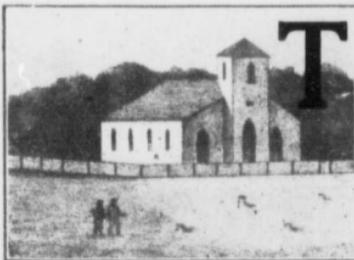


# Melville Church, Fergus, Ontario.

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## THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

in Fergus began its visible history in a roughcast building situated on the lot occupied by the present Saint Andrew's Church, and facing toward the log school-house, which stood on the site of the High School of to-day. The internal arrangements were quaint to a degree, the high pulpit

being placed at the side of the church, and surrounded by square pews with doors. The communion table occupied a permanent position in the centre and stretched almost the whole length of the building. This structure was completed in 1835, at a time when there cannot have been more than five or six houses in Fergus.

The first minister was Rev. Alexander Gardiner, settled here by the Church of Scotland in 1837, whose ministry lasted only four years. During the vacancy of two years which followed his death, Mr. A. D. Fordyce, who was the first clerk of session, kept the people together by conducting public worship and reading printed sermons.

On December thirteenth, 1843, Rev. George Smellie, who came from Orkney under direction of the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland, was inducted and began what proved to be an exceptionally long pastorate filled with far reaching influences. It was estimated one year after Mr. Smellie's settlement that nearly a thousand persons were connected with the congregation, and the parish practically extended to Georgian Bay.

The roads were originally mere Indian trails, and the pioneer settlers were obliged to hew out, or burn out, homes for themselves in the heart of the bush; so that a great deal of the pastoral work had to be done on foot, and it was not an uncommon thing for Mr. Smellie, sometimes accompanied by his wife, to walk to Guelph.

