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SOUVENIR



1861 • Jubilee • 1911

•• Of ••

the Introduction of Presbyterianism
into British Columbia

• and •

the Organization of the
First Presbyterian Church, Victoria

• B. C. •



Victoria, B. C., June 25th, 1911

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.



THE ORIGINAL CHURCH

The First Presbyterian Church.

The Jubilee Services will be held in First Presbyterian Church, June the 25th. The Rev. Professor James Stalker, D. D., of Glasgow, Scotland, will preach at 11 a. m., and the Rev. Principal MacKay, D. D., of Westminster Hall, Vancouver, B. C., will preach at 7:30 p. m. Mass meeting of the Presbyterian Sabbath Schools of the city at 3 p. m. to be addressed by Principal MacKay and Professor Stalker. A sociable entertainment on Monday evening with His Honor Thomas W. Paterson, Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, in the chair.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

Every 50th year among the Jews was a Jubilee, a year of joy and rejoicing. This year is the jubilee of the introduction of Presbyterianism into British Columbia, the most westerly province of the Dominion, whose scenic beauty and great possibilities are nowhere excelled in Canada. It stands midway between Europe and Asia, and is the door on double hinges that opens to let the East enter the West, and to let the West pass out into the East.

The Hudson Bay Company established a trading post, in 1843 at Camosun, the Indian village of the Songhees tribe where now stands the beautiful city of Victoria, the capital of the province, and the "Queen of the West." The land-locked harbor, with its safe anchorage, nestling behind Beacon Hill, and the forest-clad, undulating hills stretching as far as the eye can see toward the setting sun, and to the east lies Mount Baker, the lordly giant of the Cascades, and to the south, across the Straits of Juan de Fuca, is seen the Olympic Mountains, which all combine to make the spot one of the most pleasing prospects the mind can imagine, and one of the most desirable sites on which to build a city.

Victoria is not only a commercial center, but the seat of government; a residential city, a city of splendid homes, beautiful parks, fine drives, and well kept lawns. It is the admiration of tourists that the humblest cottages are beautified with



REV. JOHN HALL.

flowers, and the larger homes and stately residences, of which there are many, have magnificent grounds, with a wealth of roses and flowers from the tropics, for the climate is the most delightful of that of any country, being neither cold in winter nor hot in summer, but an exhilarating medium, due mainly to the Japan current of the coast, and the physical geography of the locality.

Sir James Douglas, a man of sterling worth, was the Factor-in-Chief of the Hudson Bay Company, and those associated with him were men from "bonnie Scotland," as their names—Munro, McTavish and Findlayson clearly indicate. By birth, association and education they were men qualified to take a position in any society. In religion they were, as might be expected, Presbyterians, but the Presbyterian Church of the mother land was not then as faithful in looking after the welfare of those who left her shores as she now is. Times have changed, and that for the better. These early pioneers were for nearly twenty years "roughing it" on the Pacific slope before a minister of the Gospel was sent them to conduct divine service according to the simple but impressive form of the Church of their fathers. Although they were far from the centers of civilization, and the means of grace as administered by the Presbyterian Church, their religious outlook was broad, and they regarded Christianity as larger than any denomination, and always gave a hearty welcome and loyal support to any missionary of the Gospel who reached the country West of the Rockies.



DAVID CAMERON,
Chief Justice.

While the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland, and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, were discussing the advisability of taking up work in this far West, this province of "a sea of mountains," the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland took the initiative, and sent across the sea as the herald of the Gospel the Rev. John Hall, a talented young man from Belfast. He arrived in Victoria about the end of June, 1861, preached the first sermon under Presbyterian auspices on the last Sabbath of that month, and thus became the pioneer of Presbyterianism on the Pacific Coast.

The social and religious conditions of Victoria, at that time of Cariboo and Fraser River gold mining excitement, were such as to need a man of strong faith, resourceful and tactful, and such a man was the energetic, scholarly and optimistic young Irishman from Belfast. At once he gained the implicit confidence of the young Presbyterians far from home who loyally gathered around him. Some difficulty was experienced in securing a place in which to hold services. At last the little band secured Moor's Hall, on Government Street, thence they removed to the Police Court room, which much needed the Gospel, thence to Smith's Hall, and thus, like Noah's dove, they had much difficulty in finding a resting place.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was observed according to the rites of the Presbyterian Church for the first time in Victoria on the second Sabbath of January, 1862, when fifteen men and



REV. JOHN REID, D. D.

two women were at the communion, of whom Mr. Alexander Wilson, who is still in the congregation, and chairman of the Board of Management, is the only one now in the city.

A meeting was held on the 3rd February, 1862, to organize a Presbyterian Congregation, when the following were present:—Hon. David Cameron, Chief Justice, Rev. John Hall, Messrs. John Wright, Robert Carter, John Bastedo, George H. Sanders, Alexander Wilson, John Martin, Charles Cochrane, Joseph Kilgour, Thomas Mann, George Reid, Simon Anderson and Alexander Loury. The Hon. Chief Justice Cameron was elected chairman, and the following resolution was passed, which brought Presbyterianism into visibility in British Columbia:

“Moved by Alex. Loury and seconded by Alex. Wilson that this meeting do organize itself into a congregation to be called the FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of Vancouver Island, and that the Rev. John Hall be requested to act in the meantime as our minister.”

At the same meeting a committee was appointed to secure a site on which to build a church, the Hon. Chief Justice Cameron with Messrs. Martin and Wright being named as the trustees of the Church property. A lot was purchased for \$1100, at the corner of Blanchard and Pandora Streets, on which the present church was erected, the corner stone being laid by Chief Justice Cameron in March, 1863, to whom was presented a silver trowel with the inscription:—“To the Hon. Chief Justice Cameron on his laying the corner stone of

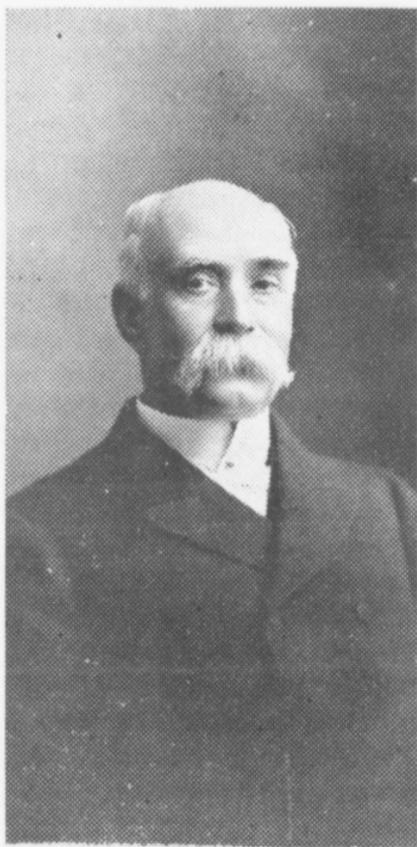


REV. DONALD FRASER, M. A

the First Presbyterian Church, V. I."

The church was formally opened for divine service on Sabbath, the 15th of November of the same year, the Rev. John Hall being assisted on that occasion by the Rev. James Nimmo, missionary of the Church of Scotland, who in the morning preached the dedication sermon, taking as his text a portion of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple:—"The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. Let Him not leave us nor forsake us; that He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers." The Rev. Dr. Evans of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, preached in the evening from the words of St. Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." The formal opening of First Church was the occasion of great rejoicing among that little faithful band two thousand miles from the nearest Presbyterian congregation, that of Dr. Black's at Kildonan, with the gigantic Rockies between them, and no Canadian Pacific Railway to connect them. Surely they were isolated.

Soon after the dedication of the church, Mr. Hall went to Australia, Mr. Nimmo was withdrawn, and the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland sent out the Rev. Dr. Somerville. All the Presbyterians in the city and the Congregationalists worshipped together in First Church, under the pastorate of Dr. Somerville, who continued to minister for two years. Trouble arose



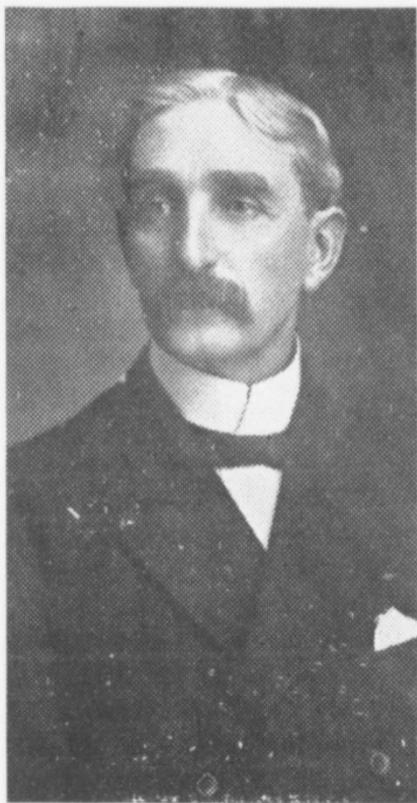
REV. JOHN CAMPBELL, M. A., PH. D.

in the congregation over the Church property, and Dr. Somerville with a large portion of the congregation withdrew, and organized St. Andrew's congregation. Dr. Somerville was succeeded by Dr. Reid, from England, who by education and ordination was a Congregationalist, but became identified with the Presbyterian Church. He was succeeded by the Rev. D. Gamble of the American Presbyterian Church.

In 1882 the congregation was received into the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and connected with the Presbytery of Toronto. In the following year the General Assembly sent the Rev. William Cochrane, D. D., convener of the Home Mission Committee, to visit the Church in Victoria, as well as other congregations in British Columbia, which had been organized by the Rev. Robert Jamieson, a member of the Presbytery of Toronto, who had been sent as a missionary to the province by the Canadian Presbyterian Church in 1862. He began work in New Westminster, where he organized St. Andrew's Congregation, and built the first church there.

Thus the Rev. John Hall and the Rev. Robert Jamieson were the pioneers of Presbyterianism in British Columbia, the one the apostle of the General Assembly of the Irish Presbyterian Church to Vancouver Island, and the other that of the General Assembly of the Canadian Presbyterian Church to the Mainland.

In 1884 the Rev. Donald Fraser, M. A., a graduate of Queen's College, accepted a call to the



MR. J. G. BROWN,
Choir Master.

pastorate of the Church and did excellent work. He was a Glengarry highlander, the best Gaelic preacher in Canada, and a strong, fearless, energetic man. Mr. Fraser died in 1891, and was succeeded in the following year by the present pastor, the Rev. Dr. Campbell, a graduate of Knox College, who was inducted into the pastorate of the congregation on the 22nd day of June, 1892. His induction was the last official act of the Presbytery of Columbia, which that year was divided by the General Assembly into three presbyteries, viz: Kamloops, Westminster and Victoria, to constitute the Synod of British Columbia.

The Sabbath School of the congregation, the first in the province, was opened with seven pupils and two teachers. A silk banner was presented the school by one of the ladies, in the center of which was artistically painted the "burning bush," the emblem of the Presbyterian Church, with the words "Faith, Hope and Charity," across the field, and "First Presbyterian Church Sabbath School, organized 1864," around the border. That banner still decorates the schoolroom wall near the superintendent's desk. The present superintendent, Mr. John Meston, has been for nearly a quarter of a century at the head of the school.

One of the outstanding figures in the history of First Church is the Choir-Master, Mr. J. G. Brown, who has for a quarter of a century led the service of praise.

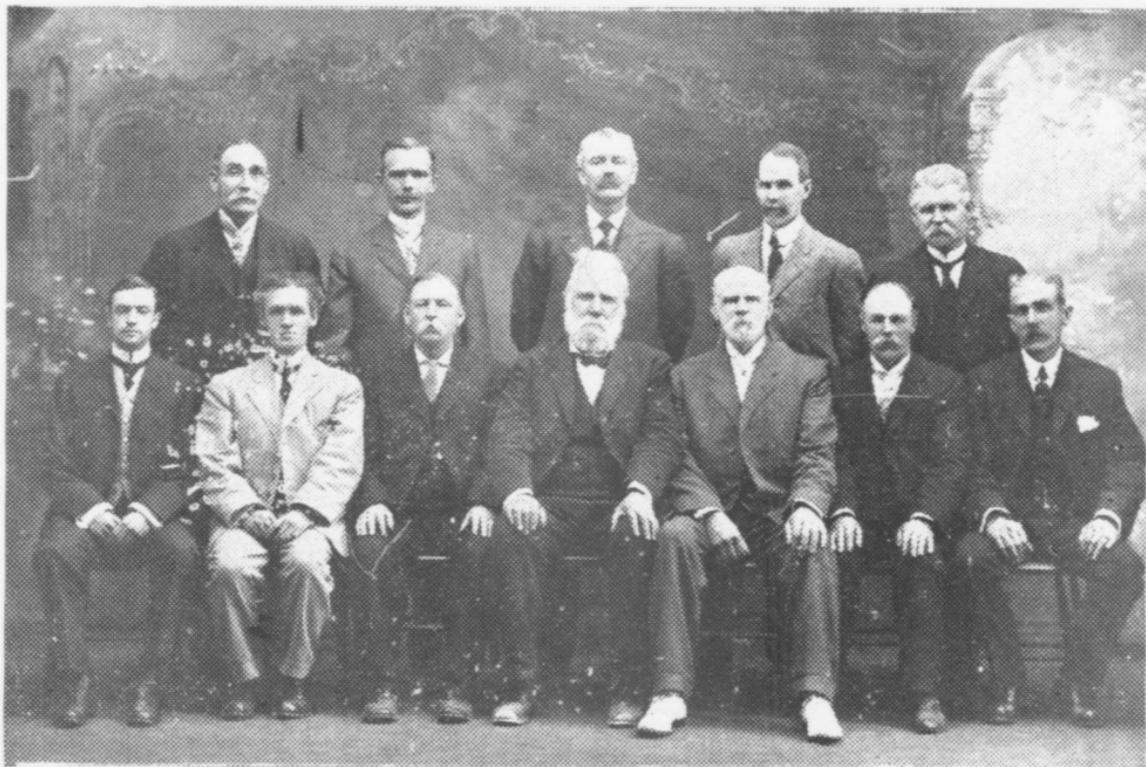
Only one of the early pioneers, the faithful pathfinders of 1861, is with us, Mr. Alexander Wilson.

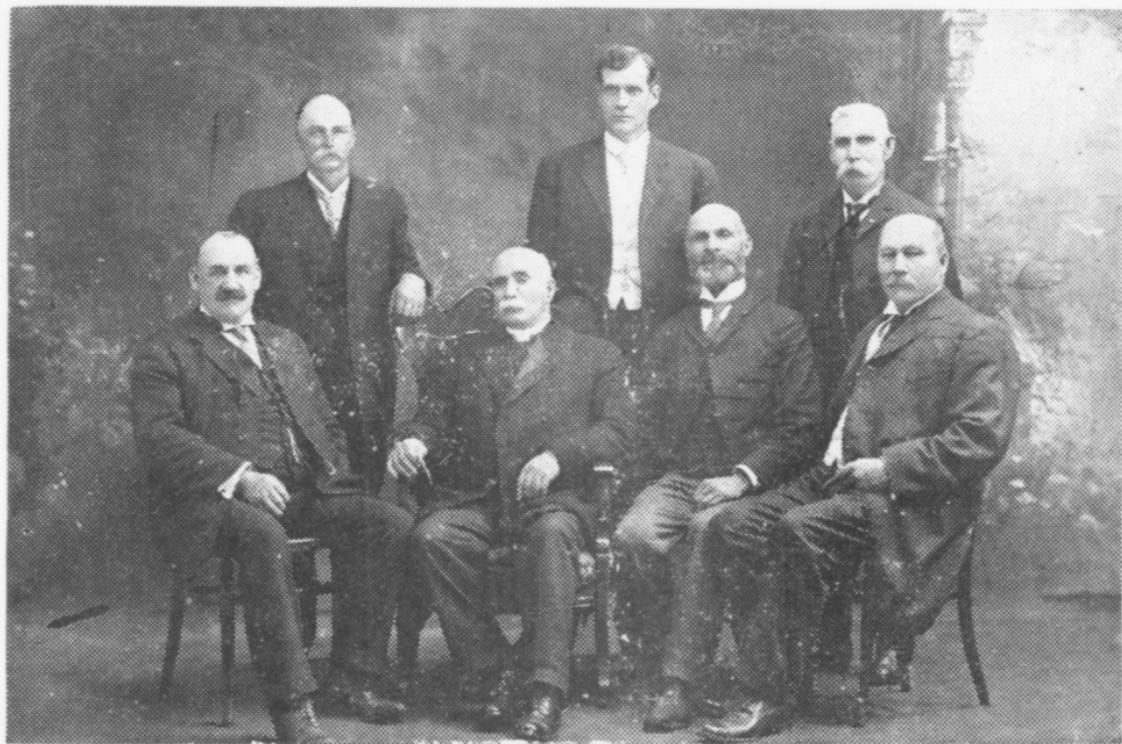
In looking over the assembled congregation of First Presbyterian Church to-day, Zechariah's question suggests itself: "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" Many changes have taken place in the building, in the Sabbath School, in the pulpit and in the pew, but the bell with its deep, heavy tones, which called the people to the church dedication on that Sabbath morning fifty years ago, still continues to remind the congregation of their duty and privilege to assemble on the Sabbath in God's sanctuary to worship Him in "the beauty of holiness." First Church has occupied a prominent place in the extension of the Gospel in British Columbia, for she had strong men in her pulpit, good men in her eldership, faithful teachers in her Sabbath school, conscientious workers on her board, and devoted women in her ladies societies and missionary committees, diligent in every good work.

The building is now, as might be expected, out of date, and on the recommendation of the Board of Management, the congregation at its last annual meeting appointed a committee to take the initial steps toward the erection of a new church, which will be in every way abreast of the times, to take the place of that which has so long stood for everything that is high, and noble and good in the interest of humanity.

This week which marks the Jubilee of Presbyterianism in British Columbia is also the week of the Coronation of His Most Gracious Majesty King George V, and to whom with Queen Mary, His Royal Consort, we extend our loyal greeting.

"God Save the King."





J. Campbell, M. A., Ph. D.,
(Minister.)

