

Our Deanery.

KINGSTON II.

In some countries a century is reckoned as a short period of time. In a country like our own — yet in its infancy — it is regarded as a very extended period. How many changes take place in a hundred years! How vast and astounding have been the changes during the last century! Dear reader, to write a history of the parish of Kingston, we must go back a little over a hundred years, to a time when no Bishop in communion with the Anglican branch of the Church Catholic existed outside of the British Isles, — when the faithful, scattered here and there over the civilized world, were inadequately shepherded by a few zealous pastors, receiving their commission to feed the flock from the Bishop of London, whose vast and unwieldy diocese extended “from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” — to a time, six months and four days before the first bishop of the American Church was consecrated, at Aberdeen, by the Primus and two other bishops of the Scottish Church.

On the 10th of May, 1784, a body of settlers, who had been driven from their homes and occupations in the newly formed and independent states of North America (because they desired to remain faithful to their king and country), having chosen the rough and hilly peninsula lying between the St. John and the Kennebecasis rivers as their dwelling place, met together for the purpose of forming a Church, or, at least, of putting themselves in the way of enjoying the blessings and privileges of that Church which they loved, and in which they were born.

But why, when they had the choice of fairer portions of this fair province, did they hit upon a spot which, however beautiful, no persons who intended to live by agriculture would ever have dreamed of selecting? Let tradition solve the riddle. We are told that when the Loyalists were about settling in various parts of the province, those, with whom we are now concerned, paddled, or sailed, up the River St. John, past the rent chasms of Indiantown and the bold ranges of hills that line either side of the Reach. Up, up they travelled, till they came to the low-lying meadows beyond the Jemseg. Charmed with the quiet, pastoral beauty of the scene, they determined to seek no further. They discharged their precious cargo and proceeded forthwith to make that spot their home. All went as happily as a marriage bell for some time. But the mighty river, whose periodical overflows we are more or less acquainted with, suddenly began to rise in a wonderful and unheard of manner. Our adventurers, new to the country, were alarmed. Nothing would induce them to remain in a spot where they were in danger of being swamped in their beds. Then, or shortly after, they gathered all together and travelled down the course they had taken, their one thought being to get as high above the river as possible. The hills, which in their voyage up they may have admired, had now a double attraction for them.

This little legend, while it does not explain why the hills about Kingston are so many and so steep, makes it clear why they became settled by so hardy and industrious a people.

But to continue: The first written record be-

fore us is under the above date, May 10th, 1784. The settlers met and organized the parish, electing two Wardens — David Pickett, grandfather of the present Rector of Greenwich, and Joseph Lyon — and twelve Vestrymen, whose descendants are to be found in several parishes of this Deanery. At the same time, they made application to Government for a grant of land for glebe, and also made exertions to obtain the services of a clergyman. These men did something more than make and pass resolutions. They were men intensely in earnest, and, until suitable provision could be made for their spiritual welfare, were not content to remain supinely indifferent till a Church could be built and a parson should be sent to them; so they selected one of their number, Mr. Frederic Dibblee, to read Prayers, and Mr. Joseph Scribner's house became, until the Church was built, their sanctuary. The cellar of this house can yet be seen on the old road over the hill, between the post office and Pickett's Lane. It was in this house that the Rev. James Scovil, S. P. G. missionary, from Waterbury, Connecticut, officiated for the first time on July 5th, 1787. A business meeting was held immediately after service, at which a petition was signed requesting the Government to grant to Mr. Scovil a certain lot of land; and, “as an encouragement to the said Rev. Mr. Scovil,” it was voted “that he should have the lot of land, as his own property, which is now called Parsonage land” Messrs. Silas Raymond, Elias Scribner, and John London, at the same meeting, “gave each of them severally one acre of land off the corners of their respective lots to the said Church, free and clear of all encumbrances, for ever and ever, as a privilege to build a Church House thereon” It was also voted to build a Church on the land thus given. By the end of that year, £134 13s were subscribed by seventy-two persons. Encouraged by this liberal response, the Vestry, on Feb. 4, 1789, determined to build a Church, 50 x 30. Having made this pious resolve, they did not let the grass grow beneath their feet; for, on the 27th of June of that year, the frame was raised “in due order without any misfortune happening.” On Nov. 5th the outside was finished, and the Rev. Mr. Scovil, who had previous to this date been appointed Rector, “dedicated” the building “to the service and worship of Almighty God, in the name of Trinity Church.”

To encourage the people in their pious endeavour to secure for themselves and their children the privileges and blessings of the Gospel, the Government made them a liberal grant of £400 currency. This grant was made in 1790, and in September of that year fifty dollars were voted by the Vestry to be given to the Church at Oak Point (Greenwich). At the same time a similar amount seems to have been voted for a Church near James Hoyt's, on the River Kennebecasis. The situation was probably near the spot where the Chapel of Ease, Lower Norton, now stands.

A month later, one-third of the original grant, amounting to £33:6:8, was paid over to Rev. James Scovil, in lieu of building a Rectory, “the Church taking a mortgage of his house and homestead for their security.” About this time, also, the Church was finished inside, and the pews were sold or hired out from year to year to the highest bidders.

(To be continued.)