

THE SETTLEMENT OF RETIRED MILITARY HEROES ON 'THE SCOTCH LINE' WHO TURNED THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOW SHARES – THE TOWN'S HISTORY & FEATURES

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This profile of the Town of Perth, taken from the May 14, 1887 edition of the Toronto Mail, is reproduced here as it was published by the Perth Courier in serial form over its editions of November 15-19-22 & December 6, 1935. The article contains much of historical interest, but it is not always completely accurate. The first section, covering the earliest years of the settlement, is especially problematic, showing a misunderstanding of the settlement's roots and containing many inaccuracies.



In reading the facts of the early history of the building of Perth it is positively startling to find the records fairly bristling with men of military titles. Captain this, Ensign that and Sergeant the other fellow crop up in every line of its story.

It cannot be said, of course, that Lanark County is peculiar in this respect from the surrounding districts in particular, for the whole of the country adjacent to the St. Lawrence and the streams connected with it received an early sprinkling of warrior farmers at the close of the last struggle between Britain and her offspring of rebellious blood on the other side of the great river. In no other part, however, do these sons of mars seem to have settled so thickly as in "the fair town of Perth" and vicinity. It will be seen moreover that, tired at war's alarm, these fire-eaters seem to have been content to settle down to the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, finding, perhaps, that after all a conflict with the great forests of British America was not so unlike the calling which in earlier days had awakened their adventurous blood.

Those soldiers were not, however, Perth's primal pioneers, for a short time before certain Scotsmen, finding the land of cakes rather restricting to men of energy and ambition, Joshua-like, sent representatives across the ocean to spy out the land. The district now comprised in the County of Lanark seemed fair unto these delegates and in 1815 a large number of families left their dear mist-enthroned isle for the land of promise in the west. These people settled chiefly in the Township of Bathurst and therefore might appear to have very little to do with the destinies of Perth but they and their descendants have had a good deal to do directly and indirectly with the uprearing of that community.

In 1816 Captain Joshua Adams, a veteran who served in the American war of 1812-1813, in the Canadian Militia, was about the first to draw a town lot of an acre, and he erected a tavern thereon. Shortly after the settlers of the class before mentioned began to pour in, and, pending the taking up of their allotments, camped on the island in the Tay River, which now forms the center portion of the town. The settlers were for the most part 49th Regiment and Foreign Legion men, who, with their wives and families were conveyed in the month of May 1816, in wagons from the various stations at which they were discharged, to Portland, twenty-eight miles north of Brockville, where they embarked in a scow owned by a man named Lindsay, thence down the Rideau Lake and up the River Tay to Perth.

Here was a government storehouse under the charge of Captain Fowler, Captain Gregg, having as subaltern Mr. Davern and Mr. Alex Matheson and Sergeant Campbell of the Glengarry Fencibles, as Issuer of Stores. The storehouse was on the south-west corner of one of the present bridges, where Spalding's brewery is now, and there on the 24th of each month, rations with necessary household and agricultural implements were issued to the settlers. Males received per diem one pound of pork and the same weight of flour – females half that amount, children of ten years and upwards the same as females, and under ten, one quarter rations. The arrangement was only to last until the settlers got some land under cultivation and were in some sort of position to help themselves. At this time, the settlers lived in the rudest of huts roofed with bark and wooden boughs, and as the winter came on most of them moved off to Brockville, Prescott, and Montreal, and there remained until the following spring.

The year of 1817 was, however, one of great hardship and privation, and the settlers were in great straits, in fact on the very verge of starvation. The crop of potatoes was destroyed by frost, and the rust got into the wheat. Some families lived for three weeks on the wild leeks they found in the woods. An application was at last made to the Government for the issue of an additional half ration per head, which was granted, and the famine, which was imminent, was averted. Timely assistance, and patient waiting for better times, tided the settlers over their difficulties; the lane turned and the highway to prosperity was soon reached; the clearings became larger, the dwellings began to assume some resemblance of comfort, crops were better year by year, and each spring saw fresh bands of settlers coming to Perth and quite a large community was formed by degree.

While this was going on Captain Adams gave up his tavern and put up one of the first grist and sawmills on Lot-29 in the 2nd concession of Bathurst, County of Lanark, and he soon began to drive a brisk trade. The first store was opened in 1816 by Mr. (afterwards the Hon.) William Morris, father of Hon. Mr. Morris, late representative of East Toronto in the local house.

The next store was established by Benjamin Delisle, an ex-Captain in the Canadian Fencibles, who came to the settlement in July or August 1816. His store, which is still standing, was on the south side of the Tay, near where the English Church is now. Mr. Delisle, after doing business there for some years, removed to Montreal. Others came in their turn, and the place began to be in some measure independent of other markets at a distance.

The first birth in the infant settlement occurred in the family of Rev. Mr. Bell, the Presbyterian clergyman in the year 1817, while the first recorded death was in 1816, the victim being the wife of Sergeant Wellesley Richey, and her remains were interred in what is now the English Cemetery, on the south side of the Tay. Many of this lady's descendants are scattered throughout Ontario.

The next band of emigrants to take up their abode in the Township of Lanark were a number of Paisley weavers, whose descendants now form a great portion of the wealthy residents of the district. They all took up land and entered vigorously into farming pursuits. They were an industrious law-abiding folk, adapting themselves easily to their new mode of life, and were soon a large and important item in the list of colonies. Despite the hardships which, perhaps from the extremely sudden transition from the use of the loom and shuttle to that of the spade, axe and plough, they felt in a keener degree than their fellow settlers, they rapidly acquired wealth, and not a few of them have left to their posterity considerable of this world's goods.

It is a singular fact that a specimen of that useful friend of man, the horse, was not seen in the settlement until the year 1830.

Perth was for many years the center of a large lumber trade. Rogers & Thompsons, Potter & Gemmill, Alexander & Henry, Montgomery, James Flintoff, and others being the leading dealers. This business, however, gradually passed away in Ottawa, and the growing importance of that town put Perth second in the race. The present capital possessed great natural advantages in becoming the center of the lumber business, and Perth, was greatly handicapped, but what it lacked in other ways was almost made up to it by the substantial, steady and yet enterprising character of its business men.

One of the early storekeepers was the late Hon. Malcolm Cameron, who, when a boy in 1831, used to ferry passengers across the Mississippi River on the road to Lanark and whose parents kept a public house or stopping place for the settlers of that district close to the ferry. In after years Mr. Cameron kept a tavern and afterwards a general store where the extensive establishment of Messrs. A. Meighen Bros. is now.

The construction of the Rideau Canal in 1825 did Perth an immense amount of good, opening up, as it did, a direct line of communication, and means of conveyance with the River Ottawa. During the years, the canal was being made, trade was very brisk in the town, the large number of men employed on the work, being the means of causing a considerable amount of money to be put into circulation.

About this time, too, a private enterprise called the River Tay Navigation Company was formed for the purpose of deepening the channel and making it navigable to the Rideau River. Large sums were laid out by the company, locks were constructed, and for a time a considerable amount of traffic by means of flat bottom boats was carried on; but in time railroads took the trade away, and the locks, on the building of which so much money had been expended, have now fallen into decay and only remain as monuments of a scheme which eventually did not turn out as profitable as its projectors anticipated.

Perth is situated on the banks of the River Tay, which empties itself into the Rideau Lake a few miles from the town. The streets are wide and regular and lined with substantial stone buildings. For its size and population, it is often described as the liveliest commercial town in Ontario.

Municipal History

In 1840 municipal institutions were first introduced, the town then still forming a part of the township. In January 1851, the town became a separate municipality, with a council composed of a Reeve, and four councillors. On the first day of January 1854, the town was incorporated with three wards – East, Centre, and West – and the council was composed of a mayor and nine councillors, and it stands so at the present time.

The total assessment in 1876, ten years ago, was \$981,000 and the population was 2,500. The total assessment for 1886 was \$1,120,000 and the population was 4,000.

The town hall was contracted for by Alex Kippen and John Walker in May 1863 and completed and possession thereof taken in November 1864. The building is two storeys in height and is built of white sandstone from the Bathurst quarry, with a deep belt of blue limestone from the Beckwith quarry. A rear building was erected for market purposes surmounted by an octagon tower 85 feet high.

The police force of the town is composed of a chief constable and six ward constables.

The town officers are: William J. Pink, Mayor; Thomas Brooks, Town Clerk; Henry Moorehouse, Treasurer; William B. Brooks, Assessor; Robert Jamieson, Collector; Robert Stone, Chief Constable and Sanitary officer, Dennis R. Noonan, Chief Engineer Fire Department; W. W. Berford and George Kerr, Town Auditors.

The Fire Department consists of the Tay Steamer Fire Engine, purchased from Mr. Ronald of Brussels, Ontario, with a company of thirty-one members. Also, the Union Fire Engine, with a company composed of twenty-eight members. Both companies are very efficient, having done good service for the corporation.

Thomas Cairns is postmaster at Perth, having held the office for twenty years or more. He is highly esteemed both officially and socially.

The town is lighted by electricity. There are now 48 lights in operation, eleven of which are streetlights. The remainder are located in the public buildings, stores, and hotels.

Railways

The first communication Perth had by rail with the outside world was about 1859 when the Brockville and Ottawa Railway was constructed, and a branch built from Smiths Falls to Perth. The name of the Brockville and Ottawa was subsequently changed to the Canada Central. About the year 1882 the Ontario and Quebec Railway was constructed from Perth to Toronto, and on its completion it and the Credit Valley and the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railways passed into possession of the Canadian Pacific Corporation. The Car Shops of the Canadian Pacific, covering 60,000 square feet of ground, in which an average of 200 hands are employed in the manufacture of flat and box cars, and conductors' vans, are here located. The CPR owns twenty-five acres of land in the vicinity of the Perth station on which are twelve buildings devoted to railway uses.

Two other lines of railway have been projected and charters obtained, which will tap the town, one from Gananoque to Perth and the other from Cornwall, via Perth, to Sault Ste. Marie. In 1880 an amendment to the charter of the Toronto & Ottawa Railway was secured, and the proposed road made part of the Midland system. This line is already in operation from Toronto and Midland City to Madoc, the latter point being only 62 miles west of Perth. The right of way from Madoc to Perth has been purchased and the road-bed graded at a cost of not less than \$500,000. It is expected that the line will be completed shortly by the Grand Trunk Railway, in which event that company will have a parallel line from Toronto to Montreal.

Tay Canal

In order to connect Perth with the Rideau Canal route, a canal was projected several years ago, to extend from Perth to Beveridge's Bay, a distance of six miles and a half, and in 1883 operations were commenced under the auspices of the Dominion government. It is anticipated that the Tay Canal will be of great benefit to the town, in that it will furnish communication with shipping points on the Rideau system, thereby cheapening transport rates, especially for bulky articles of commerce. Strong hope as entertained that the work will be completed during the current year. A. F. Manning & Co. are the contractors and F. A. Wise and Mr. D. Taylor the Government engineers.

Newspapers

The first Perth newspaper was established in 1823. There is some doubt as to who was the editor, but William Tully and John Stewart appear to have equal claims to the honor. The paper was the *Examiner*. It was afterwards merged into the *Courier* in 1834, when Mr. John Cameron, brother of the late Hon. Malcolm Cameron, occupied the editorial chair. At his death Mr. Malcolm Cameron succeeded him. From his hands it passed into those of the present Sheriff of Lanark, Mr. James Thompson, who conducted it for many years. Mr. Charles Rice, the present Clerk of the County Court, bought it from Mr. Thompson and after running it successfully for some time, on his appointment to the office he now holds, he sold it to Mr. G. L. Walker, in 1863. In 1868 Mr. Walker took Mr. J. M. Walker into partnership. The former died in 1874, and the *Courier* became the property of Messrs. G. M. Walker and W. T. Walker, who carried on the business until 1883, when the latter removed to Winnipeg. Mr. J. M. Walker is now the sole proprietor. The *Courier* is Reform in politics and enjoys an extensive circulation.

The *Expositor*, the Conservative journal, was established in 1863. Its first proprietors were Messrs. Thomas Cairns (the present postmaster) and Thomas Scott, the late member for Winnipeg in the Commons. At that time, the *British Standard* was in existence, but it has since ceased publication. When Mr. Scott determined to remain in Manitoba he sold out to Messrs. Berford and Elliott who conducted it until 1875, when they sold it to Mr. J. A. Matheson, the present proprietor who conducts it most ably.

Mayor Pink

William J. Pink, Mayor of Perth, was born in Northfleet, County of Kent, in England on the 19th day of October 1843. He came to Canada with his father's family in 1858, settling in the province of Quebec, where he remained until 1863, when he removed to Perth. For several years after locating here he followed the occupation of a journeyman cabinet-maker, but in 1871 engaged in business for himself as a manufacturer and dealer in furniture and is today the proprietor of the largest furniture enterprise in the County of Lanark. Mr. Pink has, since arriving at man's estate, manifested an active interest in municipal affairs, has been town councillor for eight years, and in January last was elected Mayor by acclamation. He is a leading member of the Masonic body, having been Master of True Britons' No. 14, one of the oldest lodges in Canada, several terms. Mayor Pink is exceedingly popular and has a reputation for enterprise and business ability.

Thomas Brooks

Thomas Brooks who has been clerk of the Municipality of Perth for 36 years continuously was born on the 8th day of September 1809, at Halifax, N.S., where his father, William Brooks, was then on duty as Sergeant in the 7th Fusiliers. While our subject was still an infant his father's regiment was ordered to join the British forces in Spain. Mrs. Brooks, with her child, accompanied her husband all through the Peninsular War, at the close of which Sergeant Brooks was awarded a medal with eleven clasps for meritorious service, and in 1813 appointed a Provost Marshal, and assigned to duty with His Majesty's forces in Canada with the rank and pay of a Lieutenant.

After several years' service here, the senior Brooks went to England to receive his discharge and, returning to Canada in 1818, settled in Perth. Thomas was then a lad of nine and relates that his first night here was spent in an Indian wigwam on Cockburn Island, which is formed by the River Tay and is now in the business center of town. Locating in the Township of Burgess with his family, William Brooks cleared a farm, which he cultivated until 1847, when he removed to Perth, where he died in 1861.

Thomas Brooks left the parental home at the age of eighteen and located to Perth where he was employed as a clerk and salesman to a mercantile business until 1836 when he became a general merchant on his own account. Retiring from active business pursuits in 1840 he was appointed the following year Clerk of the Township of Drummond. His various appointments thereafter were as follows; 1861, Clerk of the Town of Perth; 1867, Township of Bathurst and North Burgess; 1869, Township of South Sherbrooke; 1861 Township of Oso, County of Frontenac; and in 1873 he received the appointment of Clerk of the County of Lanark.

With advancing years, Mr. Brooks deemed it advisable to relinquish a portion of his official positions, and between the years of 1873 and 1883 resigned the clerkships of Drummond, South Sherbrooke, and Oso. He has been a member of the Perth Board of Education for forty-six years uninterruptedly, having favorably been chosen by acclamation. Although in his 78th year, Mr. Brooks is still hale and hearty man, beloved by all who know him, and [an] authority upon municipal affairs and early local history.

Francis A. Hall, Barrister

This gentleman, who is of Scotch parentage, was born in Perth on the 9th of August 1842, and was educated at the Grammar School in his native town. He studied law with the late W. M. Shaw, was admitted an attorney in 1866, and became a member of the law firm of Shaw & Hall a few months previous to having been called to the bar in 1868. Upon Mr. Shaw's death, which occurred late in 1868, Mr. Hall continued in practice alone until October 1876, when he, in conjunction with Edward Elliott, formed a partnership, which terminated by limitation three years later. Since 1878 Mr. Hall has had no one associated with him in a professional way. He has for many years taken an active part in municipal and educational affairs, having served two terms as Mayor, five terms as Councillor, and sixteen years as a member of the Board of Education, of which body he is now chairman. Mr. Hall, as barrister and solicitor, has a large practice and enjoys the confidence and esteem of this fellow townsmen.

Methodism in Perth

The first authentic fact that we find in connection with methodism in Perth is the record of a meeting which is still preserved at which the ways and means of supporting church purposes was discussed. The worshippers were intent on solving the problem of providing hay for the parson's horse, and of paying for the services of a man to keep the chapel tidy.

The chapel spoken of was a log house on the site of the present church lot; this gave place in 1833 to a frame house, an unpretending building in the Gothic style or architecture, enlarged some ten years afterwards so as to accommodate 300 persons, and this later was in turn replaced in 1884 by the present handsome stone structure, acknowledged to be the finest church edifice in the town. It seats comfortably 400 but can be made to accommodate 500 persons; it is handsomely upholstered throughout, is lighted with gasoline, heated by furnaces in the basement, and has a very fine organ, built by Warren of Toronto. There is attached to the church also, and opening into it, a lecture room, with classrooms, minister's vestry, etc., the whole costing, including the organ, \$11,500, and paid or provided for except a debt of about \$3,000. The number of worshippers taking the morning and evening congregations together, is probably equal to that of any other Protestant denomination in the town.

Among the earliest members of the church in Perth were John Jackson, William McGrath, Thomas Poole, John Greenley, Richard Rudsdale, Benjamin Tett, John Tatlock, Joshua Adams, Josias Richey, Thomas Bothwell. These names will be reverently remembered by many now scattered over Canada.

It may be also found interesting to append a list of the clergymen who have ministered to the Perth congregation. It is as follows: Revs. Ezra Healy, John Ryerson, William H. Williams, George Farr, John Black, Alvah Adams, Franklin Metcalfe, John Carrol, William Patrick, James Brock, Thomas Marmon, George F. Playter, John McIntyre, James Currie, George B. Butcher, George Goodson, D. B. Madden, Fraser Coleman, Johnathan Scott, James Gray, D. C. McDowell, Henry Lauton, George McRitchie, A. W. Rose, Joseph E. Sanderson, Thomas Brock, William Hansford, W. R. Dyer, Jacob Freshman, G. McRitchie, G. Davis, Richard Whiting, S. C. Bland and H. F. Bland. Of these 33 names (Mr. Ritchie was twice on the circuit) 16 have died but their work still lives.

The Baptist Church

The Baptist Church in Perth was organized by the late Rev. R. A. Fyfe, D. D., on the 31st of October 1842. The constituent membership numbered twenty six. Rev. R. A. Fyfe, then a young man, a graduate from Newton Center Theological College, became the first pastor. The building in which the congregation still worships was erected almost immediately after the organization of the church. This building the church hopes shortly to replace by a larger edifice, better befitting the now prosperous town of Perth and affording better accommodation to the worshippers. The present pastor is Rev. Douglas Laing, a graduate from the Baptist College, Woodstock, Ont., of the class of 1860. He became pastor of the church in Perth in November 1885. The present membership, according to the last official report, numbers 113. Of the constituent members there is now but one living, the widow of the late Col. McMillan.

St. James Church

The first clergyman of the Church of England who officiated to this town was the Rev. Michael Harris, M. A., Trinity College, Dublin. He was ordained in 1819 at Quebec by Bishop Mountain and appointed to Perth, at that date a mission of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. It was subsequently constituted a rectory in 1836 by Sir John Colborne, K. C. B., and is one of the forty-four completed rectories in what was then known as Upper Canada.

The services of the church, in the absence of a suitable edifice, were held in an upper room in the house of Mr. John Adamson on Craig Street, and now occupied by Mr. John Fraser. In 1820 it was resolved to build a frame church on the lot appropriated by the Government for the purpose in the original plan of the town. It was erected on the site where the present St. James Church stands and was opened for divine worship on the 10th of November 1822. The original church was a plain wooden building, about 50 feet long and 40 feet wide. Some years later the wants of the increasing congregation were provided for by the addition of a gallery at the west end. The contractor was Mr. J. Jackman and among the subscribers to the building fund, outside of the congregation, were His Excellency the Early of Dalhousie, Mr. Peregrine Maitland, the Bishop of Quebec and the S.F.G.F.P.

The church wardens in 1823 were A. F. Thom and C. M. Sache; in 1827 A. F. Thom and Christopher J. Bell; in 1829[?] A. F. Thom and G. H. Reade. From the minutes of a vestry held on the 9th of March 1828[?], we learn that Mr. William McGrath was appointed parish clerk at a salary of £10 per annum.

In the year 1828[?] the Hon. and right Rev. Charles James Stewart, Bishop of Quebec, fifth son of the Earl of Galloway, held a confirmation in St. James church when 78 persons were confirmed, among them Thomas Brooks, Town Clerk of Perth, who is, we believe, the oldest member of the congregation.

Rev. Michael Harris did not confine his ministrations to the town of Perth but held regular services at two stations in the adjoining townships, occasionally visiting the settlers as far east as the townships of Pakenham and Fitzroy, on the Ottawa River. In 1852 he resigned the rectory, and Rev. A. Pyne, B.A. was appointed to succeed him. During his incumbency, the increase of the congregation, both in wealth and numbers, seemed to justify the vestry in taking steps for the erection of a church of stone, somewhat commensurate to their shared and improved circumstances. Designs were procured from Mr. W. Thomas, architect of Toronto, but when the foundation was laid, on account of the great cost and from the want of funds, the work came to a standstill and in July 1857, Rev. A. Pyne resigned the parish and accepted the curacy of Rochdale, in Lancashire, England.

The present rector, Rev. R. J. Stephenson, M. A., was appointed by the Right Rev. John Strachan, Bishop of Toronto, to the charge on the 26th August following and entered on his duties on October 8, 1857. In the following year, the Building Committee employed Messrs. Fuller & Jones, architects, Ottawa, to modify the original plans so that something more approaching a church might be obtained at a cost two-thirds the original contract. The contractor was Mr. Samuel Bothwell. The new church was completed with the exception of the tower and spire and opened for divine service on Nov. 14, 1861.

This church consists of sanctuary, chancel, nave and two aisles, with a tower on the north-west corners. The style of architecture adopted is the early English. There is kneeling accommodation for 800 worshippers and with the beautiful chancel fittings (the latter designed in 1883[?] by Mr. Frank Darling, architect Toronto) organ, alter plate, etc., has cost over \$25,000.

The rectory house, designed by Mr. K. Arnold, architect, Ottawa, was erected in 1875 at a cost of over \$5,000.

St. John's R. C. Church

Perth is the oldest Irish Catholic mission in the province of Ontario, having had its resident pastor as early as the year 1820. Its pastors from and including that date were in order following: Father Lamothe, from Quebec, during 1820; Father Sweeney, also sent hither from Quebec, during 1821 and 1822; Father John Macdonald (the late Vicar-General of St. Raphael's, Glengarry), from 1823 down to the 17th February 1838, when he was replaced here by the late Vicar-General McDonagh, who administered the mission during the long term of 28 years.

During all those years, from 1820 down to 1847, the Catholics of Perth and surrounding country had but very inferior church accommodation. In the later year, however, Father McDonagh began preparations for the erection of the present fine parish church, and on Christmas Day 1848 they celebrated the first mass said within its walls.

The late Rev. Dr. Chisholm was the next pastor, his incumbency lasting from November 1866 until May 1878. The mission was then served from Kingston, the parent See of old Upper Canada, until June 1879, when the present pastor, Very Rev. Dean O'Conner was appointed thereto by the late Rev. Dr. O'Brien, the then Bishop of Kingston, which appointment has since been confirmed by the present Bishop of the Diocese, James Cleary, S. T. D., who further honored the actual pastor with the ecclesiastical distinction of Vicar Forane of the diocese of Kingston, and Dean of Perth on September 22, 1886. During the incumbency of Rev. Dean O'Connor, he has managed, not only to wipe out a heavy debt he found hanging over the mission, but also to erect a magnificent spire and otherwise improve and ornament St. John's church, Perth. It is now a credit to the ancient town of Perth and to the venerable Diocese of Kingston.

The deanery, or pastoral residence, is a fine two storey building, built of stone and in the English cottage style of architecture, and stands quite convenient to the parish church. There is also a flourishing Separate School, with two teachers, in close proximity to the pastoral residence. In fact the parish church of St. John Baptist, the deanery and the R. C. Separate School are all three located upon the one plot of ground over four acres in extent, and situated in the most elevated part of the town, as that they command a splendid view of the whole vicinity.

Presbyterians in Perth

The first settlers of the town and neighboring townships were chiefly of the Presbyterian faith, and consisted of emigrants from Lanark, Renfrew and Perth shires, Scotland. As to calling, many were weavers and the remainder mostly discharged soldiers and half-pay officers. The year after the arrival of the first batch of settlers the Home Government sent out Rev. William Bell, M.A., who arrived June 24th, 1817, and undertook the ministerial oversight of the infant town and settlement. Mr. Bell was educated at Glasgow University. He was a man of energy and force of character. He soon succeeded in getting a comfortable church erected and completed. He labored with abundant zeal and successes during a ministry of 41 years and died in 1857 at the ripe age of 78.

In 1829 steps were taken to form another Presbyterian congregation in the town. The year following, through the assistance of Rev. Alex. Stuart, of Douglas, Scotland, Rev. Tomas C. Wilson, of the National Church, was chosen for the new congregation, ordained by the Presbytery of Lanark and sent out to Perth in 1831. A site for the new church was secured on Drummond Street near the courthouse, a subscription list opened, and the erection of the building at once begun. In 1833 the church was completed, named St. Andrew's, and opened for divine service. As to material style and appearance it is described in Dr. Gregg's history as "a handsome stone church, built in the gothic style of architecture". It is furnished with an excellent pipe organ; and occupied by one of the most influential congregations in the town. Mr. Wilson, who was a fearless and devoted man, returned to Scotland in 1844.

In 1857 Mr. Bell's congregation and St. Andrew's united under the latter name. Mr. Wilson's successor was Rev. Dr. Bain, M. A., who was ordained and inducted into the charge the next year. Mr. Bain was educated at Queen's College, Kingston. He remained minister of the charge till his retirement from the active duties of the ministry in 1881, a period of 36 years.

The present occupant of St. Andrew's pulpit, Rev. Macgillvray, who succeeded Mr. Bain in 1881, was trained at Queen's College in Kingston and Edinburgh University. Prior to his appointment to this important charge he was for six years minister of St. Andrew' Church Scarboro.

A number of the members of St. Andrew's church and also of the First Presbyterian church sympathized deeply with the Free Church party in Scotland during the Disruption conflict. On the 13th of February 1845, three persons were organized into a congregation by Rev. Mr. Boyd of Prescott. None of the elders elected on that day are now alive. The last survivor was Mr. Ralph Smith, who died on the 8th of January 1884. The first church – a frame building on the present site – was built during the summer of 1845. The first settled minister, Rev. Andrew Melville, received the unanimous call of the congregation on the 25th of December 1845 and was ordained on the 26th of February 1846. He was called to Clarendon and Bristol in the fall of the same year and translated by the presbytery after a pastorate of only eight months.

The Rev. James R. Duncan, now of Paisley, Ont., was the next minister, and was ordained on the 1st of July 1848. During his pastorate, the present commodious church was erected in 1854. It is built of freestone and is seated for 700. Mr. Duncan resigned in March 1866 and was succeeded in November of the same year by Rev. Walter M. Roger, now of London East. He resigned in 1868 and Rev. William Burns was called and was settled on the 19th of May 1869. He resigned his charge in December 1880 to become the Agent of Knox College, Toronto, which office he still holds. The present minister, Rev. James Ross, B. D., is a native of Aberdeenshire in Scotland. He came to Canada in 1869 and was educated in Queen's University, Kingston. He was ordained to this charge on September 8th, 1881.

The congregation owns a large and comfortable stone manse across the street from the church and is in prosperous and hopeful condition.

Educational

Prior to the year 1851 the town of Perth, being included for educational purposes in the municipality of Drummond, was divided into what was then called two school sections. In the month of May of that year, after due considerations, it was deemed to be expedient that in order to secure a beneficial and effective system of education, for the general advantage of the inhabitants of the town of Perth and others interested therein, to unite the Grammar School located there with the common schools of the said town. Articles of agreement to that effect were then signed between the then trustees, being on the part of the Grammar School, Rev. M. Harris, chairman, Rev. William Bain, Rev. William Bell, W. C. Buell and Murdock Mcdonnell; and on the part of the Common School Trustees, Josiah Davies, chairman, Robert Kellock, Thomas Brooks, William Fraser and John McKay. Such union has continued ever since that time.

The Grammar School was then located in a shabby old frame building, with a single teacher, and now is located in a new, commodious, splendid building called the Perth Collegiate Institute, with four teachers. The Public School is now located, in the central portion of the town, in a substantial stone schoolhouse, in which are engaged a staff of two male and six female teachers. Such has been the advance of education in the town of Perth since the year 1851.

The collegiate building is a handsome, brick structure, surrounded by well-kept grounds, and provided with a first-rate library and laboratory. The principal, Mr. R. R. Cochrane, is a graduate of Toronto University, and brings to his work not only a thorough knowledge of our educational system, but the experience of many years of active teaching in the High and Public schools of Ontario. He is ably assisted by Messrs. Fowler, B. A. (Victoria); McPherson, B. A. (Toronto); and Dewar B. A. (Toronto). At present there are one hundred and twenty students in daily attendance, half of whom are preparing for the various university and departmental examinations.

The Public school, which is also the county Model school, is a substantial stone building, in the central part of the town. The average daily attendance is about 400. Mr. Jacques, the principal, who holds a first class certificate received his professional training at Toronto Normal School. He has by skilful management rendered the school one of the most efficient in the province. There are altogether eight departments in the Public school, each under the control of a Normal-trained teacher.

Educational matters have always received a large share of public attention in Perth, and the result is that both the High and Public schools of the town are very efficiently conducted.



- Transcribed by Ron W. Shaw (2020)