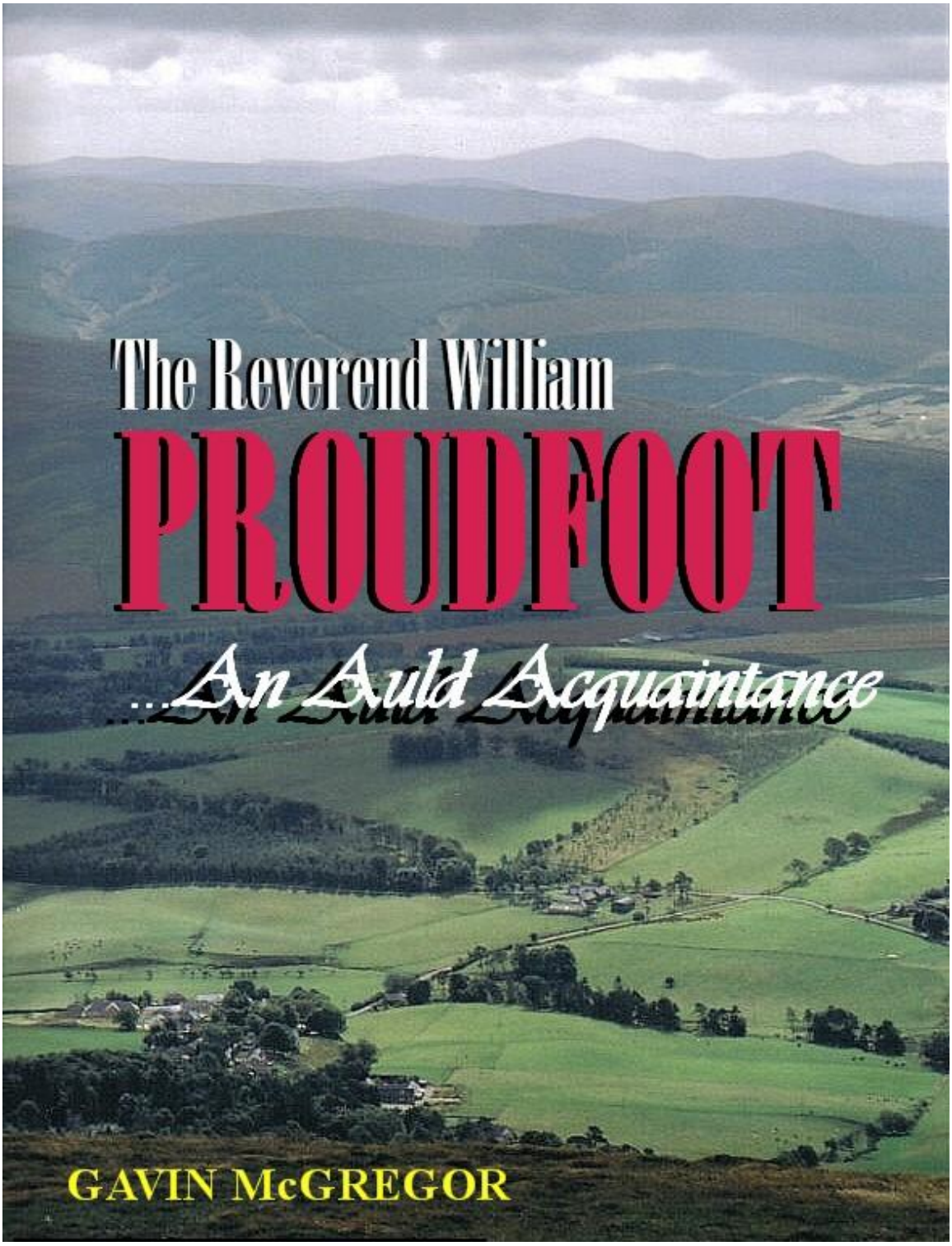
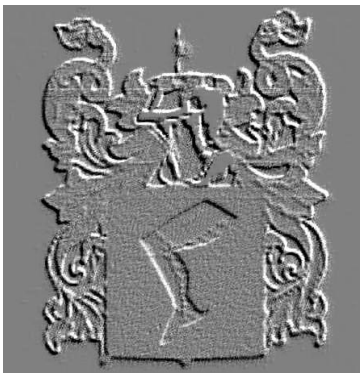

The Reverend William
PROUDFOOT
...An Auld Acquaintance
GAVIN McGREGOR

"SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT AND NEVER BROUGHT TAE MIND"
This is the opening line from *Auld Lang Syne*, written by Robert Burns in 1788, the year William Proudfoot was born.

Cover design by Gavin McGregor

The Reverend William

Proudfoot



An Auld Acquaintance

Contents

Prologue

The coincidence of *Auld Lang Syne* being published in the year of William Proudfoot's birth conveniently points us to the works of Robert Burns to feel the pulse of Scotland at that time. The language used by Burns in many of his poems and songs is the broad Scots, spoken by plain folk throughout southern Scotland,[1] and in the vernacular of the parish of Manor (Peeblesshire) where Proudfoot was born, he would have been called Wullie Proodfit.

Burns is best known for his exquisite love songs and his poems depicting rural life and characters; then in works like *Man Was Made to Mourn* he confronts us with the poverty and the despair of the common man, brought about by the seemingly insatiable greed of the gentry for more power and wealth. In this and other works, Burns wags an accusing finger at the Kirk, the Established Church of Scotland (ECS), bound by *unholy* alliances with the Crown, for turning a blind eye on such misery.

When the ECS endorsed the Patronage Act of 1733, giving landowners (lairds) the right to appoint ministers in their parishes, a large number of ministers took the risk and seceded to start what became the Secession Church (SC).This also started years of verbal and legal skirmishes not only between the SC and the ECS, but within the ECS where many still disagreed with its Auld Kirk views. In his satirical poem *The Twa Herds,* Burns shows the foolishness of the situation, as two shepherds, using the logic of the church, argue about which of them best manages their laird's flocks. In the verse quoted here, the narrator turns things around by showing the shepherds they would be better combining their skills to manage the lairds, and let the sheep (brutes) choose their shepherds.

O! a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,
Come, join your counsel and your skills
To cowe the lairds,
An' get the brutes the power themsel's
To choose their herds.

By the time William Proudfoot decided to become a minister in the early 1800s, the Secession Church was more widely accepted—but it too had internal schisms. In1820 liberally-minded secessionists (new lights), professing a broader view of the world, formed the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church. It took this synod quite some time to realize that being truly united does not come easily. One issue it dithered over for years was the need to send missionaries overseas. It believed the "*missionary style"* developed *"for preserving the gospel and of diffusing it through our native land, when the dark clouds of error and apostasy began to gather on the Scottish Establishment,"* could be deployed in other countries. A missionary committee was formed in September of 1831 and after weeks of deliberation—as it turned out based on seriously outdated information—decided on the Canadas.[2] In April of 1832, it reported having selected three volunteers: William Proudfoot, minister at Pitrodie in the Carse of Gowrie; William Robertson, minister in Cupar of Fife and Thomas Christie, minister of Holme in Orkney. [8, 9]

The missionaries received no written instructions, but in personal interviews they were advised on how they should conduct themselves. For example, regarding existing Presbyterian congregations, *"They should eventually coalesce with them, so as not unnecessarily multiply the religious divisions of the country. That for some time the missionaries should delay uniting in any close connection with them, until they had sent such accounts as should enable the committee to form a judgment on the matter, and had received their reply. But as the committee was ignorant, in a great measure, of the present state of doctrine and discipline among their transatlantic brethren in that quarter, they gave it as their advice."* [9]

The following pages provide glimpses into the life and times of the Rev. William Proudfoot and of those affected by his decisions and actions. When he uprooted himself from his first congregation in the parish of Pitrodie[3] to become a missionary in Upper Canada, he took with him a small forest of family members that needed to be transplanted and nurtured in that new land. It is the story of congregational families both in Scotland and Upper Canada, brought together by the strength of his convictions, his leadership by example, and his willingness to go those extra miles to preach what he called the glorious gospel—and in a manner more in keeping with glorious, than the somewhat gloomy approach of the Auld Kirk.

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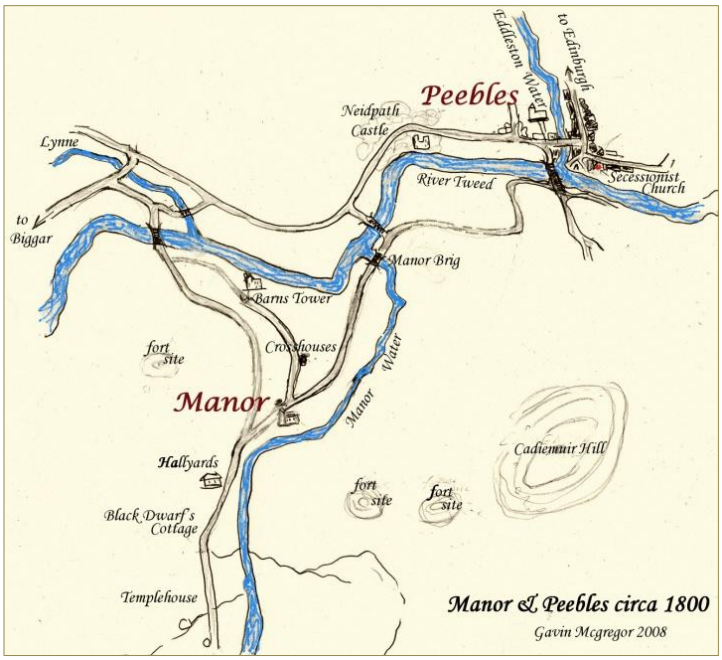
1) Dialects and idiomatic expressions varied from region to region.
2) Refers to Upper and Lower Canada.
3) Pitrodie is the spelling used by William Proudfoot and retained in this document; however, some of the referenced sources use the modern spelling—Pitroddie.

Ed: Numbers shown in brackets such as [9] are keyed to the source list on page 26.

In Manor Born

Walking home from reviewing progress on the construction of his first church in Upper Canada, the Rev. William Proudfoot mulls over the difficulties he has encountered in starting a congregation in the village of London. Catching the sound of waterfowl on the nearby river, he stops to admire the place known as the Forks of the Thames. The scene conjures up memories of the town of Peebles in Scotland, situated at the confluence of the River Tweed and Eddleston Water, and a bit further upstream, close to where Manor Water joins the Tweed, the hamlet of Manor where he was born.[1)]



Falling into a reverie he sees himself as a lad sauntering by Manor Kirk, and there, running towards him is his sister Ann, waving her arms excitedly and between breaths, in her familiar brogue, telling him that David Ritchie had been seen that very day in the kirkyaird with Professor Ferguson's son, and another young man staying with him at the Hallyards.

The young man was Walter Scott, who later used David as the model for the character in *The Black Dwarf.* David had chosen the life of a recluse after being deformed in an accident at a local quarry. He had built a cottage in the woods and although he was seldom seen, it did not stop the locals from making up stories that he was not of this world.

In a blink he is a small boy looking up at his mother[2)] and tugging at her apron to get her attention as she fetches in the clothes from the drying green, while keeping an eye out for his father due home from work as a wright.[3)] Nodding to himself, he muses, I may very well have followed in father's footsteps, but little did a' ken whit God had in mind; however, the practical knowledge gained from his father had been useful in the Lord's work.

His day-dreaming had cost time, and now he must hurry to get back to his dear wife Isobel, nursing baby Emily, and to the anticipated voices of the younger children eager to be first to tell him what they as pioneers did and saw during the day. As his footsteps reverberate on the rustic wooden bridge, imaginatively called Blackfriars, crossing the north branch of the Thames, his earlier thoughts on the confluence of rivers seemed to symbolize his vision of uniting the various Presbyterian factions from in and around London in the wee church nearing completion on York Street in the village.

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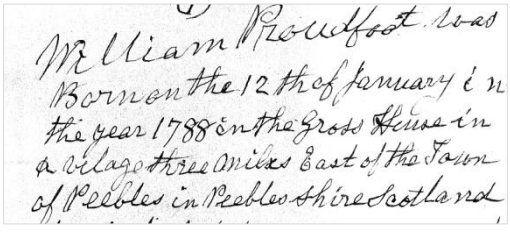
1) Official records for Manor Parish show only that William was baptized on May 25th, 1788, and identify his father as Alexander Proudfoot, a wright at Crosshouses. Notes written by Robert Proudfoot in 1915, at age 90, state that his father was born on the 12th of January in the year 1788 in the Gross House in a village three miles from the town of Peebles, in Peeblesshire, Scotland. In the broad Scots, c*ross* sounds like *gross* and Robert probably remembered hearing that pronunciation. [15c]


William Proudfoot was
Born on the 12th of January in
the year 1788 in the Gross House in
a Village three Miles East of the Town
of Peebles in Peebles-shire Scotland

2) His mother's name was Elizabeth [Hart]. For more information on the Proudfoot family lineage see page 21.

3) Wright is a term used to describe a person skilled in a craft, and is usually combined with a trade, like millwright or wheelwright. In this context, without a prefix, it is used to signify a craftsman responsible for all the woodwork employed in the construction and maintenance of buildings, such as a carpenter-joiner.

Author's note: The specific actions and thoughts attributed to Proudfoot in the articles, *In Manor Born* and *The Proudfoot Path,* although fictitious, are a plausible synthesis of historical facts and local knowledge drawn from my own experiences growing up in that part of southern Scotland, and then living for many years in London, Ontario.

Manor Water Valley

Manor Water and the parish of Manor are the same length, about 17 kilometres. From its source on the side of Greenside Law it is fed by many burns with names like Horse Hope Burn and Ugly Grain that quickly turn it into a fast-flowing small river tumbling over rocks and creating pools that are homes for wary trout. As it leaves the hill country it begins to wind its way through more pastoral countryside before joining the river Tweed.

Tracing Manor Water back towards its source leads into some of the highest hills in southern Scotland and the scenery is reminiscent of the Highlands. The old drovers took this route, driving their livestock around hills like Dollar Law, on their way to join the Great Drove Road that stretched from Falkirk to Carlyle. Anyone deciding to walk up Dollar Law will be rewarded by looking back now and again to enjoy the unfolding vistas of Manor Valley. Then from Dollar Law, by following well-marked ridges, skirt around Fifescar Knowe, Cramalt Craig and on to the summit of Broad Law (2800ft), to be further rewarded with views of Tweedsmuir, Talla and Meggat Water, and many of the prominent hills in the Southern Uplands.

Walter Scott (1771–1832), while at Edinburgh University, became friends with Adam Ferguson the son of Professor Adam Ferguson who lived at Hallyards. **Professor Ferguson (1723–1816)** was part of the Scottish Enlightenment movement and a contemporary of David Hume. He wrote many works, but is noted for his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* and is considered by some as the father of sociology.

Parish lore tells of how Scott's father had the crumbling St. Gordian's Kirk, located in the upper valley, torn down and the material used for a road bed. Its bell, inscribed *In honore Sanct. Gordiani MCCCLXXVIII,* along with other artefacts, was placed in Manor Kirk. The relics were later transferred to the present church (*right*) when it was built in the 1870s. A granite runic cross marks the former location of St. Gordian's Kirk near Kirkhope.

John Buchan (1875–1940), novelist and former governor general of Canada, spent many summers in the neighbouring parish of Broughton and often walked to Peebles on a route[1)] that took him close to Manor Hamlet, now called Kirkton Manor. Besides casting a few flies into the pools of Manor Water, the valley became a source of material for his stories. One of his first books, published in 1896, called *Scholar Gipsies,* is a collection of essays on characters and life in the upper Tweed valley—such as the gamekeeper in *On Cademuir Hill*, who provides this perspective—"Below him, in the peaceful valley, Manor Water seemed to be wrinkled across it, like a scrawl from the pen of a bad writer." His first novel, *John Burnet of Barns,* published in 1898, about the adventures of John Burnet, heir to the 17th century Barns House, located north of Manor hamlet, and a short distance from Crosshouses. John Buchan provides wonderful descriptions of how history and the natural environment have shaped the character of the people of Manor Valley and most likely that of William Proudfoot.

Kirkton Manor from Cademuir Hill © Jim Barton (above).
Manor Valley from Dollar Law © Richard Webb. Photos used under Creative Commons License (www.geograph.org.uk)

Kirkton Manor Church Image © James Denham. Used under Creative Commons License (www.geograph.org.uk)

1) The route taken by John Buchan from Broughton to Peebles is now a heritage walk called *The John Buchan Way,* offering walkers a chance to enjoy the countryside that inspired Buchan, Scott, Proudfoot and many others.

The Proudfoot Path

15-year-old William Proudfoot is on his way to commence studies at Edinburgh University. He is accompanied by his brother Alexander, who is taking him to Peebles to catch the Edinburgh stagecoach. He is excited about the prospect of university life, but as the buggy approaches Manor Brig he asks Alec to stop for a minute. Although he has crossed this humpback bridge many times, today has special meaning; it signifies his breaking with the past.

As he stands on the bridge staring into the swirling water, his thoughts also begin to swirl, from past to present then on to the prospect of someday becoming a secessionist minister. The feel of the stone parapet against his fingers reminds him that even this old brig was built with money diverted from the stipend for Manor Kirk in 1702 by its patron Lord William Douglas. The parish of Manor always had been a stronghold of the Established Church of Scotland and was likely to remain so. Therefore, the small number of secessionists[1)] had to attend services held in Peebles.

Old Manor Brig, Manor Water Image © Gordon Brown and used under Creative Commons License (www.geograph.org.uk)

He reflects on some events that had pointed him in the direction of being a minister—the humanitarian work of Thomas Leckie, the secessionist minister in Peebles—the inspirational preaching of the Rev. John Brown of the parish of Biggar—and above all, the example set by his parents and the encouragement of his friends. He is jolted to reality by Alec's voice reminding him that the coach for Edinburgh, like time and tide, would not wait for him!

William graduated from Edinburgh University in 1807, and with a definite sense of purpose, wasted little time in starting the demanding five-year theology program of Professor George Lawson, at the Secessionist Divinity Hall in Selkirk.

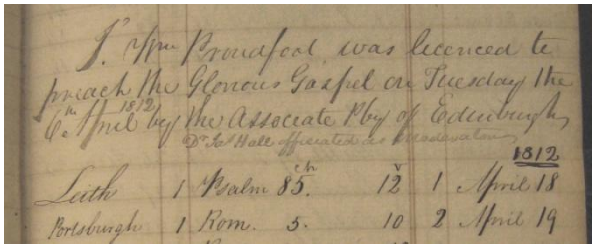
Official records show he received his licence April 6th, 1812, and as a relief preacher travelled to over seventy parishes, from the Borders to the Highlands, before accepting a call from the congregation of the parish of Pitrodie, Perthshire, where he had preached on three separate occasions; because the congregation had been without a minister of their own for more than 12 years. The Rev. Adam Philip [4] tells us that the church managers were considering writing to Presbytery to extinguish [*sic*] the congregation, but John Rodger, preses (chairman), persuaded them to try once again. Although the details behind Proudfoot's decision to accept the call from Pitrodie are not available, he was ordained there on August 11th, 1813, and was about to face the never-ending challenges of a minister in a rural parish.

Shortly after becoming a relief preacher he started a logbook[2)] in which he recorded sermon topics, along with the dates and places where they were given. The introduction on the first page reads:

*"I Wm Proudfoot was licenced to preach the Glorious Gospel on Tuesday * the 6th April 1812 by the Associate Pby. of Edinburgh, Dr. Jas. Hall officiated as Moderator."*

His first sermon, from Psalm 85:12, was presented on Saturday, April 18th 1812 in Leith, near Edinburgh.

"Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and your land shall yield her increase."


I. Wm Proudfoot was licenced to preach the Glorious Gospel on Tuesday the 6th April 1812 by the Associate Pby of Edinburgh, Dr. Jas Hall officiated as Moderator.

1812

Leith	1	Psalm 85.	12	1	April 18
Portsburgh	1	Rom.	5.	10	2 April 19

1) Statistical accounts for Manor Parish [23] for 1791, record that of the 42 families in the parish, only one is listed as being Secessionist, and although not mentioned by name it was most likely the Proudfoot family. All the other families were of the Established Church.

2) The logbook in the archives of the University of Western Ontario [15a] shows that he maintained it for the rest of his life.
*April 6th, 1812 is correct, but it fell on a Monday!

Influences

Starting in the mid-1700s and continuing well into the 1800s, Scotland underwent tremendous socio-economic upheavals, resulting in part from new ideas brought about in the Scottish Enlightenment period. Wealthy landowners in the Lowlands, eager to increase their profits, adopted new scientific methods that were responsible for more than sixty-thousand redundant farm workers being sent to North America, including Upper Canada. The Lowland clearances, in terms of the sheer numbers involved, were just as drastic as the Highland clearances. Peeblesshire was badly affected: "The 18th century was not a good time for Peebles as poverty and hunger were common in the Burgh. In 1741, 1774 and again in 1783 the council found it necessary to purchase food for the inhabitants. The Industrial Revolution did not immediately affect Peebles and recovery from these dark years was slow." (Historical Background, Peebles.)

The Secessionist Church in Peebles built 1791: Note the similarity[1)] of its roofline to that of Pitrodie Church, shown on the next page.

The Rev. Thomas Leckie had to find solutions to the many social problems when he was ordained minister of the Secessionist Church in Peebles on July 10th, 1794. Under his leadership the congregation rose from 90 to about 400. His efforts to build the secessionist community would have made him a role model for someone like William contemplating the ministry. Proudfoot would have known some of the Leckie children [26]. He wrote in his journal while in York (UC) in1834: *"... met John Leckie [here] directly from Edinburgh ... he brought welcome news of my mother and brother Alexander ... we had a grand 'crack' about old times."* John Leckie studied theology at Selkirk in the class of 1817. He became a teacher of classics at the University High School of New York, and died there in 1841 [7].

The Rev. John Brown DD was characterized at Selkirk Divinity Hall as having a taste for the flamboyant and metaphysical. Proudfoot mentions in his journal entry for December 26th, 1833, that he has a book of Brown's sermons. When Brown later moved to Edinburgh he was instrumental in developing the foreign missionary services of the Secession Church, which led to sending missionaries to Upper Canada.

Education: The *Canadian Biographical Dictionary* claims that William Proudfoot attended Lanark Grammar School before going to Edinburgh University and not Peebles as one would surmise. Lanark Grammar School, founded in 1183, had an excellent academic reputation, so going there may have been a strategic choice. Co-incidentally, during that period Lanark was the focus of Robert Owen's world-renowned New Lanark social experiments, in which he provided free education for the children of his factory workers, and better working and living standards for all his workers. There is no question that William attended Edinburgh University, for a citation dated March 28th, 1805, states: "*The bearer Mr. Wm. Proudfoot attended the Humanity Class in the University of Edinburgh, two years, & prosecuted his studies with great diligence & success is attested by John Hill Lit & Humanity"* [14]. Hill was professor of humanity at Edinburgh from 1775 until his death in [Sept.] 1805.

Dr. George Lawson is synonymous with the Divinity Hall in Selkirk and was known by his students as *The Doctor*. One tends to think of divinity halls as university institutions devoted to theological studies, such as in Harvard or Glasgow; however, the arrangement in Selkirk, though much less formal, maintained just as high standards. The students lodged with parishioners and the church itself was the classroom—this may have served as a model for the divinity school Proudfoot would start in London, UC.

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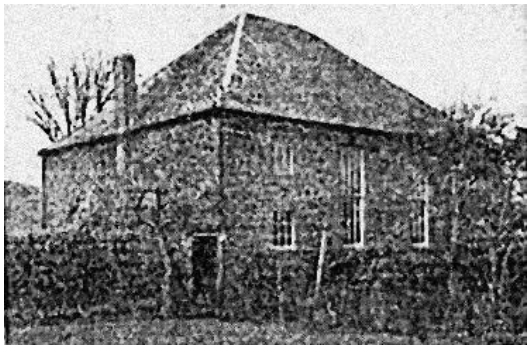
1) The similarity may be just another coincidence, but some of his father's skills and an eye for detail, may have rubbed off on William. The congregation at Pitrodie regarded him as a bit of an architect because of his input to their new church. William Proudfoot's grandson, also named William, born to Alexander in 1851, became an acclaimed Ontario architect and master builder [22].

Pitrodie Parish

The dynamic and talented new minister at Pitrodie began to make his presence felt. "Crowds flocked to hear him, and times of power and quickened interest followed." [4] The well-being of the congregation was not all the young minister had on his mind. Ten months after his ordination, the Rev. William Proudfoot and Isobel Aitchison were married in Liberton, near Edinburgh. The marriage banns were read on Sunday, June 5th, 1814; William preached in Pitrodie that Sunday, then journeyed to Liberton for their marriage on June 8th, and was back in Pitrodie in time to conduct the services on June 12th.



Pitrodie Church (c.1931)
Today it is a forlorn ruin. Photos are used by permission of Donald Abbott, a descendant of John Rodger who signed the call to Proudfoot.

The normally cautious parish managers decided it was time to build a new church to consolidate the congregational growth. From the nearby manse, Isobel would have been able to see work taking place on the new church, so desperately needed to replace the dilapidated structure he had inherited. The new building, known simply as the meeting-house, also attracted the attention of architectural students from Dundee, mainly because of the unique roof design [1]. All this activity would have represented quite a contrast to Isobel's more orderly life on the family farm near Biggar[1)] in southern Scotland.

Adding to the enthusiastic atmosphere was a new voice, for on May 1st, 1815, Isobel gave birth to their first child, named Mary Wilson, after Isobel's mother. At that joyous time she could not have imagined 20 years later at age forty-six, giving birth to their 11th child, Emily, in a far-off land, where once again William would be organizing a congregation and building a church.

Over the years Isobel knew the congregation had a struggle meeting its obligations to the parish and her family. While church membership increased, the local economy decreased. William started a boarding school. He taught classics and mathematics while she looked after boarding the students. He meticulously accounted for every penny: the cost of pencils, paper, clothing and even haircuts. The value of a patron may have crossed his mind … perish the thought! The Rev. Adam Philip [4] states: "The minutes of Pitrodie witness the force of Mr. Proudfoot. He was a man who was willing to give up cheerfully part of his income when duty called for it, but was resolute in resisting arrears[2)] to himself."

In April of 1832, William was notified that an application he had made in response to the United Associate Synod's call for missionaries for the Canadas had been accepted. This was good news, for it appears as a missionary he would receive a small allowance for a limited time until he established a new congregation in Upper Canada. He was totally responsible for getting his family there, and for all their personal expenses. William immediately started planning the trip and settling affairs with his loyal congregation. In a journal he started at that time, he wrote: "*1832. June 26. Rouped* [auctioned] *all that part of my furnishings I did not mean to take to America. The proceeds of the sale were £94. I was enabled to leave Pitrodie without owing any man any thing but Love."* [5]

Robert Proudfoot adds the following perspective. "We had an auction sale and all went off well … the congregation [was] very sorry at our going and everybody wanted a bit of something … a wine glass with a broken foot brought a penny." [15c]

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1) Isobel's father was John Aitchison; a farmer at Skirling Farms located two miles from the town of Biggar [15c].
2) Proudfoot resisted being in financial debt to his congregation, for he knew only too well the plight of his parishioners, and by volunteering to cut his stipend he removed some of their anxiety; however, as his family increased, the financial burden on his shoulders grew heavier. Income from the boarding school came from parents living outside the parish—enabling him to pay his bills, while maintaining dignity and respect—not to mention helping the local economy.

Note: The *calligraphy* font is used to signify direct quotations from documents written by Proudfoot.

The Carse of Gowrie

Pitrodie lies between Perth and Dundee in the region known as the Carse of Gowrie, renowned for its rich soil; today some regard it as the garden of Scotland. When Proudfoot lived there the economy depended on mixed farming and a nearby stone quarry that supplied materials to the expanding city of Dundee, so the ability of the Pitrodie parishioners to financially support the church varied greatly.

It is not surprising that when William Proudfoot moved to Upper Canada he wanted to have land of his own as a cushion against such economic fluctuations … or at least provide some degree of self-sufficiency.[1)]

The village of Pitrodie, in the mid-to-late nineteenth century: Photograph courtesy of Donald Abbott.
Top: **Farming on the Carse.** Image © Richard Webb and used under the Creative Common License.

Robert Proudfoot remembers—"Pitrodie was a clay-built village; clay church, clay parsonage, clay in every building. It was a wild place. But Mr. Proudfoot soon changed all; got a good stone church and stone dwelling house. He had a good large garden stocked with the best of all kinds of fruit trees and bushes and was a great success. Indeed a real beauty spot and admired by all. He opened a day school which was highly prized by the people and was a great success. After a time there was something higher needed and he opened a high school which was much thought of and got all he could take. High school class was from 7–9am. Day school was from 9am–2pm. Evening high school was from 5–7pm … the Proudfoot children were all educated at home." [15c]

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1) When Proudfoot began to establish himself in London he wrote to his daughters Mary and Elizabeth who were still in Scotland: "*April 5th 1833. I have bought 100 acres of excellent land in the Township of Westminster. The land is of the very finest description in Canada and will bear as good crops as the best in the Carse … I am drawing up plans for a house, which I propose to build immediately, and which will be ready for you both and Aunt Betsy when you come. It is a frame house and will be much better than Pitrodie Manse … The Thames, on which London stands, is a very fine river, not just so large as the Tay at Perth, but not much less.*" The name of the township appears in error, for on May 21st, 1833 [5] he closed a deal he had pending on the property of Donald McDonald, comprising half of Lot 20 (100 acres) in the Township of London. He also bought the remainder of Lot 20 from James Campbell, giving him a total of 200 acres. Regarding the purchase, he wrote. "*The price is high, but its conveniency to the town, the abundance of excellent water, the goodness of the soil, all render it for me at least a better bargain than any that I had seen.*"

Pitrodie to Upper Canada

Parishioners, many having shared 19 years with the Reverend Proudfoot, watched with sadness as he and his sons, Alexander aged 15 and John soon to be 12, set out on foot from Pitrodie over the hills to Perth. Isobel and the younger children travelled in a friend's cart and took the low road. Mary and Elizabeth remained in Scotland with relatives to finish their education and would make the journey two years later.

Proudfoot and his very excited family, joined by fellow missionary the Rev. Robertson and his wife, sailed on the brigantine *Crown* from Greenock on July 7th, 1832. The Proudfoot Papers [5] describe the voyage—each page filled with his astute observations and tongue-in-cheek comments, such as: *"The sea rough all day, the Captain said it was nothing. What, thought I, will it be when it becomes something."* It was August 29th before they arrived in Montréal. Thomas Christie sailed from Leith at the end of July. [9]

The Proudfoots left Montréal on September 1st, and although somewhat stressed, arrived in Hammond, N.Y. on Sept. 5th—where they had prearranged to spend time at the farm of Isobel's brother-in-law to get acclimatised to their new surroundings. In their journey from Montréal they had experienced various modes of transportation—some of them rather hard on the body—like the 50-mile coach ride from Cornwall to Prescott. "*Mrs. P. was all black and blue with knocks caused by the jolting of the coach.*"

While Isobel enjoyed the company of her sister, Emily, Proudfoot spent several days in Brockville meeting with fellow ministers and discussing his mission. He soon learned that in that region of Upper Canada they had already well-established congregations, and were now in need of ministers to cope with the influx of immigrants. He would have to go well beyond the town of York to find regions where he could organize new congregations and build churches. They made it clear he was welcome to stay, but he decided to move on.

It is not clear how Isobel and the children dealt with the news, but once again he left them in the care of his brother-in-law, and on September 11th took a steamship from Prescott, arriving in York on September 13th.

During the voyage, fearful of what lay ahead—especially the cholera epidemic in York—he prayed: *"May God who has been my protector and guide hitherto, protect and guide me still. I am dependent on Him alone for I have no other friend on whom I can lean. O that I had such confidence in his mercy, like Abraham, to go forward where God may lead me."*

His time in York was lonely and stressful as he attempted to find a suitable place to rent for his family, and in the process gathering information for planning his mission. It was a joyous time on October 12th when he was reunited with Isobel and the children. Two-year-old Janet, who had been very upset when he left them in Hammond, sprang into his arms and cried out *"Found Papa again!"* She buried her head in his bosom and they wept with joy; *"... and had you seen her you would have wept too,"* admits a happy father.

Life took a further turn for the better when he saw Thomas Christie disembark from the same steamer. He recalls: "*His coming was a source of the truest joy to me."* The two labourers—saddened by the news that their colleague William Robertson had died of cholera in Montréal—formed an immediate bond and set out to explore the regions west of York, leaving Isobel and the boys to cope until he got back.

News of their competence soon spread, and when William arrived in the village of London on November 8th he was greeted with enthusiasm. On November 11th he preached in the school to a representative gathering of Presbyterians, mostly Established Church and Secessionist adherents, drawn from the village and surrounding areas. At the end of the service many expressed interest in calling him as their minister; however, a Rev. McLatchie, a Presbyterian minister from Ireland, also a recent arrival in the village, claimed he had a right to be given the same chance as the Rev. Proudfoot. To avoid a pointless confrontation and to allow the prospective congregation time to make a reasoned choice, William returned to his family in York.

His integrity was rewarded when he received a letter dated December 22nd outlining acceptable terms, including a stipend … and stating that Rev. McLatchie was no longer a candidate.

He returned to London on February 6th, 1833, and after many meetings with settlers, some as far away as Goderich, the Rev. William Proudfoot officially established a congregation in the village of London on March 17th, 1833 … without many of the ECS adherents he had hoped would join him. His diary for March 16th offers an explanation: *"Saw Findlay McDonald today who told me the Highlanders in London village do not intend to unite with us, as they wish to have the Kirk of Scotland in London ... I have some fears that they may some day or other disturb us."*

Perspectives on the Journey

Judging by the time it took correspondence to cross the Atlantic, William Proudfoot must have contemplated emigrating and set the wheels in motion well before being accepted as a missionary. The planning involved was so extensive; in addition to the arrangements he had made with his brother-in-law, Mr. McGregor, a minister living in Hammond (NY), he had established contacts in Montréal, Prescott, Brockville and York. He had budgeted for the cost of travel, food and accommodation; he was not stingy, only realistic about the task at hand. He was careful not to expose his wife and children to any foreseeable hardship. For example, he hired a coach to take all of his family from Perth to Glasgow and reserved the entire inside of the coach so they could spend some time together before the long sea voyage. On board the *Crown* they travelled cabin class and not steerage as did most emigrants. William Proudfoot may have believed his mission was God's will, but he accepted that it was his responsibility to make it happen with grace.

While in York, late in 1832, he wrote to his daughters in Scotland, providing detailed information on what to expect, and whom to contact on their journey. *"The steamboats on the St. Lawrence surpass all that is to be met with in Britain in point of grandeur and size. You will need to be pretty well dressed in them; not braw but more smart than crossing the Atlantic."* Isobel Proudfoot added this postscript to the letter: "*My Dearest Mary and Elizabeth: I see everyone has forgotten to mention Mamma. I am wearying much to see you both. Papa is very much liked, and might have settled long before this time but it is not easy to get a place in everyway suitable. I hope in the Spring we will be in a place of our own … I will write to all my friends when we get a place where the air is clean, but I can tell you this is not the case in York; it is a rather low lying place*." [5]

It appears Elizabeth dressed especially braw, for when she made the journey in 1834 she attracted the attention of John Norval who accompanied her to London, where they were married by her father on September 1st, 1835.

Robert, or Bobby as he was called, remembers living in *Muddy* York in a house owned by a Mr. Bell, a carpenter at the barracks. "My brother Alexander opened a day school for little ones and we had a happy winter. Father was away about Hamilton and London and all that part of the country forming stations." [15c]

When Proudfoot moved his family from York to London in the spring of 1833 he obtained passage for them on the *Great Britain*—the largest and fastest steamship on the lakes—to Niagara [-on-the-Lake] and then to Queenston. After sight-seeing, including General Brock's monument, they were taken in wagons up the Niagara Escarpment to Chippewa. One can sense their excitement when *"… the falls burst into view. What a sight."*

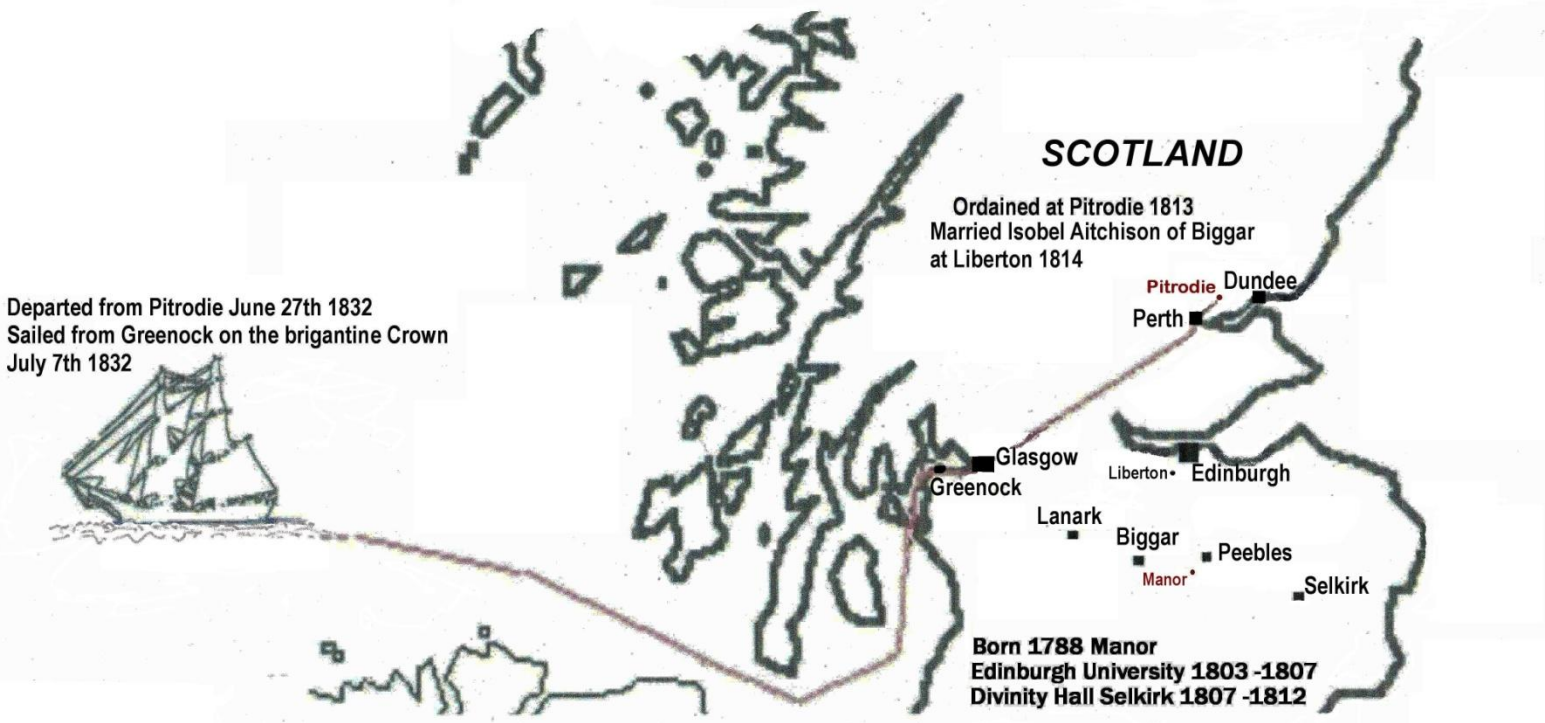
Due to a labour shortage, Proudfoot had to *"toil like a porter"* to load their luggage on the steamship *Adelaide*, which was preparing to leave from Chippewa. The *Adelaide* had great difficulty battling the current on the Niagara River and had to anchor on the Canadian side near Fort Erie. It eventually got up enough steam to cross the river and enter the Erie Canal and on safely to Buffalo—a town Proudfoot really wanted to see because of its rapid growth following the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825—describing it as an astounding place. The journey across Lake Erie to Port Stanley took longer than expected due to fog. They had departed from York on the morning of April 28th and although tired, they were in high spirits when at sundown on May 7th they arrived in London; *"… thankful that I and my family had got so far on our journey in good health."*

With respect to health, he relates in a letter to Scotland: "*Nobody uses porridge in this country! The children breakfast on fried ham and potatoes, and tea and bread, and they like it far better than porridge."*

From an original painting attributed to Lady Eveline Marie Alexander

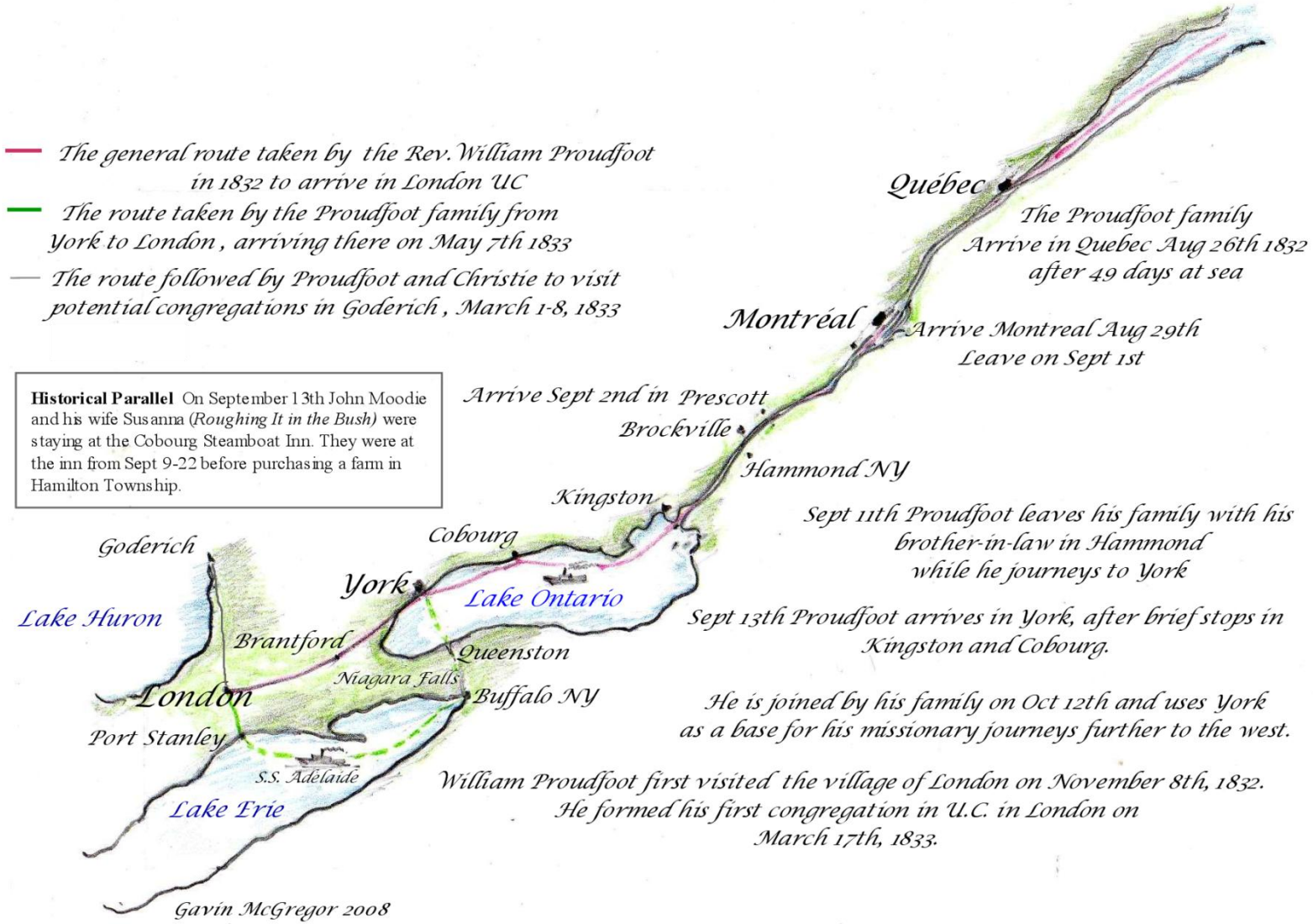
The village of London emerging from a landscape of grotesque tree-stumps was the first visual impression many settlers had of their new home. To the travellers heading west along Dundas Street, just approaching Wellington Street the eastern boundary of the village, St. Paul's Anglican Church on North Street, on the northern edge, must have been a reassuring and blessed sight.

This wooden church, built in 1834 was devastated by fire in 1844. In 1845 most of the buildings seen here were destroyed by an even greater fire, prompting their replacements to be of brick and stone.



Important locations and dates in the life of William Proudfoot in Scotland

Gavin McGregor 2008


The general route taken by the Rev. William Proudfoot in 1832 to arrive in London UC
The route taken by the Proudfoot family from York to London , arriving there on May 7th 1833
The route followed by Proudfoot and Christie to visit potential congregations in Goderich , March 1-8, 1833
Historical Parallel On September 13th John Moodie and his wife Susanna (Roughing It in the Bush) were staying at the Cobourg Steamboat Inn. They were at the inn from Sept 9-22 before purchasing a farm in Hamilton Township.
Québec
The Proudfoot family Arrive in Quebec Aug 26th 1832 after 49 days at sea
Montréal
Arrive Montreal Aug 29th Leave on Sept 1st
Arrive Sept 2nd in Prescott
Brockville
Hammond NY
Kingston
Sept 11th Proudfoot leaves his family with his brother-in-law in Hammond while he journeys to York
Cobourg
Goderich
York
Lake Ontario
Lake Huron
Brantford
Queenston
Sept 13th Proudfoot arrives in York, after brief stops in Kingston and Cobourg.
Niagara Falls
London
Buffalo NY
He is joined by his family on Oct 12th and uses York as a base for his missionary journeys further to the west.
Port Stanley
S.S. Adelaide
Lake Erie
William Proudfoot first visited the village of London on November 8th, 1832. He formed his first congregation in U.C. in London on March 17th, 1833.
Gavin McGregor 2008

Pride and Patronage

Proudfoot's new congregation appointed a management board. William Robertson, co-signer of the letter that brought Proudfoot back to London, was its treasurer, and on behalf of the congregation he applied for and received a half-acre lot on York Street, suitable for their church. Getting the land had a bittersweet taste when Colonel Talbot [27] notified Proudfoot after construction had started that it was for all Presbyterians in the village of London, which included the Established Church of Scotland adherents, who really wanted to build on land specifically deeded to the Church of Scotland. For some reason, Talbot would not accept that Robertson[1)] was acting only on behalf of the Secession Church when he made the application, and not the ECS adherents. At some level of authority the decision was made to continue with the construction of a church and to deal separately with the issue of ownership. In the meantime, Proudfoot began holding regular services in the Methodist meeting house and other available buildings, which were open to all Presbyterians wishing to attend.

While hearings regarding ownership dragged on, a church gradually took shape. Progress on its construction was equally slow, for under the circumstances tradesmen were reluctant to undertake projects unless payment was guaranteed. On April 3rd, 1834, Proudfoot wrote: *"This day the framework of the roof has been put up. The business proceeds very slowly. What it will come to, I cannot tell, but appearances are not very smiling."* His journals show that in 1835 he visited the United States to preach and obtain donations from generous secessionist supporters, which enabled completion of the church.

On April 17th, 1836, the church, still needing finishing touches to the tower, opened for public service bearing the name United Presbyterian Church, signifying its intention rather than ownership. The official deed issued in1838 granted the land and the building exclusively to the trustees of the *United Associate Congregation in London; in connection with The Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas; in connection with the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church in Scotland.* For the leaders of the Established Kirk this definitely was not the end of the matter!

Many ECS adherents continued to attend services in the United Presbyterian (UP) Church, nicknamed by some the *Scotch* church; others, led by Duncan McKenzie (p.20) kept focused on getting their own land and kirk. They were rewarded in 1841, when a petition made directly to the Crown, rather than Col. Talbot, on behalf of the *"Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland in London Upper Canada"*—carefully noting how they differed from "Proudfoot's seceders"—for three acres on the east side of Waterloo Street, between Duke Street (Dufferin) and North Street (Queens Ave.), was approved by Lieutenant Governor, Sir George Arthur.[2)]

On October 12th, 1842, Duncan McKenzie laid the foundation stone for North Street Presbyterian Church, and when it opened in September 1843, part of the service was conducted in Gaelic by a Rev. Donald McKenzie. Less than a year later, following the Free Church disruptions in Scotland, most of the congregation voted in favour of the Free Church and became St. Andrew's Presbyterian Free Church [10]. The remainder separated and formed the nucleus of a congregation known as St. James Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The St. Andrew's congregation, now seceders from the ECS, did not obtain a full-time minister until the Rev. Dr. Scott was ordained in 1850.

The fundamental principles of the Canadian Synods of the Free Church and of the United Presbyterian Church were so similar that in 1861 they merged to become the *Canada Presbyterian Church*. St. Andrew's dropped the Free Church designation and became St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. At the time of the merger, the UP congregation—following the loss of their York St. church by fire in 1859—was in the process of building a new church located at the corner of Duke Street and Church Street (now included in Clarence Street). When it opened in 1862, it was called First Presbyterian Church, a name that may have appeared a bit provocative to the other Presbyterian congregations in and around London.

With the passage of time most of the deep-seated historical differences between the congregations of First Presbyterian and St. Andrew's Presbyterian gave way to forms of one-upmanship, relating to the merits of being first. This friendly rivalry lasted until 1938, when they united under the same roof to become First-St. Andrew's United Church. (See the timeline chart on page 22.)

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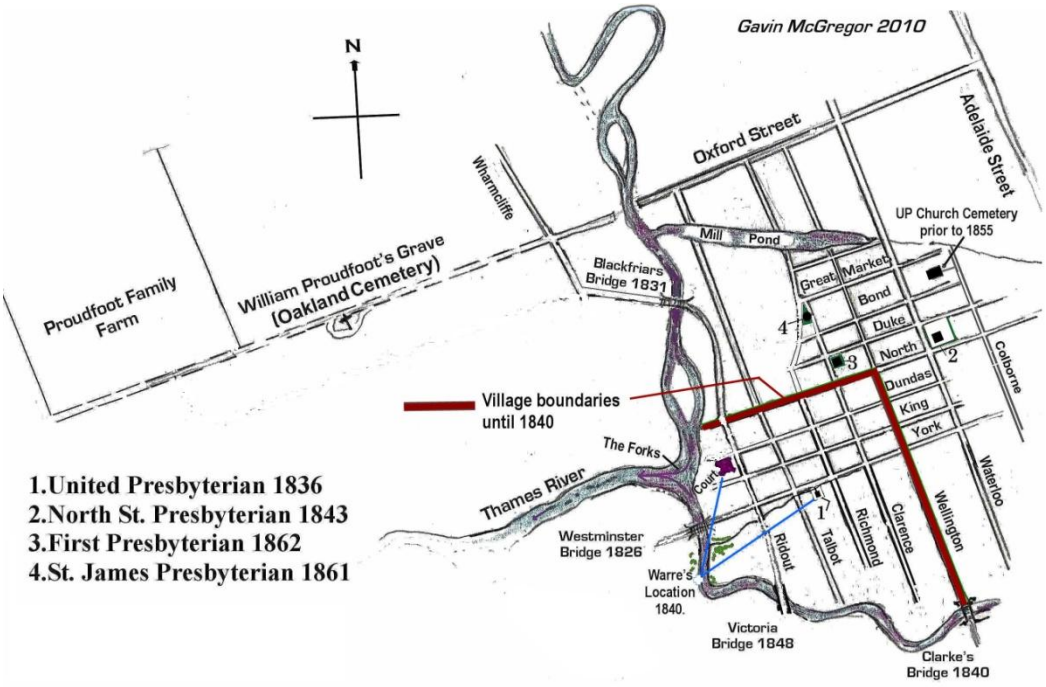
1) William Robertson joined Proudfoot's congregation, but his brothers Ross and Alexander remained ECS adherents and helped to establish North Street Presbyterian Church. In *Proudfoot to Pepperbox to Posterity 1833–1983*, Leslie Robb Gray printed part of a paper he discovered amongst Proudfoot family documents, called *Facts Concerning the Presbyterian Church in London UC*, which helps to explain the problem.

2) In 1847 the trustees for the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian were deeded the land *in perpetuity* by Queen Victoria.

Two Branches … One River

The map shows London as it evolved during the time of the Rev. William Proudfoot. To aid the reader, it shows the location two churches 3 and 4 built after his death, and the current location of his grave.



Drawings of the **United Presbyterian Church** could not be found. The image on the left was created by the author using snippets of information found in *The Proudfoot Papers* and other documents. The church was set back on high dry ground, and a rough wooden bridge crossed a creek that ran between it and York Street [10, 28]. Proudfoot made reference to a tower, but gave no details. Henry Warre's sketch (p.20) looking from the south branch of the Thames, southwest of the church, shows just the spire poking above the trees. The UP Church opened on April 17th, 1836 in a village setting, but after a few years the trees were gone and the small wooden church found itself surrounded by commercial establishments, and at the heart of an emerging city.

On completion of the Great Western Railway (GWR) in 1854, its tracks ran directly behind the church, drastically changing the local topography and the lifestyle of the congregation. On Dec. 6th, 1859 the gallant church, which over the years had survived other fires in the village, was completely destroyed by one that started in a GWR repair shop, and then spread rapidly to other buildings.

North Street Presbyterian Church opened in 1843 sporting an ornate tower and spire. The photo lower left shows the church and manse before they were sold and removed to make way for St. Andrew's Presbyterian in 1869, now First-St. Andrew's United Church.

The ECS adherents who separated from the St. Andrew's congregation in 1844 struggled for many years without a full-time minister or church. However, in 1861 they built **St. James Presbyterian**, located in the triangle between Church St. and Richmond. It became known as the Pepperbox Church because of its unusual shape; however, the architect's drawings identify it as the *Scotch Church*. [16]

Mission & Character Statements

On his first visit to the London region, Proudfoot was introduced to disparate groups of Presbyterians that had struggled for years to keep their faith alive without the guidance of a minister. Sensing their eagerness to obtain his services, he was careful to inform them of how the Secessionist Church differed from the Established Church, particularly in the manner of calling a minister, and provided copies of the secessionist booklets—*A Summary of Principles,* and *Testimony.* [9] Although the situation with Mr. McLatchie caused him a great deal of inner turmoil, he had refused to be drawn into compromises and stuck resolutely to the principle of getting a definite call from the congregation. In a letter written in York, December 31st, 1832, to the London congregation accepting their call, he states: *"Your letter was the occasion of real joy to those of my Christian friends here, to whom I had given an account of my leaving London, who while they respected the principles on which I acted, thought all things considered, that I might have staid and left the blame of the interruptions lie where it ought."* [5]

During the troubling days of the ownership dispute with the ECS adherents William found a light. In a report to the Synod in Scotland, he records this experience: "*On the first Sabbath of June [1834], a day hallowed in the recollections of many in all my congregations … One hundred and two persons sat down at the Lord's Table. Some of these belonged to the English settlement* [1] *and some to the Proof Line.*[2] *We got the loan of the Methodist meeting-house for the occasion; but long before the hour of meeting the house was crowded to excess, and many could not get in. We therefore moved out to the open air. It was the work of but a few minutes to place planks for the whole congregation. I never witnessed a service out of doors where there was such an unexceptionable propriety of behaviour; and this was the opinion of all who had been at tent services in Scotland. There were present many who had not been at the communion table for more than a dozen years. There was joyousness, mixed with a deep solemnity, which was peculiarly affecting."* [9]

William Proudfoot took the challenges of the mission in his significant stride, and proceeded to consolidate congregations outside of London. Robert Proudfoot [15c] remembers: "Now all these places soon formed into small but faithful and lively congregations. He managed to see them all once a fortnight either on the Sabbath Day or a weekday. He must have done that on foot for about three years. Then the congregations put their heads together and got him a nice young filly, saddle and bridle and that put him in good shape."

Several years later: "Some young men, my brother John, Mr. Cavin, Mr. John Fraser and two or three others all wanted to study for the ministry. At length they got father to teach them. As there was no other place for them to live and study, father had the upstairs of the house divided into bedrooms with skylights and made snug. This was the first theological school the mission had in the then Upper Canada." In 1850 it was moved to premises in Toronto to take advantage of non-religious classes available at the new University of Toronto. Robert indicates the school was moved to the recently finished Knox Church[3] in October of 1850. "Father and his students were moved into it, but the stone and lime foundation had not time to dry and was quite damp. This brought on a severe cold, congestion of the lungs, then an attack of his weak heart, which brought on dropsy. He lingered until the 16th January, 1851 and died at the age of 63 years and 4 days."[4]

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1) The English Settlement was named after Presbyterian families from Northumberland, England, that had settled in concessions 9 and 10 in the 1820s. [24] In 1817 Proudfoot spent several weeks preaching in the north of England [15a] and probably knew some of the families that subsequently emigrated.
2) Presbyterians on the Proof Line started meeting at various locations as early as 1830. The Rev. Thomas Christie is credited with organizing a congregation for the United Associate Secession Church in 1832. When Christie accepted a call from Flamborough in 1833, Proudfoot took over the congregation. A church was built ca.1838 and Proudfoot was inducted as its first minister. (Bethel Presbyterian Church records in the archives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.)
3) Knox Church was on the south side of Queen St., between Yonge and Bay. Gregg [11] states there were no special buildings erected in either London or Toronto for the UP Theological College prior to its amalgamation with Knox College in 1861. In 1867 the Rev. John Proudfoot became a part-time lecturer at Knox College [18]; then in 1871 Monmouth College conferred upon him the degree of D.D. for his outstanding work.
4) Reaffirming that his father was born January 12th, 1788.

Epilogue

About ten years after his arrival in Upper Canada, Reverend William Proudfoot had more than met the primary objectives of his mission. He had established congregations, helped them raise funds to build churches and faithfully tended his rural charges until ministers were obtained. Had he chosen, no-one would have denied him the chance to settle down and enjoy preaching the Glorious Gospel; however, he knew much more was needed to sustain present and future congregations. Over the years—most likely starting around the time daughter Mary opened a boarding and day school on Bathurst Street, and where he taught higher level subjects to the children of many of London's prominent families—he had become increasingly aware that his children and those of other families were shaping a new culture in Upper Canada. A culture, which, while acknowledging the history behind the need for separation of church and state, could see that to be of value the principles had to be incorporated into the fabric of this new country, rather than continue to cause disruptions within and between churches; an observation driven home in the aftermath of the 1837 Rebellion. This more inclusive culture would need special care in order to bloom!

Although under pressure to deal with a shortage of ministers, he reasoned with the UP Synod that ministers coming from Scotland, while well-educated and theologically trained, were becoming increasingly alien to this culture, and obtained agreement to start a divinity school in London. Instead of being discouraged by the small budget, as we learned from his son Robert, he rolled up his sleeves, converted the family home into a school, and on top of his regular congregational work, conducted the classes himself.

Amongst its first graduates was his son John, who along with Alexander had walked with him from Pitrodie to Perth in 1832. Rev. John Proudfoot and contemporaries, notably Rev. Dr. William Ormiston (p20), played key roles in bringing about the merger of the UP Church and the Free Church in 1861 to form the Canada Presbyterian Church

As Clerk of the Synod for the UP Church in Upper Canada, Proudfoot saw that ministers needed to be up-to-date, motivated and able to share their views and ideas. The *Presbyterian Magazine* was part of his answer; he was its editor and his son-in-law John Norval the publisher. The first edition, published in January 1843, carried mostly Presbytery matters; then quite unexpectedly, which is typical of Proudfoot, there is an essay with the title *Jesus Christ* attributed to Pascal—the noted 17th century physicist, mathematician and philosopher. It is his essay on Jesus Christ, and appears to be from *Thoughts of Blaise Pascal,* as translated from the original French by Rev. Edward Craig in 1825. The arrangement above of a few selected passages from the essay featured in the *Presbyterian Magazine* is introduced—with probably the same intention as William Proudfoot—simply as food for thought and to promote discussion.

Jesus Christ

Archimedes would be venerated independently of the distinction of his birth. He won no battles; but he has given some wonderful inventions to the world. How great, how illustrious, is he to the scientific mind! Although Archimedes was of a princely birth, it would have been idle to have brought this forward in his book of geometry.

It had been useless for our lord Jesus Christ to come on earth as a monarch, in order to add dignity to the reign of holiness. Jesus Christ, without wealth, without the adventitious distinction of scientific discovery, comes in his order, that of holiness. He publishes no inventions, he wears no crown; but he was humble, patient, holy in the sight of God, terrible to wicked spirits, and free from sin. But with what pomp and magnificence has he come forth before the eyes of the heart, which behold true wisdom! The grandeur of that wisdom, which comes from God, is invisible to merely sensual and merely intellectual men. *Pascal*

It is no surprise to find historians, notably Rev. Robert Small [3], using Rev. Dr. Ormiston's appraisal of Proudfoot found in the *Religious Encyclopaedia* of 1891. *"As a theologian he was scholarly and profound; as a scholar, erudite and accurate; as a preacher, instructive and impressive; as a teacher, clear, logical and inspiring."* This certainly conveys the image of a competent scholarly person—who may have spent just too much time indoors. Not so! For there is also the William Proudfoot who travelled the open roads and rough trails of Scotland and Upper Canada experiencing the wonders, mysteries, hardships and joys of the natural world, along with coming to terms with the equally mysterious, sometimes wonderful, but more often cantankerous nature of mankind. It is this mix of lifestyles that most likely produced his unique understanding of the human condition and his socio-political acumen.

According to John Buchan [29] this coming together of scholar and the gipsy-like lifestyle … *"produce a union so enchanting that it is apt to seem to onlookers as the very secret of life."*

Supplementary notes and documents:

From page 19: Rev. Dr. William Ormiston was born 1821 in Scotland, at Symington, near Biggar, Lanarkshire. This is the same year John Proudfoot was born in Pitrodie, Perthshire. Ormiston came to Upper Canada with his parents in 1834, and settled east of Toronto in Whitby Township. He was a graduate of Victoria College, Cobourg. Victoria College was granted university status by Queen Victoria in 1841, offering degrees in arts, science, law, medicine and divinity. The Reverend Egerton Ryerson was its first principal.

From 1856–1870 he was minister of the UP Church, Hamilton—later Central Canada Presbyterian. He became the moderator of the UP Synod in 1859 and the first moderator of the Canada Presbyterian Church's General Assembly in 1869. In that capacity he conducted services at the opening of *St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, London, Ontario in 1869*. The following year he moved to New York City to become minister of the Collegiate Dutch Reform Church and a trustee of Rutgers College. He died in 1899 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery, New York City.

From page 17: This pencil sketch by Henry Warre (1819–1898) of the London gaol and courthouse, dated 1840, looking from the south branch of the Thames River, also shows a church spire in the location of the UP Church on York Street. The treed gully shown on the far bank is where the creek that ran in front of the UP Church entered the river [28]. Note: The only other church building in that vicinity was a two-storey meeting-house on the south-east corner of King and Talbot streets—built by Methodists in 1839.

Courtesy the Library and Archives Canada Acc N°1965-76-71

Warre studied at Sandhurst from 1832–1837. From 1839–1846 he was aide-de-camp to his uncle, Lieut. General Sir Richard Downes Jackson, then commander-in-chief of the forces in North America. During inspection tours of garrisons Warre visited London. Fortunately he kept journals, sketchbooks and paintings of his career and travels; we are doubly fortunate that some of his work is safely housed in the Library and Archives Canada. The courthouse (Crown) still administering punishment to those found guilty of participating in the rebellion of 1837, and a secessionist church, originally founded on the principle of separation of church and state, portrayed in this Camelot-like setting, is an interesting subject for a young officer and artist, who one day would become General Sir Henry James Warre.

From pages 12 & 16: On Nov 8th, 1832, **William Robertson**, a storekeeper, informed Proudfoot about the various Presbyterian groups in the region, and of the politics and tactics needed to obtain support for his mission—especially amongst kirkmen in the townships who understood no other language than the Gaelic. To understand the situation he was referred to a **Mr. McKenzie**, a.k.a. Squire McKenzie**,** who lived four miles from the village. After breakfast on Nov 9th he walked out to McKenzie's house to talk about his mission. Here is Proudfoot's impression of the meeting. "*He is a most violent kirkman, who will give no encouragement to a man who is not a kirkman, and speaks Gaelic; and the minister he will encourage must be one who will hold or express no opinion unfavourable to the government of this country … I had never met such a real, red tory … but recollecting that political opinion had nothing to do with my mission I said not a word, but left him to have it all his own way."* The following day they met again at Mr. McKenzie's house and had dinner. It appears Proudfoot's silence on politics had translated into a willingness to support him in settling, but, "*My settlement, with his concurrence, depended on my not saying anything against state or church. To this I made no reply, for it would be vain to agree with a man who could propose such a thing."* During dinner Mr. McKenzie expressed opinions on many subjects, revealing in the process that "*… he has of late been appointed a magistrate, or justice of the peace, and thus being dressed up in a little brief authority he looks at everything through the spectacles of his politics."*

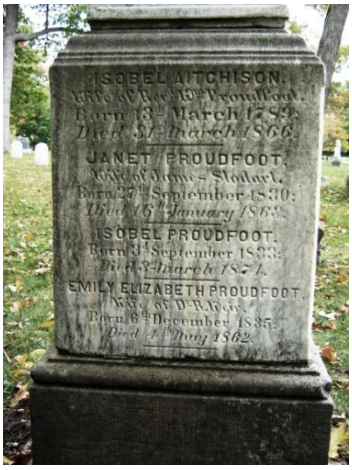
Proudfoot accepted McKenzie's invitation to preach in his neighbourhood the following evening "*… glad of an opportunity to preach the gospel to any that will hear be he Whig or Tory."* Following the service in the schoolhouse in London on Nov. 11th, 1832, Proudfoot, true to his word "*… went out four miles and preached from 1 John, 4-16, to a number of Scotch Highlanders at the third concession. The audience was most attentive, even though they did not understand well the English language. It would be of great importance that a Gaelic minister was sent to labour in this place. The people can be edified only in the Gaelic language."*

Lineage of William Proudfoot

- 1733, Alexander Proudfoot, William's father, was born to James Proudfoot and Margaret Paton in the parish of Lyne—adjacent to Manor parish, in Peeblesshire, Scotland.
- 1784, August 28th, Alexander Proudfoot and Elizabeth Hart were married in the parish of Manor.
- 1788, January 12th, William Proudfoot was born in the parish of Manor, where the parish records show he was baptized on May 25th, but his birth date is not recorded. According to his son, Robert Proudfoot [15c], he was born on January 12th, 1788. A monument in Oakland Cemetery (below) indicates he was born May 23rd—just two days before his baptism. The *London Free Press* on Jan. 17th, 1851 (p.3 col.3) announced he died on January 16, 1851 *"at the age of 63,"* which supports his birth date being prior to Jan. 16th, 1788.
- 1790, William's sister, Ann, was born on May 25th and then baptized on June 6th. The event is recorded on the same page of the old parish records (OPR) recording the baptism of William. The OPR also reveal that he had a brother Alexander, baptized July 17th, 1785, and a sister Margaret, baptized March 18th, 1787.
- 1789, March 19th, Isobella (Isobel) Aitchison was baptized in the parish of St. Cuthbert, in Edinburgh. Her parents were John Aitchison and Mary Wilson. Her birth date is not shown on the parish records. She died in 1866 and the gravestone in Oakland Cemetery shared with her husband and several children, indicates she was born March 13th, 1789. The birth dates of both Isobel and William need further research as well as the circumstances behind the present location of their graves.[1)]
- 1814, June 5th, the banns of marriage for William Proudfoot and Isobella Aitchison were read in the parish of Errol-Pitrodie in Perthshire. According to Robert Proudfoot, they were married on June 8th in the parish of Liberton. Parish records for Liberton confirm this, and also that they were married by the Rev. James Grant, who was the minister there from 1789 to 1831.

Children of William and Isobel:

❖ Mary Wilson, born May 1st 1815	d. 1887
❖ Alexander [Paton], born Jan. 27th 1817	d. 1893
❖ Elizabeth Ann, born Aug. 23rd 1819	d. 1895
❖ John James Aitchison, born Aug. 21st 1821	d. 1903
❖ William, born Nov. 9th 1823	d. 1903
❖ Robert, born July 21st 1825	d. 1917
❖ James, born Jan. 12th 1827	d. 1827
❖ Hart, born July 3rd 1828	d. 1866
❖ Janet, born Sept. 27th 1830	d. 1863
❖ Isobella, born Sept 3rd 1833	d. 1874
❖ Emily Elizabeth, born Dec. 6th 1835	d. 1862



All the children were born in Pitrodie, except Isobella and Emily who were born in London Township, Upper Canada (UC). It is worth noting the ages of the children when they made the journey to UC; also that Isobel must have been pregnant with Isobella during the strenuous journey from York to the village of London in the spring of 1833.

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1) The land application filed by Proudfoot's congregation in 1833 was intended to include a small graveyard, but by the time the deed was issued in 1838, the lot on York Street was considered inappropriate; therefore, a cemetery was established outside of the village, just west of Colborne Street; it was located at the end of a lane—later named Hope Street (see p.17). In 1855 the newly incorporated City of London passed a by-law prohibiting cemeteries within the city limits, which by that time included Hope Street. Land was granted to the United Presbyterian congregation for a cemetery on the south side of Oxford Street, the current location of Oakland Cemetery. As William Proudfoot died in 1851, he was most likely buried in the Hope Street cemetery and his remains moved to the Oakland Cemetery sometime after 1855.

Timeline for First Church and St. Andrew's Congregations

1832 to 1938

St. Andrew's Congregation

Some Established Church of Scotland (ECS) adherents were not convinced by Proudfoot and decided to form their own congregation and build a church 1833

Received a land grant of 3 acres 1841

North St. Presbyterian Church opened 1843

St. Andrew's Presbyterian (Free Church) congregation established 1844

Queen Victoria deeds the 3 acres of land to the trustees 1847

Rev. Dr. John Scott first full time minister 1850

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church dedicated October 31st 1869
(The old church was moved to Springbank Park where it was ultimately destroyed by fire)

Rev. James A. Murray appointed 1875 after the Rev. Dr. Scott resigned

Rev. Dr. Robert Johnston 1895

Rev. Dr. James Ross 1903

St. Andrew's Hall added 1905

Rev. Dr. Donald C. MacGregor 1914

St. Andrew's United Church established 1925

Rev. Dr.John Y. MacKinnon 1936

St. Andrew's United Church was renovated for the combined congregation

Some ECS adherents were against the principles of the Free Church and formed St. James Presbyterian; the forebears of New St. James Presbyterian Church on Oxford St.

GMcGregor 2009

The Rev. William Proudfoot a missionary for the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church in Scotland

arrived in London on Nov 8th 1832
After failing to form a congregation from disparate groups of Presbyterians he returned to his family based in York.
Dec. 22nd he received a call from London and decided to return.

Reed organ installed 1857
Organist Mrs. T. H. Purdom (Miss B. Craig)

Precentor
Mr E.D. Rowlands
1865 -70

Choir threatened to boycott church opening because their request to have musical instruments in the church was denied.

First Pipe Organ (Woodstock) 1870
Organist Miss Erith

Precentors 1870-77
Mr. W.M.Begg & Mr.Barron

Precentors 1877- 87
Mr. Freeland & Mr.H S. Marshall

1888 First Pipe Organ (Woodstock)
Organist S.W. Wilson

1890 Charles E. Wheeler
Choir director and organist until 1937

New organ (ca. 1895)
Karn-Woodstock

1910
Organ rebuilt

Organists following Miss Erith:
William Ellis
Miss Raymond
William Barron
George Phelps
Vivian Reeve
George Lethbridge
Clarence Gilmore
Mrs. W. Cornell & Ernest Harris
(Director of Music) (Organist)
Dr. Harvey Robb Music Director

1937
First United and St. Andrew's United decided to merge

1938
Union took place January 1st 1938

Services commenced October in the renovated First - St. Andrew's United Church

Rev. Dr. John Y. MacKinnon and Rev. Dr. Moir A. J. Waters
Music Director Dr. Harvey Robb

First-St. Andrew's United Church of Canada Congregation

First Church Congregation

1833 Proudfoot returned Feb. 6th. Started organizing a congregation and by March 17th became its minister

1833-34 Proudfoot purchased land and moved his family from York

1836 (April 17th) United Presbyterian Church opened on York Street

1851(Jan 16th) William Proudfoot died
He was succeeded by his son, the Rev. John J. A. Proudfoot

Dec 6th, 1859 Church destroyed by fire (The reed organ valued at $240 was saved)

1862 A new church called First Presbyterian opened at Clarence and Dufferin

1867 Rev. John J. Proudfoot began lecturing part time at Knox College, Toronto

1871 Obtained his D.D. from Monmouth College

1889 Rev. Dr. John J. Proudfoot resigned

1890 Rev. Dr. William John Clarke

1893-4 The1862 church was rebuilt including adding a tower

1907 William Clarke moved to Quebec

1908 Rev. Dr. John Gibson Inkster
(From the church in Flamboro built by the Rev. Thomas Christie... Wm. Proudfoot's fellow missionary)

1913 Rev. Dr. William J. Knox

1921 Rev. Dr. William Beattie

1925 First United Church established

1933 Rev. Dr. Moir A. J. Waters

Joint services were held in First United during renovations to St Andrew's.

First United Church was sold to London Life and subsequently demolished.

The organ was sold to a church in Toronto. The console is stored in London. (R.Doddington)

Presbyterians from the Proof Line were part of this congregation. Circa 1838 they built their own church and inducted Proudfoot as their first minister. In 1862, the present church was built at the corner of Ilderton Rd & Hwy 4. It is now Bethel Presbyterian Church

Timeline Notes

Congregational Roots: The timeline addresses concurrent events in the histories of the Established Church of Scotland adherents who elected in 1833 not to follow Proudfoot (became St. Andrew's Presbyterian Free Church congregation in 1844), and of the United Presbyterian congregation founded by Proudfoot in 1833, which in 1862 became the congregation of First Presbyterian Church. Attention is drawn to other congregations, such as New St. James Presbyterian that evolved from the ECS stream in 1844, and Bethel Presbyterian, whose forebears strongly supported Proudfoot and greatly influenced his decision to come to the London region—he was inducted as their first minister as mentioned in the notes on page 18. Proudfoot also consolidated other congregations, notably South Nissouri Presbyterian, where his son the Rev. John J. A. Proudfoot was inducted as minister in 1855.

Musical Instruments in Churches: The middle column of the chart reflects how music increased in importance in the church services. When Proudfoot came to Upper Canada, playing of musical instruments as part of the service was not favoured by most Presbyterian ministers, who according to tradition, preferred congregations to be led in the singing of psalms by the voice of a precentor. William Proudfoot was no exception, which may imply he disliked music; on the contrary, his journals clearly show he enjoyed all kinds of music, particularly dance music played at wedding receptions. He specifically mentions being treated to some fine music played on the German flute by a passenger on board the sailing ship as it crossed the Atlantic. Here is his reaction on hearing music during a church service in Brockville: *"1832, Sept 9th: Preached today for Mr. Stuart ... there is a band for conducting the psalmody of the church. The music is very good; but here as in every place where there is a band, the congregation do not sing. The music is very dearly bought when it is at the expense of the praise of God."*

In 1857, following a lengthy struggle with the Presbytery, the congregation of the UP Church on York Street, now under the leadership of the Rev. John Proudfoot, installed a small reed organ. On December 7th, 1859, the *London Free Press* reported that on the previous day a fire had completely destroyed the United Presbyterian Church; however, the organ valued at $240 was saved. It also noted the church was insured for $2000, and "Mr. Proudfoot though losing his stable, succeeded in saving his horse, buggy, cutter, harness &c."

Reverend Dr. Scott of St. Andrew's Presbyterian realized the writing was on the wall with respect to allowing an organ in the church. The choice he faced was to compromise his principles or cause unhappiness. The issue may have been a contributing factor in his decision to resign in 1875; however, a pipe organ was not installed until 1888.

The Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada informs that: "Old St Paul's Anglican Church was the first London church to possess an organ, built by a local cabinetmaker in 1844 … a Mr. Pringle according to source [28]. It was destroyed when the church burned on Ash Wednesday that same year. In 1850 an organ was installed in the Wesleyan Methodist Church on Queens Avenue."

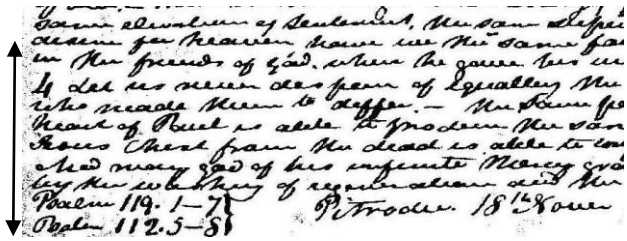
Congregational Growth: Expansion of London into a city in the 1850s resulted in congregations outgrowing their original churches. During that time the UP Church on York St. experienced an inflow of new members and an outflow leaving for other churches, such as: North Westminster, South Nissouri, Crumlin Road and Bethel Presbyterian. Following the fire in 1859, the UP congregation relocated and built a larger brick church called First Presbyterian (pages 16 & 17). That same year saw the opening of the present Bethel Presbyterian Church bearing the inscription Canada Presbyterian Church 1862.

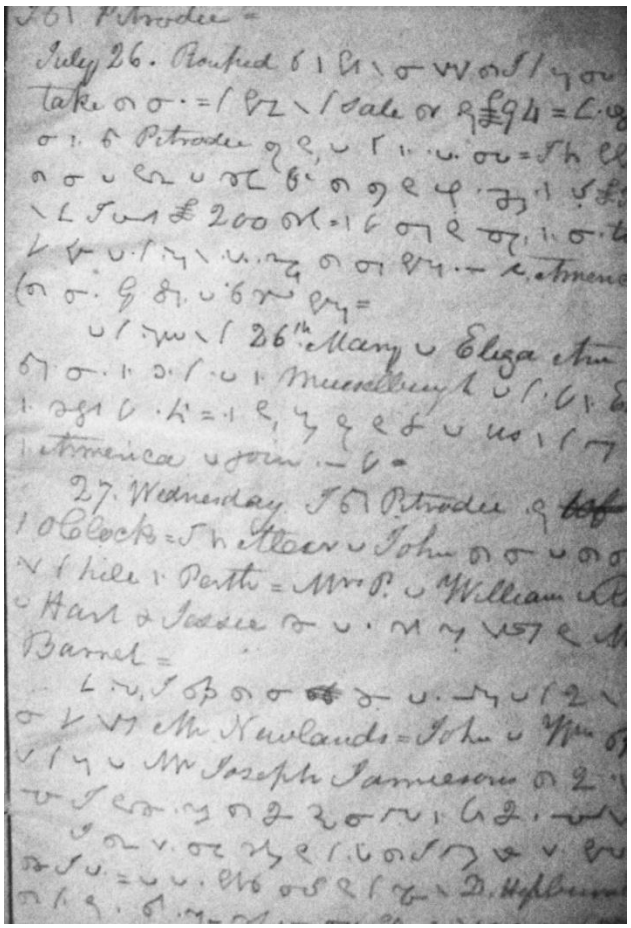
The building boom in churches was so great that when St. Andrew's Presbyterian opened in 1869, Rev. Dr. Scott reminded everyone in his address: "*Any ecclesiastical edifice, however beautiful and imposing, is but as it were, a symbol of the more important and spiritual building of which Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, the sure foundation of all who build on Him."* William Proudfoot would have shared this view had he been alive, often referring to places of worship as meeting-houses. He did not always preach in churches, settling for farm buildings, schoolhouses and even in the open air. For instance, at Pitrodie in 1816, regarding one of the few times he was unable to hold a service, he wrote, "*Sick of rheumatic fever; probably occasioned by preaching in the open air while the church was being built."* [15a]

Documents Written in Shorthand

Many of Proudfoot's sermons exist in various archives in Canada, and some are written in a form of shorthand, adding an air of mystery. Survival of such a large quantity of sermons has prompted speculation that he probably read his sermons. His journals give us his reaction to the styles of various preachers. He disliked sermons presented extemporaneously that said little of consequence. He preferred sermons that were well prepared and presented naturally and sincerely. This was in keeping with his training at Divinity Hall in Selkirk, where ministers in training were required to preach before the class and acknowledged preachers. He judged the value of his own sermons by the reaction of the particular congregation.

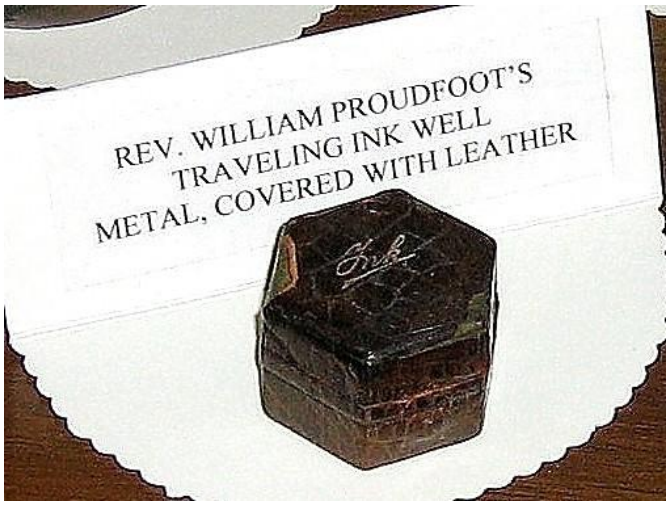
Some sermons are written in such a fine hand that it almost requires a magnifying glass to see; providing another reason why he did not read his sermons. The arrowed line on the sample below represents one inch, indicating he achieved on average 10 lines per inch.





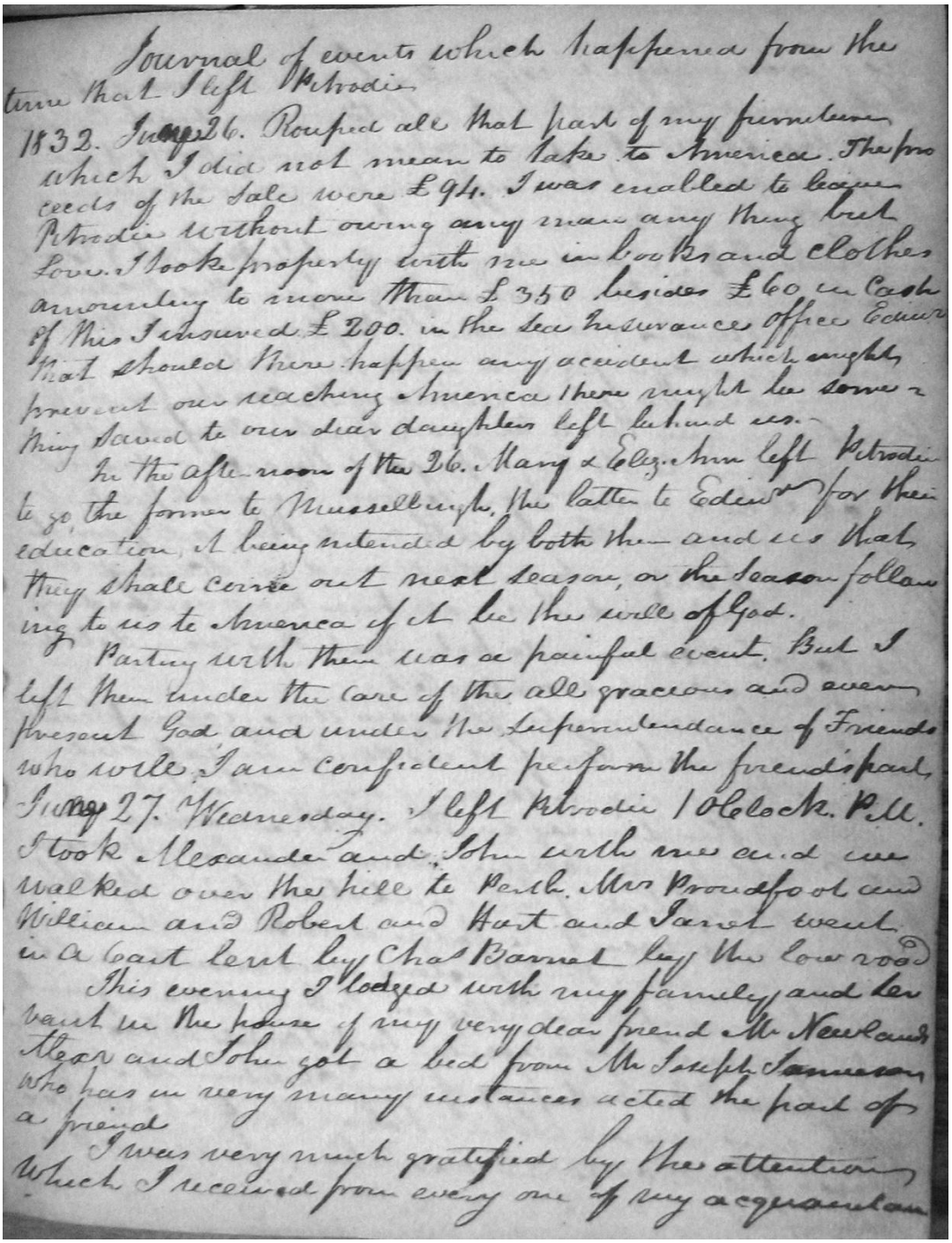
Amongst the various Proudfoot family documents in the archives at the University of Western Ontario is a small notebook with the date 1808 on the cover. The contents are written in pencil and shorthand. A more thorough examination of the document reveals it to be a version of the journal he started in 1832 when leaving Pitrodie to come to Upper Canada. The digital photo (70% full size) is of the first page of the notebook and is provided for comparison with his original journal on the next page.

These documents teach us that Proudfoot was indeed a practical Scot, who economized on paper, reused his old notebooks; kept pencilled notes of daily events in shorthand and when circumstances were more favourable wrote his journals in ink. There is no mysterious code!



The inkwell is part of a small collection of artefacts donated to New St. James Presbyterian Church, London, Ontario, by L. R. Gray (author of *Proudfoot to Pepperbox to Posterity)* on behalf of Winifred Proudfoot, a great-grand-daughter of the Rev. William Proudfoot.

Proudfoot's Journal



Journal of events which happened from the time that I left Ptrodie

1832. June 26. Roupied all that part of my furniture which I did not mean to take to America. The proceeds of the sale were £94. I was enabled to leave Ptrodie without owing any man any thing but love. I took property with me in books and clothes amounting to more than £350 besides £60 in Cash of this I insured £200. in the Sea Insurances office Edinr that should there happen any accident which might prevent our reaching America there might be some thing saved to our dear daughters left behind us.

In the afternoon of the 26. Mary & Elizabeth left Ptrodie to go the former to Musselburgh, the latter to Edinr for their education, it being intended by both them and us that they shall come out next season, or the season following to us to America if it be the will of God.

Parting with them was a painful event. But I left them under the care of the all gracious and ever present God and under the superintendance of Friends who will, I am confident perform the friendly part.

June 27. Wednesday. I left Ptrodie 10 Oclock. P.M. I took Alexander and John with me and we walked over the hill to Perth. Mrs Proudfoot and William and Robert and Hart and Janet went in a cart lent by Chas Barnet by the low road.

This evening I lodged with my family and servant in the house of my very dear friend Mr Newland Mear and John got a bed from Mr Joseph Jameson who has in very many instances acted the part of a friend.

I was very much gratified by the attention which I received from every one of my acquaintan

The digital image of the first page from Rev. Proudfoot's original journal is printed courtesy of the Archives of the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. The corresponding shorthand version on the previous page has events taking place in July, but the error has been corrected to June in the actual journal. The *Proudfoot Papers* [5] also indicate Mrs. Proudfoot and the younger members of the family travelled to Perth by boat. His journal shows they travelled by cart, which is confirmed by their son Robert—"Mother and all of us in a farmer's cart got a jolly cart ride to Perth." [15c]

Sources:

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2. *Pitroddie—the Canadian Link &c*. by Donald M. Abbott 2005 ISBN 0905452461.
3. *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900 (vol. II)* by the Rev. Robert Small 1904.
4. *The Evangel in Gowrie* by the Rev. Adam Philip 1911 (pages 220–222)
5. *The Proudfoot Papers:* 1832 to March 1833, published by the London and Middlesex Historical Society (LMHS), and from March 1833 through 1847, published in the transactions of the Ontario Historical Society, volumes 26–32. All of these publications are in The London Room of the London Public Library. Note: the original handwritten journals are in the Archives at the Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario.
6. Information on births, baptisms, marriages and deaths was obtained by accessing the Scottish National Archives, (www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/research).
7. *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* by the Rev. William Mackelvie 1873
8. *The History of the Secession Church* by John McKerrow 1841 (McKerrow and Proudfoot were classmates at Selkirk Divinity Hall in1807)
9. *History of the Foreign Missions of the Secession and United Presbyterian Church* by John McKerrow 1867.
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11. *Short History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* by Gregg 1893.
12. Proudfoot Family Fonds. Canadian National Archives.
13. Archives at First-St. Andrew's United Church.
14. The London Room in the London (ON) Public Library.
15. The Proudfoot Family Collection in the Archives of the Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario: **a)** Sermon Logbook. **b)** Original Journals. **c)** Notes written by Robert Proudfoot in 1915 to Harriet Priddis (LMHS) providing her with his recollections of the Proudfoot family.
16. *Proudfoot to Pepperbox to Posterity 1833 to 1983* by L.R. Gray. Published by New St. James Presbyterian Church 1983.
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23. *Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791–1845*; National Archives of Scotland.
24. *London Families Past and Present, Vols. 1 & 2,* published by the London Township History Book Committee 2001. Vol.1 ISBN 096896060X, Vol.2 ISBN 0968960618.
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26. *Children of the Manse, The Family of the Reverend Thomas Leckie of Peebles* by Sheila Scott 1980.
27. *Life of Colonel Talbot and the Talbot Settlement* by Edward Ermatinger, published in 1859.
28. *Reminiscences of Mrs. Gilbert Porte by* Harriet Priddis 1902: London & Middlesex Historical Society Heritage Articles.
29. *Scholar Gipsies* by John Buchan. Published by John Lane, London 1896.

Acknowledgements:

- Jim Hutchinson, who introduced me to the archives of First-St. Andrew's United Church, and pointed to other possible sources of material on the Rev. William Proudfoot.
- The Friends of Perth and Kinross Council Archive, Perth, Scotland, for placing my request for information on William Proudfoot in the hands of Donald Macdonald Abbott, who spared no effort in providing me with information. Donald's generosity in sending me copies of his booklets *Pitroddie Perspectives* and *Practical and Pictorial Pitroddie* 2004 (ISBN 0905452445), and for allowing me to use two of his valuable photographs in this document.
- The help received from the following: The Ivey Family London Room of the London Public Library, the Archives of the University of Western Ontario, and the Archives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto.
- The encouragement received during brief conversations with Douglas Proudfoot, great-great-grandson of the Rev. William Proudfoot.
- Helpful conversations with historians Dan Brock, Glen Curnoe and Kevin Zacher during my search for illustrations, drawings or descriptions of the United Presbyterian Church that existed on York Street from1836 to 1859.

"… AND DAYS O' LANG SYNE"

Pioneers, land surveyors and early settlers coming to the London region of Upper Canada would have viewed their world, for the most part, from trails and clearings hacked out of the forests. Finding a piece of high ground providing a broader perspective on the surrounding landscape would have been treasured; to find one that overlooked the confluence of two rivers, one flowing from the north with one from the south, and to see them unite as one and journey westward, must have been magical, even symbolic. This place where the waters meet had been known to aboriginal peoples for millennia, the Forks of the Thames as it was named by European settlers was a natural gathering place, which over the years had listened quietly and impartially to the plans, schemes, and speculations of would-be lairds, merchants and entrepreneurs alike; it shared the visions, hopes and prayers of those wishing to obtain sufficient land to clear and start farms, and of others who simply wanted to create better lives for their families. To the east of this very special place the village of London began to establish itself starting about 1826.

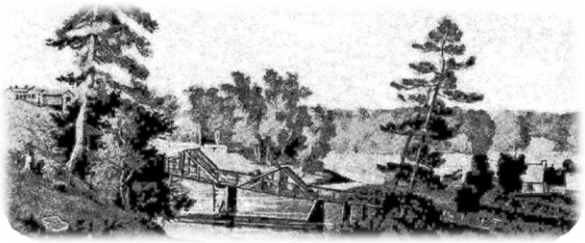
Two days after the Reverend William Proudfoot arrived in the village in 1832, he was inspired to write:

Nov 10th London Village: "The Thames is a noble river, and when once the wood is cleared off the banks it will be seen beautifully winding its way through a fertile valley, which will be clothed one day with flocks and herds. The portion of land on which London stands, has been covered principally with pine, consequently it is sandy. There is a very thin sprinkling of sand on the surface. It will, I think, never be a very productive spot. There are two wooden bridges over the river, one on each branch. They are clumsy and badly made; and being unpainted, will not last long to offend anybody."

The following day, Presbyterians from surrounding and outlying areas crossed over these bridges and joined with their brethren from the village to hear Proudfoot preach in the school house—a resource also agreeably time-shared by several religious groups and for community meetings.

Nov. 11th Sabbath: "This morning I preached in the school house from John 12, 32."

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."



Blackfriars Bridge(inset), built in 1831, crossed the north branch of the Thames River connecting Ridout Street with London Township, where the Proudfoot family put down their roots in 1833. The other bridge mentioned by Proudfoot was Westminster, built in 1826 across the south branch of the river linking York Street to Westminster Township, so it was often called York Street Bridge. Both bridges, though rudimentary in construction, were vital links to points north, south and west and, as Proudfoot found out, crossing them became a routine part of life.

Mrs. Gilbert Porte reminiscing with Harriet Priddis about pioneer days in London [28] recalls: "… I have often seen it [York St. Bridge] in the early days chained to immense butternut trees, which were plentiful on the banks of the river, to keep it from floating away in the floods. One of these immense trees at the foot of Richmond Street was quite a landmark in its day … its branches stretched almost across the river … and there was not a boy in the village who could not show you beneath their shade the best speckled trout hole in the world, and a comfortable seat among the branches from which to throw the line.

"When the railway came in 1854 everything was changed. The last signs of pioneer days soon passed away. London was made a city in 1855. St. Paul's chimes called congregations to worship. My little boys attended the public schools. Business men had private boxes in the post office, from which they took their mail, and the Great Western train bore their letters twice a day past blocks of houses where I so well remember an unbroken forest.… I can see it all before me like a panorama; but more change has been caused to the views around London by the cutting down of hills and the building up of gullies than anything else."

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike…. When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."

—John Muir (1838–1914) botanist, geologist, writer; born in Scotland, emigrated with his parents to America in 1849. In *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*, Muir brilliantly describes the character-building events and influences leading to his profound understanding of the wild mountain regions of California. When "blind progress" threatened to destroy specific ecological domains, Muir's well-publicised defence of their true value to the world helped create America's national parks, its forest reserves, and to the formation of the Sierra Club.

Snow blankets the countryside around the town of Biggar, barely visible amongst the trees in the valley, and to the south, wintry clouds still linger over the landmark shapes of Cardon hill and Culter Fell. Such a scene would have been very familiar to Isobel Proudfoot (Aitchison) while growing up on the family farm, near skirling, located about two miles east-southeast of the pine tree.