

History of St. Paul's Parish

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THE HISTORY of St. Paul's Parish, Toronto, for the first half of the present century comprises the struggles of the early Catholic settlers of Toronto. St. Paul's was the only organized parish in Toronto before the dedication of St. Michael's Cathedral, Sept. 20th, 1848. Owing to the missionary nature of the Church in Upper Canada in the first and second decade of the century it is difficult to find definite records of the priests, who from time to time on their missionary tours visited the settlers of York and afforded them the ministrations of our holy religion. With the appointment of Alexander McDonell to the newly erected bishopric of Kingston in 1819 a permanent pastor was stationed in York (Toronto). Through the efforts of Mgr. McDonell the Church had acquired a block of land from the Parliament of Upper Canada in 1805, and on it St. Paul's Church was built in 1826. The pastor at that time was Rev. James Crowley; he was the first resident priest of St. Paul's Parish that we can find any record of. He labored successfully among the pioneers of Catholicity in Toronto for about ten years. Not much information as to the architect, contractors or benefactors in the erection of the old Church can be obtained. It was an imposing edifice for those early days, and a most solid and substantial building. It stands to-day after the lapse of 73 years without crack or flaw, and is now used as a parochial hall. It is described in the books of travel written by Englishmen who visited York about the time of its erection. Dr. Scadding gives an amusing sketch of the old Church in which he says that "the material of the north and south