

CHURCH HISTORY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE EARLY DAYS

(By Rev. Alexander Dunn, M.A.)

III. NANAIMO

The Nanaimo and Victoria ministers, whose spheres of labor lacked perhaps something of the romance of the rural Mission fields, nevertheless occupied positions more advantageous in certain respects than their fellow-Presbyters. They were the ministers of city congregations. The adherents of their churches were within easy reach of church and manse. Of them no more physical labor was required than was conducive to health. From the beginning they lived in comfortable, well-furnished houses, and enjoyed leisure and convenience for the pursuit of congenial studies. The roads which they travelled, when they went beyond the city limits, were comparatively short and as good as they were short. Indeed, everywhere on Vancouver Island, where there was settlement, and even, it was alleged by mainland opponents of the government, where there was no settlement, roads were found in good repair. The nearer Victoria the better the road, and vice versa, the further from Victoria the worse the road. The explanation was obvious, if not creditable to those who were responsible for the condition of things referred to, namely, on the Island were the capital of the province and the seat of government; and for many a long year the Island held the balance of political power. The Island members of parliament could foresee that the balance of power could not be retained by them indefinitely, and, as was natural, therefore, if not commendable, they made the best use of their opportunities while they lasted.

The congregation of St. Andrew's, Nanaimo, was composed of families either directly or indirectly connected with the coal mines located in the immediate neighborhood. Of the Presbyterian families, ten or twelve were solid and reliable, disposed by early training and by the Spirit of God, to embrace every opportunity presented to them of attending public worship. Moreover, these families could be depended on to take the right and honourable course, and to stand up for the right in any movement or agitation going on in the place. They were a leavening power in the community, a source of