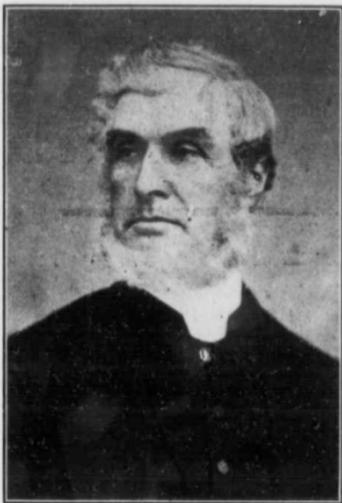


MELVILLE CHURCH, FERGUS



Rev. George Smellie, D. D.

Annually he made long tours to the most distant parts of his charge, preaching sometimes in taverns or barns, or other large buildings; marrying, baptizing or ministering to the sick wherever such services were needed.

In 1843, the Church of Scotland had been rent by a controversy over the question of State control, and the disruption resulted in the formation of the Free Church of Scotland, a sympathetic movement in Canada the next year bringing about a similar result. Mr. Smellie joined the Free Church party, followed by a large part of his congregation. For some time they continued to worship in St. Andrew's Church, but it became necessary to reorganize the congregation and,

in the Autumn of 1845, to proceed with the erection of a separate building, which was completed and formally opened for public worship in March 1847 under the name of Melville Church.

In spite of the fact that much of the material and labor was contributed gratuitously, about \$6 000.00 was expended on this first church building, including the wings which were added in 1861. Sites on the south side of the river, for both church and manse, were given by the Hon. Adam Fergusson, one of the founders of Fergus, and a "bee" was appointed for a given Saturday in October "to log off" the ten acres on which the manse was situated.

In the year 1880 this property was purchased from the congregation by Mr. G. L. Smellie. (now of Vancouver), and continues to be the home of the family, and a new manse was built and has since been occupied by succeeding ministers. The most kindly relations have existed between the old manse and the new, a common interest and affection forming a strong bond between them, and while Dr. and Mrs. Smellie lived, the younger ministers found in them warm and sympathetic friends for whom in turn they showed an almost filial regard.