

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

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EARLY ST. CATHARINES.—U. E. LOYALISTS.

The first subscription for the erection of a house of worship in St. Catharines bears date February 17th, 1796. Forty-four names were appended to the document, with amounts varying from £26 10s. 6d. N.Y. currency, down to the small sum of 8s., the total amount subscribed being £121 12s. The document is headed, "Appointment to the church at St. Catharines, with their respective sums next to their names." A plan of the church accompanies the document, showing it to have had twelve double pews 7ft. by 4, surrounded by an aisle three feet wide, which enclosed eight single pews or slips each 15½ x 2¼ ft. A gallery was constructed on three sides. The building was 30x34 feet in size, without steeple or belfry, and was lighted by means of four circular topped windows. The enterprise seems to have been inaugurated and carried forward as a union movement, by the inhabitants generally, who desired some place of public worship. The two persons making the largest original subscriptions were Presbyterians, though subsequently members of the Church of England appear to have given larger amounts. Under date of January 4th, 1798, a deed was executed by Robert Hamilton for about two acres of land, "for and in consideration of one penny paid by John Gould and Abel Letten, the present church wardens in the township of Grantham, in behalf of themselves and the other inhabitants of that township, and to their successors in office, for and in behalf of the whole inhabitants of the said township, for ever." The description speaks of the land being "situate around where the present church is built," and thus indicates the speedy erection of the building after the circulation of the subscription paper in 1796. This deed seems to have been mislaid or forgotten, and never registered, and nothing more was heard of church wardens in Grantham or St. Catharines for many years, the management of the church property being in the hands of trustees, a portion of whom were always Presbyterians.

The date of the first occupancy of this building for religious worship is not now known, nor who preached the first sermon from its pulpit. From the arrival of Rev. D. W. Eastman, in 1801, it was continuously occupied, at stated periods, for Presbyterian service, St. Catharines being one of his numerous preaching stations on the Niagara peninsula. In the Historical Atlas of Lincoln and Welland Counties, it is stated that "most of the settlers in the vicinity of St. Catharines gathered at this church for worship, which was conducted by various ministers, as the church had no regular pastor for many years after it was erected, but the Rev. Mr. Addison officiated at the church as much as possible." Mr. A. was a Church of England minister, who was sent to Canada in 1790 as a missionary, and settled at Niagara, where he officiated as chaplain to the first Parliament. His visits to St. Catharines were not frequent nor regular. The

FIRST RESIDENT MINISTER

in St. Catharines was Rev. LEWIS WILLIAMS, a Welsh Presbyterian, who came about the year 1808, and remained until removed by death in 1822. He was an energetic, large-hearted, devoted and sincere man, and entered into the peculiarly trying and self-sacrificing work of a pioneer preacher in a new country with that earnestness and zeal which is born only of faith in God and love for souls. For about fourteen years, besides preaching steadily at "the union church" in St. Catharines, he was an earnest co-worker with Rev. Mr. Eastman, and the two ranged over the country from the Niagara river to and beyond Ancaster, preaching in the primitive churches erected by the hardy settlers, in school-houses, barns, private residences, groves, by the roadside, and wherever and whenever, on Sunday or in the week, "two or three" could be gathered together to hear the word of life. Mr. Williams brought with him from Wales a quantity of bibles and religious books, which he distributed as he passed along, and a lady now living remembers receiving from him, as a present, the first bible she ever owned, when she was only five years old. Many anecdotes are related of him, not all of which, however, appear authentic or consistent. His choir at Louth, Mr. Philip Beamer, chorister, was much in the

habit of singing the tune called "Complaint," and, at length, it becoming too monotonous, Mr. W., after reading a hymn, quietly remarked, "I do not like to be always complaining: please sing something besides 'Complaint.'" He was very systematic and punctual, always commencing service at the precise moment appointed, telling the people that if he waited five minutes for them to-day, he would have to wait ten minutes to-morrow. But instruction and example, in this direction, appear to have been of but little avail, at least in St. Catharines, if we are to credit the testimony of Dr. John Howison, a Scotchman, who visited Canada in 1819, and published his "observations" after his return home, in 1821. The following extract is given from his book, to illustrate the rough character of the early settlements, and the difficulties pioneer preachers had to contend with. It is evidently much exaggerated, and should be read with very liberal allowance:

"It was Sunday when I first visited St. Catharines, and crowds of well-dressed people were hastening to Church. Most of the young women were adorned with a variety of the highest colors, but they did not seem to have adopted any particular fashion, each dressing herself in the style she conceived most becoming. There was as much variety and ostentation among them as would be found in a congregation of a country church in England, but they assumed greater airs than rustic females are accustomed to do there. The young men who came to church were generally mounted upon graded farm horses, the decoration of which seemed to have occupied more time and attention than that of their own persons; gaudy saddle-girths, glittering bridles, and other tinsel accoutrements, being profusely exhibited by these candidates for the admiration of the fair. Large wagon loads of amphibious Dutch who had probably vegetated in some swamp during twenty or thirty years, occasionally arrived and conveyed the ponderous *flans* and *myshers* to the door of the church which I entered along with the congregation. Presently an old man, dressed in a showy blue coat, white pantaloons, top boots and plated spurs, entered, and, to my astonishment, proved to be the priest. The form of the service was Presbyterian, and, during the whole course of it, the people continued going out and in, without regard to silence or decorum, while the school master of the village school, with a number of pupils, made his appearance only a few minutes before the blessing was pronounced. At the conclusion of the service, the clergyman gave out a hymn which was sung by a party of young men who sat in the church gallery. The sound of a miserably played flute, and a cracked flageolet, united with the harshness of the voices, produced a concert both disagreeable and ludicrous. When the singing was finished the preacher proclaimed several marriages and dismissed the congregation."

There is a singular conflict of opinion among the older inhabitants who were well acquainted with both, as to whether the preacher referred to was Mr. Williams, or his predecessor and co-laborer in this region, Mr. Eastman. By some, the style of dress and general appearance is said to be exactly that of the former, while others contend that he never dressed in that manner, but that the description exactly fits the latter. After considerable effort to reach the "bottom facts," the writer has come to the conclusion to take a lesson from the traditional showman, and say to the readers of the PRESBYTERIAN, "You pays your money and you takes your choice." Mr. Williams participated in the public affairs of the Province, with his neighbors, but never in forgetfulness of his position as a Christian teacher. April 20th, 1818, at a "Gourley meeting" held in Grantham (Mr. Gourley being, or having been, a candidate for Parliament), Mr. W. offered the following toast:—"May morality and religion increase throughout the province, particularly in the township Grantham," and it is recorded that a wag present made the not inappropriate impromptu—"Where there is much need of it." During the war of 1812, Mr. W. was absent for a brief period, and occasionally, at other times, he would make a tour through central New York, preaching, in their own language, to the Welsh Calvinistic Churches in, and in the vicinity of, Utica. His chief work, however, was in St. Catharines, and elsewhere in the peninsula, where the fruits of his teaching and example still remain, and where he is affectionately remembered by not a few of his hearers who "still live."

By the younger of these remaining veterans—those who were too young to entirely appreciate his sermons—he is particularly called to mind as following a dun, or cream-colored horse, peculiarly marked by a black stripe down the back—the horse which carried him regularly and promptly to all his appointments. He boarded during most of his residence in St. Catharines at "Shipman's Tavern," but for a time with Captain Ditrick, a member of his congregation residing in the suburbs of the settlement. Here he was taken suddenly ill, and seeming to realize that it was his last sickness, he requested to be carried over to the tavern,

where, after a few days, he died. His remains were first deposited in the old burial ground adjoining the church in which he had so often preached, but were afterwards removed to St. George (Episcopal) Churchyard, where they now lie, their position being designated by a headstone, on which is this inscription: "Sacred to the memory of the late Rev. LEWIS WILLIAMS, a native of Henllan, Carmarthenshire, South Wales, England, who labored, a faithful Minister and Servant in God, at this place, for several years. Departed this life the 25th of September, 1822, in the 63rd year of his age, universally lamented." Mr. Williams was never married, and, having no relatives on this side of the Atlantic, the means for obtaining information in reference to his early life and labors are wanting. He came to this country in the maturity of his years, and without pecuniary aid, trusting God and the people among whom he cast his lot for food and raiment and the means for the prosecution of his Christian work. Canadian history is incomplete which does not give prominence to his name, and recognize his influence for good upon the lives and characters of the pioneers of the Niagara Peninsula.

A NEW DEPARTURE.

Until 1819, the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians of St. Catharines seem to have united harmoniously in the support of Mr. Williams, and no effort had been made to secure a minister connected with the Church of England. Indeed, except at Niagara, as before explained, and at Ancaster, where a Rev. Mr. Leeming, a missionary to the Indians on the Grand River, often officiated, there were then no clergymen of that Church in all this region, though a Rev. B. B. Stevens, chaplain to the forces at Fort George, was performing "divine service at a new Episcopal church at Queenston, on Sundays, with great punctuality, and to the entire satisfaction of the inhabitants." On the third day of July in that year, "a meeting of the trustees of the church at St. Catharines" was held, "by request of the inhabitants, the call being signed by W. H. Merritt, Esq., as Secretary. Four trustees were present, two of whom were Presbyterians, and after the transaction of other business, they resolved unanimously "that we petition the Bishop of Quebec to send out a pious clergyman, we paying him £50 currency per year, and providing him with a respectable parsonage house." It is evident that the harmonious relations of the two denominations still continued, and that Mr. Williams and the "pious clergyman" to be sent out by the Bishop of Quebec were to be supported by mutual subscription, and to alternate in the occupancy of the church building, which was still held as common property. How soon after this meeting the "pious clergyman" arrived, the writer of these papers is not informed, but with the death of Mr. Williams, no other Presbyterian minister being obtainable from any quarter, Presbyterianism seems to have died out for the time in St. Catharines, and the property fell readily to the Church of England, a new deed having been finally obtained from the trustees of the estate of Mr. Hamilton. It was sold in 1835 to the Canadian Wesleyans, and the building was burned, during the progress of revival meetings, on the night of the fourth of March, 1836.

Recent official declarations which have been misunderstood or misrepresented to their discredit, seem to justify, at least, a few words on behalf of the

U. E. LOYALISTS,

who were the first settlers of the Province. It seems to be a historical fact that to them belongs the credit of first planting Presbyterianism in what is now the Province of Ontario, and of almost exclusively supporting it in the Niagara district for more than a third of a century. They were hardy, enterprising pioneers, loyal to their sovereign and tenacious of religious convictions and denominational preferences. Many of them were natives of Scotland, or of Scotch parentage, and inherited a love for the Presbyterian faith and order which privations and seclusion seemed only to increase. Some brought a like faith from "Fader Land," some from England and a few from Ireland. Without waiting the arrival of missionaries, they commenced at once to gather congregations for prayer and praise, and for catechetical instruction; and here and there, at convenient centres, by the light of their camp-fires, and among the cabins which were their first wilderness homes, they erected rude but comfortable houses for public worship. When, therefore, Mr. Eastman and Mr. Williams arrived, they found the