

**S A I N T
J A M E S
C H U R C H**

**1853
1911**

**W I N N I P E G
M A N I T O B A**

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St. James' Church

ANNO DOMINI MDCCCLIII.

THE Parish Church of St. James, Winnipeg, has the enviable distinction of being the oldest church of any denomination in the Great New Capital City of Western Canada. It was built in the year 1853 A.D. to accommodate the settlers who were beginning to congregate westward along the banks of the River Assiniboine. For many of these the journey on a Sunday to the old Parish Church of St. John's was too great, and the distance to St. John's School an impossible daily task for children. So in 1853 the Church of England Parish of St. James was formed, and the erection of the Church commenced, which was completed in 1855. Shortly afterwards a school was built which has long since disappeared. The original Church building still stands, and the little graveyard then planned as a last resting place for the settlers and their families resident within the Parish, has spread both north and south into St. James' Cemetery, where the names of many of the old families of Winnipeg can be seen inscribed on the memorial stones erected to their memory.

The original Church of St. John's, lying well on the north side of the city was built in the year 1823, but was twice taken down and the present Cathedral built in its place on the same site in the year 1862. Thus the Church of St.

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ST. JAMES, ASSINIBOIA,
CIRCA MDCCCLX

James built in the year 1853 has the distinctive privilege of claiming to be the oldest church in the city, though not the oldest parish. It was erected on the northern bank of the River Assiniboine about three miles west of Old Fort Garry.

A grant of land measuring eighteen chains on the river front and extending some four miles north was given by the Hudson's Bay Company to provide an endowment for the Incumbent of the Parish, and on a portion of this land the Church was built and the surrounding cemetery formed. Built of oak logs which were floated down the Red River from St. Paul, it has stood the ravages of time and climate remarkably well. The name of the architect, if there was one, is unknown, and the nature of architecture is distinctively Colonial. The tower, which appears on the west end of the Church in the first picture (taken from a print in an old English illustrated magazine), was taken down during Rev. Mr. Pinkham's incumbency, probably somewhere between the years 1871 and 1873, when the Church was being repaired, the foundations thereof not being strong enough to bear its weight. No effort appears to have been made in later years to restore it. The removal of the tower considerably detracts from the appearance of the Church, as can be plainly seen in the photograph reproduced of St. James at the present day.

Parochial Records

The first Rector of the Parish was the Rev. W. H. Taylor who came to St. James from the Town of Clint, Worcestershire, England, the inhabitants of which presented to St. James the set of communion vessels still being used

REV. D. W. H. TAYLOR
RECTOR OF ST. JAMES', 1883-1887



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in the Church. In his handwriting there still remains the carefully kept record of the money and gifts received and expended in connection with the building of the Church. From this it appears the total cost of the building, in material and labor, came to £323, 15s. 1d. all of which had been received by the 30th May, 1857, except £2, 17s. 7d., which was then due. No further record appears to say if this was ever paid, though presumably it was. The Church was consecrated on Sunday, May 28th, 1855, a meeting being held therein on the same day to organize the parish, when Mr. James Spence was elected Rector's Warden, Mr. James Isbister was elected People's Warden, and Mr. Henry Cook and Mr. Alban Fidler nominated as Vestry men.

The Parish school was built on ground given by Mr. Andrew Fidler in the year 1860 and cost £78, 6s. 6d., and the old Rectory, close to the Church was built in 1852 at a total cost of £368, 11s. 9d. The various books necessary for Divine Service were presented to the Church by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and these along with the old Parochial Records still exist. The first baptismal entry is dated January 9th, 1853. The first publishing of Banns of Marriage, 18th February, 1866, between Alexander Fidler, Bachelor, of the Parish of St. James, and Mary Linklater, Spinster, of the Parish of St. Andrew's. The first marriage entry is dated 11th August, 1855, between William McMurray of St. John's, Red River, and Ann Christie Ballinden of the same Parish, and was witnessed by John Ballinden, Eliza Marguerite Ballinden and John Sevanston. The long list of burials commences in the year 1856, when Jane Isbister, aged nine months, of St. James, was buried on the 10th December by W. H. Taylor.

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ST. JAMES' RECTORY

BUILT 1853

TAKEN DOWN 1909

After a successful ministry of 14 years, at a vestry meeting held on the 23rd May, 1867, Rev. Mr. Taylor announced his intention of retiring and returning home. Evidently some difficulty was experienced in securing a successor, for not until November, 1868, does the name of the Rev. Cyprian Pinkham, the present Lord Bishop of Calgary, appear on the Vestry Records.

Improvements and Growth

At a vestry meeting held on Monday, 30th October, 1871, it was resolved: "That in the opinion of the Vestry, the Parish Church of St. James is not in a fit condition to hold service in, as it appears to be gradually coming down and that it is beyond repair." The outcome of this resolution, the first that speaks of the Old Church becoming dilapidated, is not recorded, for the next notice on the records reads "The Minutes of several meetings not entered in this book at the time at which they were held have been mislaid." Something possibly may have been done to improve the building, for no further mention of repairs is made, till Tuesday Evening, 3rd October, 1876, when "The consideration of making some necessary repairs on the Church, in order to add to its warmth and providing the materials therefor," was under discussion, and then it was resolved: "That a new floor be laid in the nave of the Church, and that tar paper be laid between the present and proposed new floor, also that the cracks and crevices in and about the base, windows and plates, be filled with mortar, or other suitable material, and that the Church be thoroughly banked up, all of which it is thought will add much to its warmth and comfort." Again on 18th

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REV'D CYPRIAN PINKHAM
RECTOR OF ST. JAMES', 1868-1881

September, 1879, the same question comes up, and an estimate of the necessary repairs (as determined upon by a committee of examination appointed at the Annual Easter Meeting,) states that \$1,500 will be required to set the Church in decent repair. For this purpose the Rev. Mr. Pinkham issued a circular addressed to the parishioners asking for subscriptions. The full amount asked for was not however obtained, for in the annual Easter Vestry of 1880, mention is made that the Church had been repaired at a cost of \$642.21. After being repaired, in the following year, the exterior of the Church was painted.

The first mention of the sale of the Church lands is dated 24th January, 1881, when 200 acres were disposed of at \$35.00 per acre, and again in May when 92 acres were sold for an average price of \$30.00 per acre.

The Rev. Mr. Pinkham resigned the incumbency of the Parish in 1881, and was succeeded by the Rev. A. E. Cowley, who remained in charge for 28 years. No mention of any considerable expenditure for repairs is made until 1889 when the present Belfry was erected and the Church re-seated at a cost of \$262.85. In 1893, the Church was again re-painted, and though mention is made at various meetings of the building being very cold during the winter months, nothing could be done evidently until 1901 when the whole of the ceiling was ceiled with wood, which considerably improved both the appearance of the Church inside and the comfort of the worshippers. In 1904 at a cost of \$146.00 the members of the Women's Auxiliary in the Parish had the interior of the Church renovated and in 1909 the old system of lighting by oil lamps was dispensed with, and modern electric fixtures installed.



REV. A. E. COWLEY
RECTOR OF ST. JAMES', 1881-1909.

A. E. COWLEY

In 1909 the Rev. Mr. Cowley resigned his charge of St. James' Parish, having seen it grow from barren prairie into a thickly populated district. During his long incumbency the Parishes of All Saints, St. George's, St. Matthew's, St. Jude's and St. Margaret's were each in turn formed out of portions of the original Parish of St. James.

Present Requirements

Now, once again, the need of repairs to the Old Parish Church demands the attention of the parishioners. There are some who would counsel its removal and the erection of a new and modern Church in its place, but with the old oaken logs still in a splendid state of preservation it seems a pity to destroy one of the ancient historic landmarks in this very modern City. It was from the old tower of St. James that years ago the bell rang out its paen of welcome to the first steamboat that reached Fort Garry; from the same tower in days gone by, the settlers along the Assiniboine watched the rebel forces, surprise and capture the volunteers who had come from Portage la Prairie and the West, and it was to the present building that they were prepared to bring their families when the danger of the rebels attacking them seemed imminent. The requirements, in order to make the building not only lasting, but fit for service, include the taking out of the old oaken sills on which the Church rests, and inserting a new concrete foundation, re-shingling, re-plastering the interior, and excavating a basement for a furnace, to take the place of the original Carron stoves, which still are used in winter for heating purposes.

Under the terms of the original grant, conveying to St. James' Parish the land given by the Hudson's Bay Company, it is set forth plainly that the proceeds of the sale of such land shall be held in trust by the Executive Body of the Synod of Rupertsland, and the interest on same be used exclusively for the maintenance of the Rector of the Parish. And because of this, St. James' Parish has always enjoyed the privilege of almost the free ministrations of her Clergy. It is impossible for the Parish to obtain even one dollar from the endowment fund for the purposes of building or repairing the Church. To cover the absolutely necessary repairs which are in immediate need of being carried out, it is estimated that at least Two Thousand Dollars will be required, and for this purpose donations from friends and parishioners are asked for. The repairs contemplated will, when carried out, preserve intact for many years to come a building, interesting on account of its age and history, a building that was standing when Winnipeg was unknown and undreamed of, and which in days not far distant when St. James has become the residential centre of Greater Winnipeg, will still remain as a link with the past for old residents, and a standing memorial of bygone days to those recently come to seek new life in a new country.