

History of the English River
and Howick Congregations



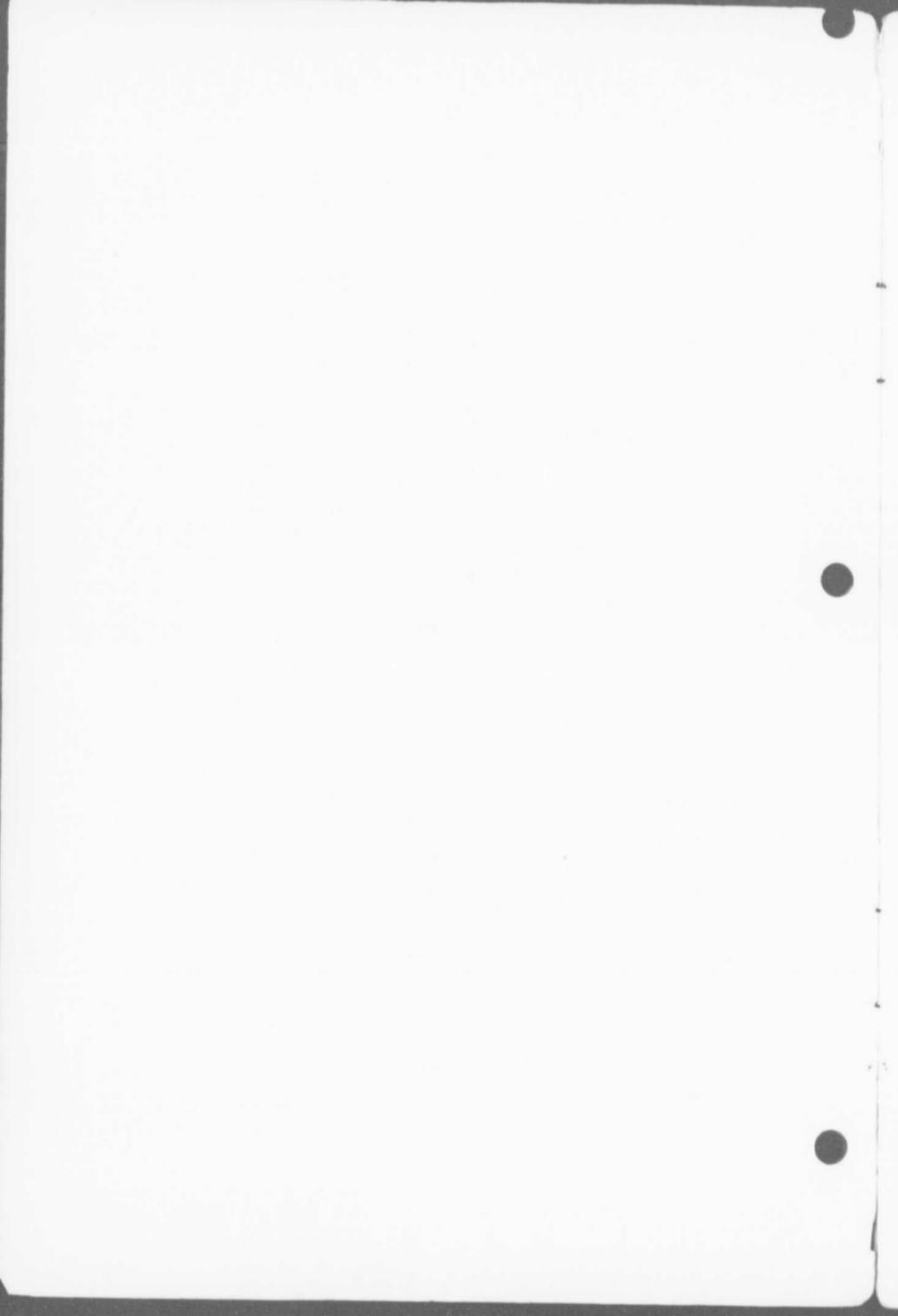
1845 - 1915

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The History of the English River
and Howick Congregations.



1845-1915.



History of English River and Howick Congregations

The English River, which has its source in the foot hills of the Adirondacks, flows through one of the richest and most productive counties in Quebec, mingling its waters with the St. Lawrence by way of the river of the same name as the county through which it flows, viz. Chateauguay. The first settlers on the English River and in its concessions came from Scotland in the year 1821 and began to hew homes for themselves out of the virgin forests. By 1828 a considerable settlement had been made by the Scotch and also by the Irish.

A friendly meeting of the inhabitants along the English River was held on Jan. 28th., 1828, in the home of Stephen Paterson, when the following resolution was adopted: "where of some having a number of children and found to be of good genius were lost for want of education, it was therefore proposed that towards their support a fund might be begun and carried on by the whole inhabitants in the above township for the erection of a school house, the interest of which might in time enable some of such to be useful either in "Church or State". Accordingly two acres of ground were purchased from Mr. J. Wilson on Lot No. 91 for school and cemetery purposes, the site of the present school and cemetery. The school was erected in due time, and Mr. Wm. McGregor was installed as first teacher.

The thoroughness of those sturdy pioneers is evidenced by the fact that if any of the settlers absented themselves from the general meetings of the school district the following motion applied: "That a fine of two shillings

currency or a day's work in improving and repairing the said school or burying grounds when called upon, shall be levied upon each member for every such meeting that he may absent himself from, excepting such member shall give a satisfactory reason to the committee for his absence." No mention is made in the secretary's book of the fine being imposed at any time. They too must guard well their faith for it was enacted: "That no person should be admitted into said schoolhouse for the purpose of preaching any doctrine whatever except he or they be licensed by the government to perform all the functions of a regular and legal clergyman."

The first religious services held in the school were conducted by the Rev. Mr. Colquhoun of Georgetown. On the Sabbaths the settlers in the district worshipped in the Georgetown church.

The Congregational ministers from Franklin visited the settlers along Norton Creek, preaching in the school house, and a small church was erected about 1840 on the Wylie farm. The ministers who served this church were the Rev. Bowles, Rev. Robertson, and Rev. McKelligan. This church fell into disuse, and its worshippers became absorbed in what was known as the Houston Church.

The history of the Houston church began in the troublesome times of disruption. About 1843 the Rev. James Law, an ordained missionary from the United States (Mass.) and a seceder, began work among the settlers on the English River, preaching in the school houses and also in private houses. He prosecuted his work with great zeal and earnestness and in the autumn of 1845, just 79 years ago, a small frame building was erected on a piece of ground donated by the late James Houston on lot No. 94. The first communion in this church was celebrated in May 1846.

Mr. Law also searched out the Free Church people along the Chateauguay river as far as Ormstown and towards St Louis de Gonzague. The services for this community were held in what was known as the "Henry Wright Church". This was a building erected by Henry Wright about the year 1835 on the Brodie Farm (now occupied by Mr. Wm. Ogilvie) for a place of worship for any religious denomination. During the rebellion of 1837 soldiers were quartered therein. After the union in 1875 this building was moved to Allan's Corners and is still used as a union church, supplied from Ormstown and Georgetown. Mr. Law served this large constituency for five years and then returned to the United States.

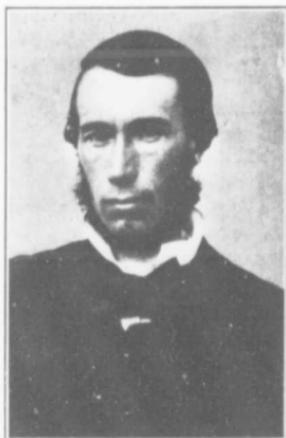
*after
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See English
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a. Robertson*

The Free Church worshippers now proceeded to secure definite and regular organization. Accordingly on March 16, 1848, a largely signed petition was presented to the Presbytery at Montreal in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, asking for this organization. The Presbytery granted the prayer of the petitioners and appointed Rev. Jas. Fettes minister with Rev. Wm. Leishman and Rev. Thomas Henry assessors till sessions would be established. Mr Fettes had come from Scotland to serve his church in this new land, and with his characteristic energy carried forward the organization work with despatch. The Communion Roll of North Georgetown, or the worshippers in the "Henry Wright church," was prepared on May 24th, with 87 names thereon, and a similar roll for English River was made on May 8th, with 30 names attached. The elders elect for North Georgetown, viz., Messrs Wm. Hall and Luigi McDougall, were ordained on 20th August, while Messrs Daniel McGregor, John Muir and Moses Douglas were ordained as elders, and Messrs James Carmichael, James Houston, Thomas Gebbie and John Miller were ordained as Deacons for English River on August 24th.

Mr Fettes prosecuted his work with energy, zeal, and determination, walking and riding long distances to gather in the flock. A Sunday School was opened by Mr Fettes in connection with the Houston church and the first staff of officers was composed of Messrs Wm. McKell, John Miller, and Miss Mary Carson now Mrs Wm. Wylie who is still living. Mr Fettes returned to Scotland in the autumn of 1849 and died shortly after.

The Rev. Wm. Troup, having arrived from Scotland, was called as pastor in the summer of 1851. He labored very earnestly in this new land for the development of the church. Shortly after he took charge a division arose in North Georgetown between the people along the Chateauguay river and those from St Louis. A petition to Presbytery, signed by 50 of the Chateauguay River section, was issued, and a separate organization was established in St Louis in August, 1852. The Session at English River was strengthened in January, 1853, by the ordination of Messrs Wm. McKell, James Meikle, and David Cameron. The congregation purchased a glebe midway between Riverfield and Howick, on the farm now owned by Mr Alex. McFarlane, and erected a manse thereon. Mr Troup received a call to Upper Canada and resigned in the Fall of 1853.

In the autumn of 1854 the Rev. John Milne, recently arrived from Scotland, was called and inducted. His labors were progressive and effectual. During his pastorate two elections of Elders were held. The ordination of Messrs Wm. MacArthur and Wm. Henderson took place in November, 1855, and that of Messrs Robert Orr, Nathaniel Allen and David Galbraith in August, 1858. Mr Milne resigned, and returned to the land of his birth in the Fall of 1858.

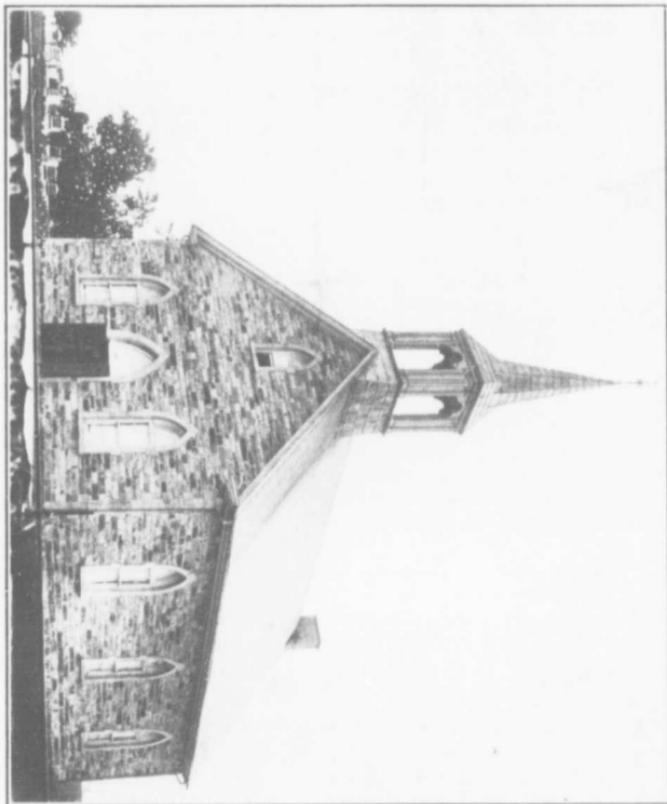


REV. JOHN MILNE

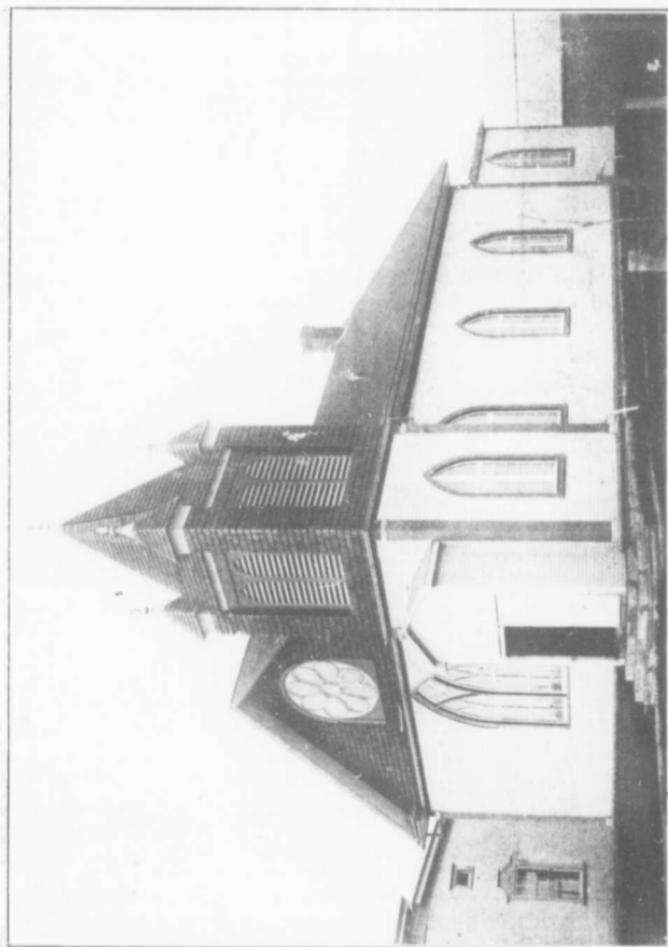


REV. ALEXANDER YOUNG

The charge was without a settled pastor for two years and consequently there was great rejoicing on Dec. 18th, 1860, when the Rev. Alexander Young of St. Thomas, Canada West, was inducted. The Presbytery requested him to open a church in Ormstown and services were held on the south side of the river. Mr Young was a man of great power, a forceful speaker and brilliant conversationalist. It was during his pastorate, viz., June 6th, 1861, that the Presbyterian church of Canada and the United Presbyterian Church in Canada were united upon a basis agreed upon with name "The Canada Presbyterian Church." The session was strengthened in 1863 by the ordination of Messrs James Esdon, Roderick Mackenzie, and William Miller to the eldership. The country had rapidly developed and large settlements had grown up; so much so, that the charge was divided by Presbytery and Mr Young was relieved of Ormstown in the summer of 1863. He straightway opened a service in Howick village in "Abbott's hall", and the charge came to be known as "English River and Howick." Mr Young accepted a call to Calvin church, Montreal, in January, 1867, to the great sorrow of his much attached people. Later he served the charge of Valleyfield and then went West to Nanaimo where he passed to his reward.



Presbyterian Church, Riverfield.



KNOX CHURCH, HOWICK



REV. C. M. MACKERACHER

The congregation then called the Rev. C. M. MacKeracher, who was inducted in May 5th, 1837. He was not a stranger to the people, as he had supplied this charge for a year, while a student. He was a man of ripe scholarship, even temperament, guileless in spirit and of lofty soul, and served this community faithfully and well for 29 years. The congregation of Howick felt the need of a church, consequently on Nov. 5th, 1867, a strong committee was appointed, with instructions to erect a suitable church edifice. The building was of brick veneer, and on Oct. 14th, 1870, was formally taken off the hands of the contractor by the committee. It was then opened for Divine worship and solemnly dedicated.

It was also felt by the people of English river, that they should erect a new church. The committee in charge planned a large commodious stone building. The corner-stone was laid with imposing ceremony on June 24th, 1869. The congregation met in the old church and was suitably and eloquently addressed by Rev. Alex. Young, of Montreal, a former minister, Rev. Dr Muir of Georgetown and Rev. Mr Clarke of Ormstown. The session was then constituted and the large gathering resorted to the new foundation, a quarter of a mile from the old church, situated beside the cemetery and school. Mr John MacFarlane assisting, the session placed the stone and declared it 'well and truly laid'. Rev. Mr Clarke offered the dedicatory prayer and Dr Irvine of Montreal delivered the a masterly address to the congregation. The pastor, Rev. C. M. MacKeracher, stated the contents of the box placed in the stone, as follows—A copy of the Montreal Witness, Home and Foreign Missionary Record, Communion Roll of the Church, names of the Building committee, name of builder, The British American Good Templar, Constitution and by-laws of Knox Church Sabbath School Association, Montreal; Portrait of Rev. Dr Irvine, a Spanish French, German, American, British and Canadian coin, and the autograph of those who took part in the ceremony, and the following—'This stone was laid by the Kirk Session on the 24th day of June, in the year of our

Lord, 1869." One of the pleasing features of the day was the marching of the school children in the procession and their delightful singing under the leadership of the schoolmaster, Mr Martin. It took two years to complete the edifice, the cut-stone being drawn on wagons all the way from Montreal. The church was solemnly dedicated to the worship of God on Sunday, Nov. 5th, 1871, and the congregation entered upon a new phase of service and spiritual progress. Twenty-five years later the pastor and his faithful flock felt that the church needed renovation, which was done in 1896. The first service held thereafter was of a sad and pathetic character. The 'Old Servant of the Lord' had taken ill and it proved to be God's call to His faithful under shepherd, who had served this charge for 29 years. He heard the call on August 5th, 1896, "and fell on sleep." The memorial service was conducted by Rev. Dr Amaron, assisted by many members of the Presbytery, interment being made in the English River cemetery.

On different occasions during the ministry of Mr MacKeracher, the following were ordained to the Eldership, viz., Messrs George McClenaghan, Robert McGregor, Matthew Orr, Thomas Gebbie, John McFarlane, Matthew McKell, and Dr J. C. Shanks.



REV. J. W. McLEOD

Penn. Messrs Robert McKell and James Templeton were ordained as Elders in the first year of Mr McLeod's ministry.

The Rev. J. W. McLeod was inducted pastor on March 31st, 1897. He was a man of a very high sense of righteousness, burning with zeal for the extension of the Kingdom of God, and a fearless preacher. The work so ably carried on in the past took on a new lease of life under his pastorate. It was during his term of office that the glebe was sold and a new manse was erected at Riverfield on the opposite bank of the English river from the church and central to the whole charge. The formal opening of the manse took place on Nov. 3rd, 1897, when the Rev. Principal MacVicar of Montreal, and other clergymen participated in this social function. Mr McLeod resigned in March, 1903, and is now laboring in Canonsburg.

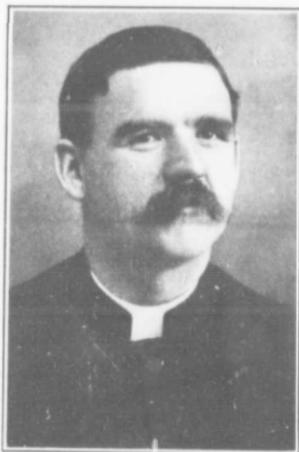


RIVERFIELD and HOWICK KIRK SESSION, 1915.

(Standing) DR. J. C. SHANKS, DAVID GALBRAITH, GEORGE McCLENAGHAN, JOHN CARMICHAEL, JAMES CRAWFORD.
(Seated) ROBERT MCKELL, WILLIAM TEMPLETON, THOMAS GEBBE, REV. S. A. WOODS, MATTHEW MCKELL.



THE MASSE, RIVERFIELD.



REV. J. M. KELLOCK, M.A.

Two Elders were ordained by Mr Kellock, viz., Messrs David Galbraith and John Carmichael.

The Rev. J. M. Kellock, M.A., was next chosen by the congregation and inducted in October, 1903. He was a man of marked energy, keen mind, brilliant wit, and was a prodigious student. His temperance principles were a vital part of his religion. He became a leader in the parish in the movement to abolish the licensed saloons. The success of the campaign was due largely to his leadership. During his pastorate the Riverfield Y. W. C. T. U. was organized. This society celebrated its 10th anniversary in March, 1914, and is the largest society of its kind in the Province. Mr Kellock accepted a call to Manitoba and was released from this charge in October, 1908.



REV. R. L. BALLANTYNE, B.A.

The congregation now extended a call to the Rev. R. L. Ballantyne, B. A., who was inducted on March 19, 1909. Mr Ballantyne was a man of great optimism, looking for the best in everything and everybody. He stood for the dignity of worship. He was distinctly a man of affairs, and held as a primal axiom that the home base must be carefully developed and guarded. During his pastorate the Howick church was renovated and made into a very tasty, neat church edifice. It was reopened in January, 1910, when the Rev. W. D. Reid, B.D., of Montreal, officiated. The horse sheds at both Riverfield and Howick were replaced by large closed in sheds, so that the lover of horse-flesh had no excuse to be absent from service on a stormy Sab.



REV. D. FRASER, B.A.



REV. STUART A. WOODS, B.A.

bath. Under his leadership and guidance the English River cemetery was made into a beautiful lawn and properly surveyed. Since then it has been incorporated and is one of the most neatly kept cemeteries in the province.

To the great sorrow of the whole community Mr Ballantyne in December, 1911 accepted a call to Maisonneuve.

The next minister to be inducted was the Rev. Donald Fraser, B.A. of Prince Edward Island. The induction took place on October 10th, 1912. Mr Fraser was a man of devout soul and profound in thought. His pastorate was short as he accepted a call to St. Peter's, N.S., in September, 1913, but his influence continues to increase as the people reflect on his Sterling worth and strong helpful messages.

The congregation proceeded without delay to secure a pastor and the choice fell on the Rev. Stuart A. Woods, B.A., of Chesterville, Ont., who was inducted on December 19th, 1913. In the second year of his ministry Messrs. William Templeton and James Crawford were ordained as elders. The Temporal Board of Knox Church, Howick, was granted an independent status with Dr. J. C. Shanks, Secy-Treas., in January 1915.

The charge has known only four treasurers, the first being the late Thos. Gebbie. He was followed by Mr. George McClenaghan, who served with great ability and faithfulness for nigh half a century. Miss Christina McLeod was the efficient secretary after Mr. McClenaghan's retirement till her death in 1914 when Mr. James Sill was elected to this responsible position.

One of the live factors in the congregation's life for many years has been its Sunday Schools. These are three in number, viz. Riverfield, Norton Creek and Howick. The Schools have been efficient because the staff of officers and teachers has always maintained a high standard and consecrated their lives to this work. The annual S. S. picnic is one of the great events of the year and is assuming greater proportions as the years pass by, the 33rd anniversary being celebrated this year 1915.

The name of the charge was changed in 1912, with the consent of Presbytery, to Riverfield and Howick. It is an ideal rural charge, progressive, loyal, benevolent and missionary, as evidenced by its steady progress, its ever increasing contributions to missions, and, but two months ago, its contribution of \$1000 to the Militia Department of Canada for the purchase of a Lewis machine gun for one of the Canadian regiments now fighting the battles of the Empire in defence of freedom and liberty and honor against the tyranny of Germany's militarism.

W. M. S.

One year before the organization of the W. F. M. S. of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and seven years before the W. M. S. of Montreal, the women of Georgetown and English River congregations were organized into a society on August 31st, 1875, known as the "Georgetown and English River Women's Missionary Society," auxiliary to the Women's Board of Missions, Montreal, an undenominational organization.

The object of the society was "The Cultivation of the Missionary Spirit among its members and the Collection of Money for Missionary Purposes."

The prayerful consecrated spirit of these ladies took definite form in the first year in the support of a Zenana teacher in India, under the care of the American Board, in a contribution to the Labrador Mission through Zion Church Ladies' Missionary Society of Montreal, and in a gift to French Evangelization through a band of Montreal Ladies interested in this work, which was the nucleus of the W. M. S. of Montreal organized in 1882. In 1883, after a year's deliberation whether to become auxiliary to the W. F. M. S. or the W. M. S., they decided upon the latter, because of its threefold work: Home, Foreign and French Evangelization, a policy now adopted by the United Women's Society of Canada.

It was a source of gratitude and an occasion of thanksgiving when they reached the \$200 mark in a single year. In 1909 the Society was divided into two organizations concurrent with the two pastoral charges. The new society of Riverfield and Howick went forward to greater work in the extension of the Master's Kingdom and soon began to contribute more per annum than did the United Society, having reached \$263 in its palmy year.

S. A. W.