfully continued as such for forty-six years. Mr. H. Topps was secretary-treasurer from then until 1955 when Mr. S. Topps continued for one year. Mr. Howard Smith has held that office since then.

Rev. P.A. Paris came in December 1912 and during his incumbency the carpet was bought for the chancel,

the Bishop's chair for which Mrs. Price had collected the money, was added to the furnishings and a much needed drive shed was built.

Following Rev. Paris those ministering to the people of St. John's church are:

Rev. Richard Haines.....	1918	-	1923
Rev. H. Peeling.....	1923	-	1928
Rev. J.E. Evans.....	1928	-	1930
Rev. Sampson.....	1930	-----	
Rev. C.B. Harris.....	1930	-	1933
Rev. A.P. Scott.....	1933	-	1934
Rev. W.A.J. Burt.....	1934	-	1938
Rev. A.E. Carding.....	1938	-	1944
Rev. R.C. Warder.....	1944	-	1947
Rev. Gower Stone.....	1947	-	1948
Rev. Canon A.E. Minchin.....	1948	-	1954
Rev. P.G. Docksey.....	1954	-	1959
Rev. D.L. Woodward.....	1959		

The Rev. B.G. Gosse of North Bay has been a close friend of the people of St. John's as he has filled the vacancy on many occasions over the years when we would have been without services.

The W.A. of St. John's was organized by Rev. and Mrs. Peeling in April, 1925. The members at that time were: Mrs. M.D. Boxwell, Mrs. W. Boxwell, Mrs. H. Topps, Mrs. H. Wraight, Mrs. W. Wraight, Mrs. J. Price, Mrs. J. Anderson, Mrs. E. Topps, Miss A. Topps and Mrs. S. Topps.

In 1956 it was decided to have the church wired for electricity.

At the 19th. session of Synod of the Diocese of Algoma held at Sault Ste. Marie in June 1959, the Mission of Chisholm became part of the Diocese of Algoma.