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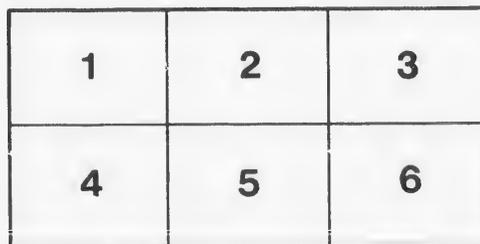
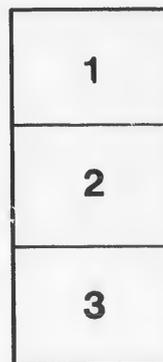
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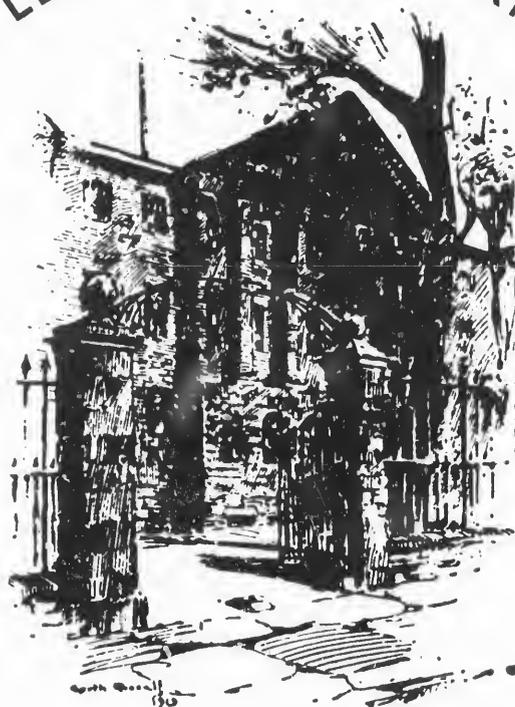
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NOVA SCOTIA
LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY



PROVINCE HOUSE

RECORDS

of the
Church of England in Newport

ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE PRESENT DATE

BY

REV. GEORGE W. HILL, M. A.

Professor of Pastoral Theology and Chaplain to the Lord Bishop

HALIFAX

PRINTED BY JAMES BOWEN AND SON

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CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN NEWPORT.

THE township of Newport lies on the eastern side of the river St. Croix. It is one of the six subdivisions of Hants county, and in importance ranks next to Windsor. In consequence of the proclamations issued by that excellent and popular man, Governor Lawrence, in the years 1758-9, many substantial farmers from Boston, Rhode Island, New London and Plymouth, arrived in Nova-Scotia, determined to settle in districts most favorable to the prosecution of agriculture. Newport was considered one of these, and in the year 1761 it was granted in seventy shares. The township comprises fifty-eight thousand acres. Of these, fifteen hundred are good dyked land, two hundred are salt marsh, and some few are intervals, Gypsum and lime abound, and the former has been extensively quarried and exported to the United States. It is also said to possess the best freestone quarry in the Province. The

place, however, is chiefly agricultural, and as the land is generally good, and the greater part of a superior quality, the prudent and diligent farmers have in many instances been repaid for the toil and labor which they have expended. Few portions of the colony present a finer appearance during the summer months, as respects the products of the soil, though it must be admitted that there are other townships, as Horton and Cornwallis, which exhibit more marks of wealth and prosperity in the houses, out-buildings, and fences to be seen on the farms. For some reason less attention has been paid to the external appearance than is the case in the townships mentioned. The stranger, therefore, in passing through, is liable to form an erroneous judgment from the absence of these usual indications of success, unless indeed he be qualified to pass an opinion upon the culture and fertility of the land.

Like several other districts in the Province, Newport possessed great advantages in the majority of the people to whom it was first granted. The emigrants from New England were "respectable and industrious, whose occupation had always been the cultivation of the soil,—who were inured to labor, aware of the difficulties they had to encounter, and fully prepared to overcome

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them." They handed down to their children many of the gifts which they possessed themselves—a practical knowledge of agriculture, prudence at home, and perseverance in business. The population is rapidly increasing, and every year bears fresh witness to the great natural capabilities of the place and the substantial worth of its inhabitants. It is to be deeply regretted that the railway to Windsor has not been carried through the fertile valley of the Meander, intersecting the luxuriant meadows on the banks of the St. Croix, and passing by the fine old homesteads throughout the township. Circumstances prevented this desirable end; and it now remains to construct a branch line, which will enter into the most densely populated and most highly cultivated settlements, and enable the owners and occupiers of land to send their abundant produce to market as early and easily as their neighbors.

The inhabitants of Newport are divided in religious opinion. Besides the members of the United Church of England and Ireland, there are Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists. This manifold sub-division, which unhappily obtains in a greater or less degree through the length and breadth of Nova-Scotia, has its injurious effects in this place. Religion and edu-

cation alike suffer from it. With divided strength the community find it difficult to support ministers and teachers. Each denomination is obliged to erect places of worship and maintain a pastor—a task to which they are quite unequal, however willing and even anxious they might be to perform it. If united in sentiment, their combined means would enable them to plant and cherish the Church of Christ, as also to create and foster an educational establishment, which, with God's blessing, would fit their sons and daughters for the various duties to which they might be called.

In Newport, the Church of England embraces but few families. The emigrants from the older colonies, whether farmers; loyalists from the Carolinas, or disbanded soldiers, were more frequently Presbyterians, or independents of some form, than members of the Established Church. Hence a comparatively small proportion of the population now belong to it. But few as these have ever been, their spiritual interests were early cared for.

The first notice of Newport as a mission of the Church of England, is found in the report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts for the year 1762. In the month of April of that year, a letter from Jonathan Belcher, Esq., Lieut.-Governor of Nova-Scotia,

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was laid before the Board in London, dated Halifax, January 14, in which he observes "That most of the new townships in the Province are without ministers of any persuasion, and therefore recommends that a missionary may be appointed at Horton, to officiate in rotation there, and in the three townships of Falmouth, Newport and Cornwallis. The Society, therefore, in compliance with the Governor's earnest request, have agreed that Mr. Vincent be missionary and schoolmaster at Lunenburg, in the room of Mr. Bennet, and that Mr. Bennet be appointed missionary to Horton, Falmouth, Newport, and Cornwallis, in Nova-Scotia, each with a salary of £70 sterling." At this time, so immediately following the first grant, the population was very small, as is shewn by the statement of Mr. Bennet, in a letter of January 4th, 1763, "that in Newport there were 251 persons, of whom 111 were children." Scattered as were the members of his flock, and limited in number, the missionary was not disheartened, but cheerfully writes, in July of the same year, "that his success in his mission has far exceeded his expectations." Indeed, he seems to have been so much encouraged that he proposed at this time to establish a schoolmaster for Falmouth and Newport combined, and eventually carried into effect his purpose.

Four extensive townships were, as we have seen from the tenor of his appointment, under the charge of this clergyman; but it became necessary to add still another to his already too wide and arduous field of labor. The ordinances of religion must be administered, it was rightly thought; and as there was no one to assist, his duties were increased. In the year 1764 we find a letter from Mr. Bennet, in which he writes "that he now officiated at five places, the Governor having ordered him to take Fort Edward (Windsor) in rotation, on account of a difficult and dangerous river, which rendered it impossible, at least five months in the year, for the inhabitants near that fort to attend divine worship at the place appointed."

At this interesting period of the mission we have to lament the loss of a letter which contained a "more perfect account" of its state. The vessel which conveyed it was probably lost, for the document never came to hand. Its writer, however, appears to have been faithfully performing his duty, according to the testimony of Chief-Justice Belcher, who, in his correspondence with the Society, speaks highly of Mr. Bennet's labors, "who in the service of four townships has been employed without the least abatement of zeal and

good conduct. Missions were conducted by him as a pioneer, and a laborer for public work. He was selected by deep piety in private hours, and people were of a number of com-

After a service Mr. Bennet visited Nova-Scotia. William Ellis, of the Society for Foreign Part, reaching his country when he reached the ship on board and when the master steered the vessel, the inhabitants would not shrink back from about their people, Mr. Ellis a place of rest, street walls, windows upon them, and fed and sheltered

good conduct." The usual difficulties in colonial missions were encountered by this indefatigable pioneer, and as yet having no building set apart for public worship, and "the town being intersected by deep and dangerous rivers," he officiated in private houses, by which, he tells us, "that the people were obliged." In 1772 he reported the number of communicants in Newport at nine.

After a service of twelve years in this mission, Mr. Bennet was appointed as an itinerant in Nova-Scotia. His place was filled by the Rev. William Ellis, who was sent to the Province by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Difficulties beset him both in reaching his destination and in his appointment when he reached it. The small-pox broke out in the ship on board which he was a passenger, and when they arrived at Boston—whither the master steered instead of Halifax—the inhabitants would not take them into their houses, but shrank back from them as if they bore the plague about their persons. Without provisions or apparel, Mr. Ellis and his wife were about seeking a place of rest for the night under cover of the street walls, when an old woman took compassion upon them, and, not having the fear of infection, fed and sheltered them. After some weeks' delay,

which caused considerable anxiety on the part of the Society which had sent him to America, the missionary found his way to Nova-Scotia. Here he encountered fresh trouble, having been appointed by the corresponding committee at Halifax to the station occupied hitherto by Mr. Bennet. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was not pleased at this being done without their direct sanction having been first applied for and granted, and hence some time elapsed before the matter was finally adjusted. In 1777 a resolution was passed by the Board in London, formally committing the care of the five townships already named to Mr. Ellis, he having made ample apology for having exchanged his mission without authority from head quarters. In the same letter he speaks of there being no church at Newport, although the congregation there was more numerous than in any of the other four stations. During the period of his services the American Revolution took place, but Mr. Ellis was of opinion that "the influx of refugees made no difference in his mission." In this, however, he must have been somewhat mistaken, as there are now living the immediate descendants of some who then found a home in the township. For twenty years Mr. Ellis served in his mission, — the report fr: 1795

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Mr. Willoughby succeeded. He had been at Cumberland until this date. When first appointed to his new sphere of labor, Newport appears, for some not apparent reason, to have been omitted from the list of places at which he was to officiate. In a short space of time, however, we meet a statement made by him to the Society, "that he should be able to take charge of Newport as Mr. Ellis had done." Mr. Willoughby was a very irregular and meagre correspondent of the Society whose servant he was, and we are consequently left without authentic information of the history of his mission. We cannot but lament this neglect on his part: first, because it makes a serious break in our chain of narrative; and secondly, because we may be led by his silence to the unjust conclusion that ecclesiastical affairs were not prosperous with him. Whatever was the progress made in this portion of his field of labor, we are ignorant of it. He probably devoted most of his time to Windsor and Falmouth.

The next missionary to Newport was that much loved man, the Reverend William Cochran, D. D., Vice-President of King's College, Windsor. Devoting himself, as far as compatible with his Pre-

fessorial engagements, to the duties of the mission, he was the means, under God's blessing, of firmly establishing the Church in this place. In the month of March, 1809, the Bishop committed to his care Newport, Falmouth, and also Rawdon, "until a proper person could be found to reside there." In his communication with the Society the Doctor says that "he derives most satisfaction from Newport. Although the Baptists are numerous there, yet the congregation is not inconsiderable. The church, which was neglected during ten or twelve years, has been lately repaired, and now only wants painting on the outside and pews within, which will soon be accomplished." In 1810 Dr. C. writes "that he is more and more pleased with his little flock at Newport, where the Bishop of Nova-Scotia held a confirmation in the month of September, on which occasion seventy-six persons were confirmed, some of whom were from the neighboring township of Rawdon, and a few from Douglas, but the greater part was of Newport." He was also cheered by some signs of vitality amongst his flock, in the addition of some communicants at this time.

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general subscription, with the understanding that it should be exclusively for the Church of England. The means of accomplishing the work were inadequate, and, to add to trouble, the building had been injured, about the year 1798, by a person of unsound mind, who during the night had broken every window-sash. At the time now spoken of (1810), Dr. Cochran was in hopes of obtaining a grant of money from the Governor towards the completion and necessary repairs, and states that the people were subscribing very well in order to prove themselves worthy of the grant.

It would seem that from the year 1812 to the year 1814 Newport was, in some measure, neglected, Dr. Cochran having been appointed to the charge of Falmouth alone. At the last-named date, the Reverend William Twining was commissioned with the care of Newport, in connection with Rawdon and Douglas. It was at this juncture of affairs that the mission was created into a parish, and the boundaries marked out, as follows :

“ PARISH OF ST. JAMES, TOWNSHIP OF NEWPORT, COUNTY OF HANTS, erected by order in Council bearing date March 30th, 1814.”

“ Beginning at a stake and stones on the margin of the sea shore on the E. side of the river

Avon, at the distance of one mile to the northward of the river Cockmagun, being the beginning boundary of the township of Newport; from thence to run E. ten miles; thence S. until it meets the main public road leading from Halifax to Windsor; thence following the several courses of the road northwesterly until it comes to land formerly granted to George Scott and others; thence by the side line of said Scott's land until it meets the river St. Croix; thence following the several courses of said river down stream until it meets the river Avon; thence down the said river Avon by the southern shore thereof, until it meets the place of beginning by the name of the parish of Saint James,—reserving the power, however, to establish one or more parishes hereafter within the same limit.”

In reply to the application made by the Rev. Dr. Cochran to government for aid, the sum of £150 was granted by Sir George Prevost out of the “Arms fund,” towards the repair and completion of the church. Upon the expenditure of this money the people seemed to take more interest in religious ordinances, although for some time they labored under the disadvantage of having no regularly appointed services. In the year 1818

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the report speaks in the following terms:—
“Since Newport has been connected with Rawdon, and the weekly duties performed regularly, the congregation has increased, and the people are thankful for the attention they receive. The Society have, however, been able to provide for the duties at Newport more satisfactorily. The Rev. Dr. Porter, president of the college at Windsor, has undertaken the charge of that parish. This arrangement will relieve Mr. Twining from the most arduous part of his duty.” Accordingly, on the 19th of April, the missionary for Rawdon delivered up the charge of the parish of Newport, “with a full church and an increasing communion.”

After the lapse of two or three years Dr. Porter was requested by his parishioners to express to the Society the gratitude of the members of the church for the arrangements which had afforded them divine service every Sunday. Although living at such a distance from the scene of his ministerial duties, this learned clergyman gained the good-will and esteem of his people, and some progress was made in ecclesiastical matters. About the year 1824 a national school was proposed, and pains taken so to arrange the site for the building in which it was to be held as should

accommodate the largest number of those interested. There was a good deal of opposition manifested at first by those who were not members of the Established Church. Time, however, broke down the uncalled-for prejudice which existed; and so marked was the success of the teacher, Mr. Maxwell, that many who were antagonistic to the founding of the institution gladly availed themselves of the opportunity afforded them for obtaining a sound education for their children.

Some useful information in reference to the date of the consecration of the church, the state of the school, and the obtaining of a parochial lending library, will be gathered from the following extracts from the reports of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel:

“On Friday, Nov. 3, 1826, Dr. Porter met us (the Bishop and Archdeacon) at the Newport church (St. James'), where a large congregation was assembled. The church and burial ground was consecrated, and forty-one persons confirmed. This township contains 98 square miles and 1659 inhabitants, of whom a fair proportion belongs to the Church.”

The Archdeacon in 1829 reports that a little repair was wanting both to the church of Newport and the fences round it. A very handsome, large

school-house, and a new church, which was built by Mr. Alexander Porter, occupied the old site of the church; he was a scholar. There was a provision of the mission consisting of 1000 lbs. of the S. P. C. K. for the people through the direction of the Society by subscription. I can speak highly of the attention to the duties.

Dr. Porter continued until his resignation in 1833. To this day he was one of the agents in giving his deep interest in the parish, which was a contribution to the new mission.

His successor, who had received from Hall, Oxford, and Dublin held the mission dates the

school-house, he says, has been built near the church, which is not yet finished in the interior. Mr. Alexander was the schoolmaster, who occupied the old school-house about three miles from the church; his school had from forty to fifty scholars. There is in this church, under the direction of the missionary, a parochial lending library, consisting of books that are on the catalogue of the S. P. C. K. These books were purchased by the people themselves, under the advice and direction of their missionary, from a sum raised by subscription among themselves. The people speak highly of their missionary, and of his attention to the duties of his mission.

Dr. Porter continued in charge of this mission until his resignation of the Presidentship of the college in 1834, when he returned to England. To this day he continues a correspondence with one of the aged and leading inhabitants, expressing his deep interest in all that concerns the parish. which he lately manifested by a contribution to the newly erected church.

His successor was the Rev. Richard J. Uniacke, who had received his education at St. Alban's Hall, Oxford, when the present Archbishop of Dublin held the office of Principal. His appointment dates the year 1835. The parishioners soon

ERRATA. — In eleventh line from the bottom read 1836 for 1834; and in the bottom line read 1837 for 1835.

became attached to him, and evinced their good feeling by every effort to make his residence among them comfortable. On the 13th November, 1837, a meeting was held to provide a house for the clergyman, and the resolution then arrived at was speedily carried into effect. The parsonage stands on a beautiful spot near the foot of a hill, and, surrounded by a variety of trees, presents a most pleasing aspect. Within a few years quite a village has sprung up in the neighborhood, to which the name of Brooklyn has been given; and if we may judge from the present price of land, and the number of houses in course of erection, it bids fair to be a place of some importance in the township.

During Mr. Uniacke's ministry at Newport, two churches were built—one at Walton, the other at Cockmagun. A statement of these may be given in Mr. Uniacke's own words, as copied from the report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for 1845. He speaks with thankfulness of the encouragement which he has met with at Newport. "A friendly and intelligent people," he says, "have generally received my services in a good spirit, and have usually seconded with readiness any effort for the spiritual benefit of the parish." One of the settlements

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within his mission (Walton) is seventeen miles from the church, and contains a population of about six hundred. On Mr. Uniacke's first visit to this place, soon after his appointment to the mission in 1837, he found that no minister of religion had been there for three years. In the spring of 1844 a number of the inhabitants, several of them dissenters, engaged to contribute a salary of £15 to the resident clergyman of Newport for a monthly visit on Sunday; and the proprietor of a dissenting meeting-house offered, on the same condition, to secure the building, together with an acre of ground, as the permanent property of the church. The building was made over, in an unfinished state, to the Society, and measures were at once taken to adapt it for divine worship. Monthly service is now regularly performed, and the attendance averages from ninety to a hundred.

In another settlement eight miles from Newport, and containing no more than fifteen families by no means in wealthy circumstances, it was determined to build a small chapel, and £50 were subscribed for the purpose on the day of meeting.

Mr. Uniacke concludes his report in the following words:—"In reviewing the seven years in which I have been occupied as a missionary in this

place, I see much cause for thankfulness ; and notwithstanding the obstacles which, more or less, everywhere impede the course of truth and religion, I cannot but think that the Church within the limits of this mission has gained some ground. I desire humbly to ascribe whatever measure of success has accompanied my ministerial exertions to that blessing from above, without which no 'increase' could accompany our most devoted labors ; and I pray for the continuance of God's blessing, that the individual piety of its members may grow with the enlargement of His visible Church." The church at Cockmagun, for which the above-mentioned sum of £50 was subscribed, was ready for consecration in the autumn of 1850, but, owing to the late Bishop's illness, was deferred to a future time.

With deep regret on his own part and that of his attached flock, Mr. Uniacke removed to Sydney, Cape Breton, in 1853. His place was supplied, after a few months, by the Rev. H. M. Spike, who was removed from Tusket to fill the vacant mission. During his residence in the mission a great effort was made to build a new church upon the site of the old one, which had become so dilapidated as to be utterly unfit for the public worship of God. A bazaar was held in 1856

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upon the grounds around the parsonage, which produced a large sum of money, and enabled the parishioners to enter into a contract for the erection of another sanctuary. It is gratifying to record that this purpose has been accomplished. A most substantial, appropriate, and well-finished church now stands upon the old and beautiful site, looking down upon the stream below, which flows between luxurious meadows on the one side and a well-wooded slope on the other.

In the autumn of 1857 Mr. Spike resigned the care of the mission, having received an appointment to another parish, and a temporary arrangement was agreed upon with the Rev. Professor Hill, of King's College, Windsor, to discharge the public duties so far as practicable. These were commenced on the first Sunday in October, 1857, and continued until the month of May, 1858, when the Rev. James J. Hill succeeded. The church was consecrated by the Bishop on Sunday, the 27th June, and his Lordship confirmed twenty persons, one of whom had been baptised in the morning by the newly appointed missionary, who then for the first time received a member by this sacred rite into the Church of God.

We trust that the spirit of God will rest upon His little flock in Newport in an abundant mea-

sure, that many wanderers may be guided to the narrow way that leadeth to eternal life, being brought to a knowledge of themselves as sinners, and of Christ Jesus as their Saviour, and that minister and people may so live as to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into marvellous light."



