



REV. JOHN STEWART
First minister—1863-1870.

Historical Sketch

A WAY back as early as the middle of the last century a number of families, most of them from the Highlands of Scotland, settled along the Thames River, in the Townships of Dunwich and Ekfrid. It is to that settlement which later formed the congregation of Chalmer's, Dunwich, that we, as a community, today turn and which we reverently call to mind. The religious instinct which had been carefully nurtured in the Homeland was strong in them, and coming to a country that had no past, a foundation must be laid, and the fact that that foundation must be laid in righteousness they never doubted or questioned. In their homes the Altar of God was set up and in order to obey the scriptural injunction, to "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," they met in one another's homes and beneath the shelter of the forest with fallen trees for seats, and thus they conducted their own service of prayer and praise.

This was but introductory, as they longed for a definite place which might be known as "The House of God." It is said that one, Mr. Hugh McBride, never missed an opportunity of mentioning in prayer meeting, that desire. To this end a public meeting was held at the home of Mr. Hugh Fletcher, a short distance south of the river, on the sixth day of July, 1853. At that meeting we have on record the following resolutions having been passed:

1. "That a church was to be built on Mr. Hugh Fletcher's farm."