

The First Hundred Years

1832-1932

The First United Church
(Formerly the First Presbyterian Church)

London, Ontario

Mrs. Fennick
Christmas 1931

A History
of
The First Hundred Years

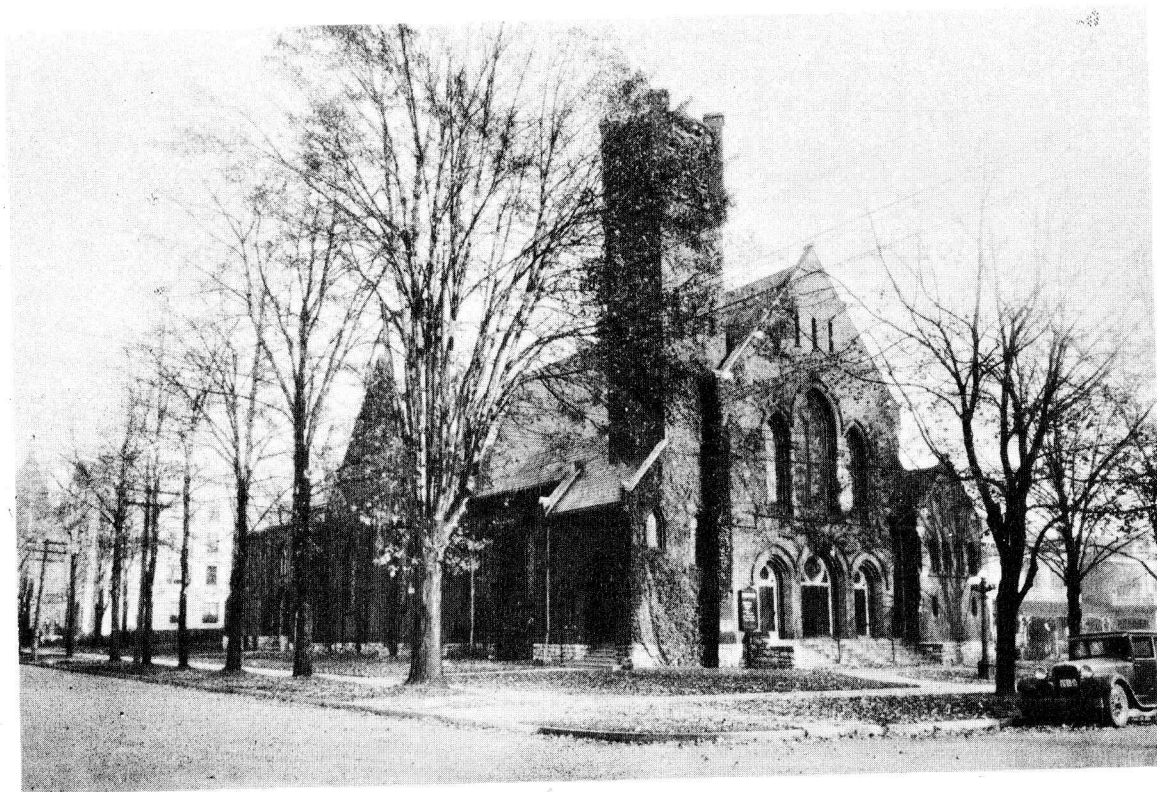
of the

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First United Church, London, Ontario, 1932

Dedication

For those we love within the veil,

Who once were comrades of our way,

We thank Thee, Lord: for they have won

To cloudless day.

The Year 1832

A world war was but seventeen years in the background. Napoleon had been but eleven years in his grave on lonely St. Helena. William IV., well-meaning but dissolute, was on the throne of England, and the Reform Bill, ushering in a new democracy, had just been passed despite the opposition of the old Duke of Wellington. There was talk of legislation to prohibit employment of children under nine years of age in mills, and to free the black slaves in the British colonies. On the continent, revolutions and uprisings were everywhere the order of the day, by-products of forces set loose in twenty years of war. In the United States a typical westerner, Andrew Jackson, sat in the White House, the first to break the line of Virginia and Massachusetts aristocrats holding that office. Strange things were happening in the republic as the new democracy of the frontier exercised power. In Upper Canada, one of Wellington's Waterloo lieutenants was governor, and at the little provincial capital a fanatically reactionary assembly had just expelled for the third time the leader of reform in the province, William Lyon Mackenzie. In the western end of the province, Colonel Thomas Talbot was calling upon his supporters to smash the new democratic ideas that were creeping in. The mighty stirrings of the times touched everyone from the monarchs of Europe to the pioneers in a remote Canadian province. An old era was dying, a new era was being born.



Rev. William Proudfoot

Rev. William Proudfoot

1832-1851

“November 11 (1832), Sabbath, London Village. This morning I preached in the school-house from John 12, 32. I enjoyed freedom in commending the Christian faith and the Lord Jesus Christ to man.”—*Diary of Rev. William Proudfoot.*

Armistice Day, 1932, marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the first sermon preached in London by the first minister of the present First United Church. The text was evidently a favorite, for he had preached from it on shipboard while coming to America, and it was to be the basis of sermons on subsequent occasions—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

He can never be remote or strange to us, this first minister of the First Church. We know more about his activities and his opinions than of any

other London citizen of his times. His diary, begun when he sailed for America, is a fascinating document, and he has, with good reason, been described as the Canadian Pepys. From Pitrodie, Scotland, where he had been minister for seventeen years, William Proudfoot set out for Canada in the summer of 1832 as a missionary of the United Associate Secession Church. With him went Rev. William Robertson and Rev. Thomas Christie, the former dying of cholera soon after his arrival in Canada, the latter continuing his ministry almost forty years until his death in 1870.

It was November 8, 1832, when Mr. Proudfoot first set foot in London. He came unannounced and among strangers, seeking a field for his labor. In his diary we have his first impressions of the village. "The situation is a very good one," he wrote. "The streets are laid out at right angles, and in a good many of them there is a considerable number of houses. The best houses here, as everywhere else in Canada, are stores. In most of the streets are still standing stumps of large trees, and passengers must wend their way about them in the best manner they can. There is a large court house

and gaol just on the edge of the bank which looks down on the junction of the two branches of the Thames. It is of brick and plastered on the outside. It is a kind of Gothic, clumsy and uninteresting."

Mr. Proudfoot found few Presbyterians in the village itself, but in Westminster there was a considerable number, while other groups were settled on the Proof Line north of the village and in the "English Settlement" to the northwest. Only by combining these scattered groups would there be enough people to form the nucleus of a congregation. The field, however, was one that appeared likely to grow in population.

Mr. Proudfoot's arrival in London coincided curiously with the arrival also of Rev. Benjamin Cronyn, first rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and later, first Bishop of the Diocese of Huron. From available records it would seem that they came to London within a few days of each other. Mr. Proudfoot, who preached in London for the first time on November 11, 1832, records that Mr. Cronyn preached in London the following Sunday.

Both men had come to the village unannounced, and each was requested by his fellow-religionists to remain among them. Mr. Cronyn accepted the invitation at once, but it was some months before Mr. Proudfoot accepted the invitation and proceeded to organize the congregation. In his diary for March 17, 1833, we read:

"Preached to-day from Rom. 8, 32, at two o'clock p.m. in the Methodist chapel to, I suppose, 200 persons nearly. The congregation attentive, though some were going out or coming in during the service which led me to reprove them, which reproof they much needed. After sermon, I proceeded to organize the church."

Among the minister's admonitions to his flock was the duty of living in peace and harmony. "I designed this for McKenzie," he confides to his diary, "and I thought he felt it." McKenzie, a local squire, was somewhat of a trial at times to the rather radical William Proudfoot who, when he first talked with him, wrote: "I never felt in my life so strong an inclination to maul a man."

For eighteen years Mr. Proudfoot continued as minister of the London congregation. Upon coming to the village he bought a 200-acre farm (lot 20, con. 2, London Tp.), and the produce of this supplemented his very meagre salary. The erection of a church building was a matter of concern from the first. A site was chosen in the first few weeks of his ministry, but it was more than three years before it was completed, and then only after the minister had visited New York to raise funds. In his diary of April 17, 1836, he writes:

"On this day our church was opened for public worship. I preached from I. Cor. 15:58. The house not full, owing, we supposed, to the state of the roads. In the afternoon, Mr. Skinner preached from Habakkuk, 'The Lord is in His Temple.' The collection nearly £39. We ought to be thankful that God has hitherto so prospered us. The house has cost about £400, and all is paid except about £66."

The site of this first church building was on the south side of York Street between Richmond and Talbot Streets, and approached across a small stream which has long since disappeared. The Scotch

church, as it was called, came into curious prominence in the troubled days at the end of 1837 when it was revealed that the Radicals (Reformers) of the village had agreed that, if they were attacked by their political opponents from London Township, they would meet to defend themselves at the church. Rev. Mr. Proudfoot was himself at this time under suspicion of holding political views not strictly orthodox. The effect of the political turmoil upon his congregation is well illustrated by the following extracts from his diary:

"Dec. 13, 1837. Ever since the last election the church has been thinner, and in going amongst my people I see every day how many are alarmed with this, for the time being, all absorbing subject."

"Dec. 17, 1837 (Sabbath). The whole town taken up with catching the Radicals, so that nobody had time to attend meeting for the worship of God. Such a scene I never witnessed."

"Oct. 2, 1838. The influence of the vile political faction that has disturbed the country has been injuriously exerted to hurt the interests of the church. Some few persons have not only left the church

on political grounds but returned to the world from which they were never, I fear, separated but in name."

The troubles of the time came home yet more closely to Mr. Proudfoot when, at the end of 1838, he had to appear in court on behalf of his nephew, on trial with more than forty others for participation in the patriot invasion at Windsor; to hear the young man sentenced to death, and later to witness his departure in chains for Van Diemen's Land when the original sentence was changed to banishment to a penal colony overseas.

From such troubled scenes it is a relief to turn to the description he has left us of the first communion held by this congregation:

"June 1 (1834). When I went into London, the meeting-house was full and many outside. It was judged proper to have the service outside. The people in a twinkling made a pulpit—boards laid upon two casks—seats were placed all around and the audience all comfortably seated. Preached from Luke 23:33, 'And they crucified Him.' The sermon went off well. I fenced the tables also

out of doors. After the fencings went into the meeting-house. There were four table services. I also gave an address after the service was over.

"The place was not very convenient for the service, but I never saw a sacrament conducted with more external decorum. I did not give an evening sermon—lest I should weary the people—I had already spoken for six hours.

"Thus has been solemnized the first Sacrament of the Supper in my new charge. There were 101 at the Table. May God of His Infinite Mercy keep His Hand around them at all times and bless them with the aid of His Spirit. And may God add to their number a multitude of such as shall be saved."

No sketch of Rev. William Proudfoot's ministry would be complete that did not relate his labors in the larger affairs of the church. In presbytery and synod he was an outstanding figure, and exerted large influence upon the policies of the church. Realizing the need of raising up in Canada men for the ministry, he advocated the establishment of a divinity school, and eventually in 1844 was authorized by the synod to open and carry on such a

school himself. With but scanty financial help and laboring almost single-handed, he went about the task, and in the years that followed trained a score or more of men for the ministry, among them being his own son, John J. A. Proudfoot, and William Caven, the latter becoming one of the outstanding figures in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. From 1844 to 1850, the teaching was done at London, after that at Toronto, and in 1861 the school was joined up with Knox College. At London the students were boarded by the minister himself, and for 7/6 per week received "lodging, food, washing, fire and light." In his diary on October 2, 1844, Mr. Proudfoot records the arrival of the first student, John G. Carruthers.

At the beginning of 1843, Mr. Proudfoot set on foot another activity for the church when he began publication of the Presbyterian Magazine, of which he was editor. The magazine contained a variety of articles on religious subjects, and also news of the church. A file of this magazine for 1843 is in the library of the University of Western Ontario.

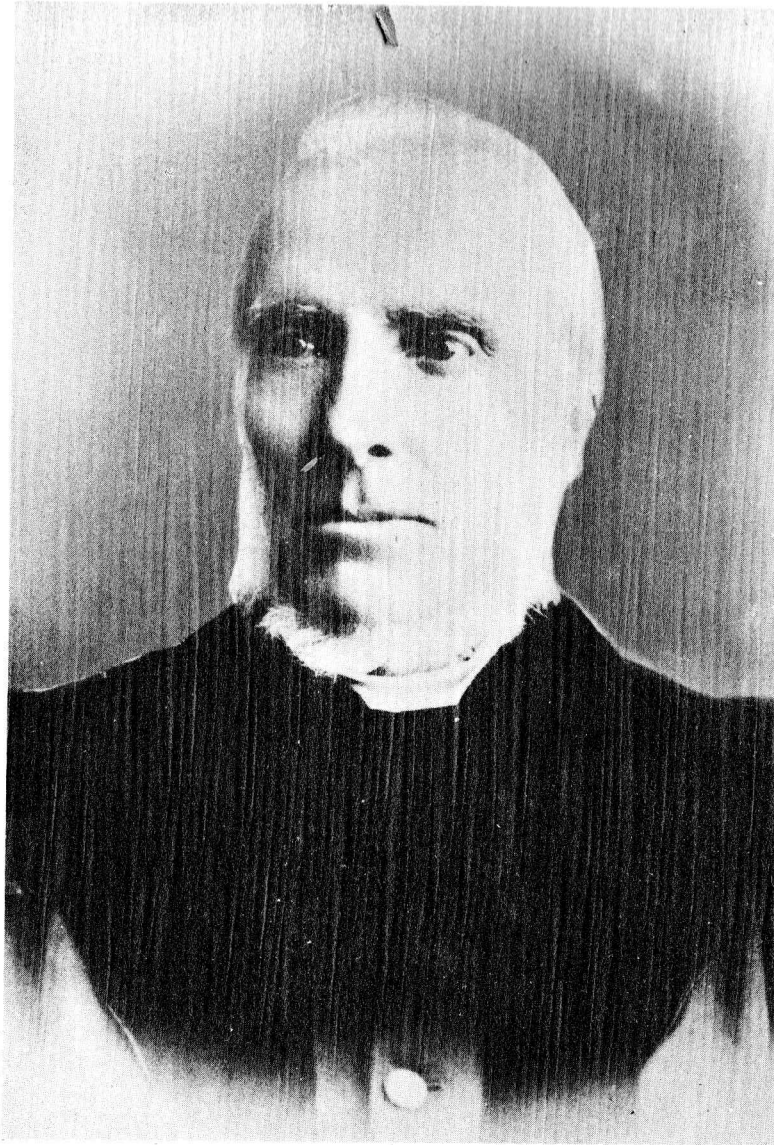
At his death in 1851, the London Free Press, devoting more than a column of space to his obituary, said of him: "His mind was distinguished by clear intellectuality and comprehensiveness; he could in a few and suitable words exhibit a subject in its proper light. His character was marked by genuine Christian worth and consistence; and in his manners, gentleness and amiableness shone forth sweetly." He is buried in the old Scotch cemetery (Oakland) on Oxford Street west, London, not far from the home in which he settled when he came to London. On the gravestone is inscribed: "In memory of Rev. Wm. Proudfoot, late pastor of the United Presbyterian Congregation, London, and Professor of Theology to the United Presbyterian Church. Born May 23, 1788. Died January 16, 1851. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

[Sixteen]

An Early Choir of First Presbyterian Church



| | | | | |
|-----------|----------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| J. Gibson | C. Murray | W. Simson | D. Christie | L. Gibson |
| D. Currie | J. Marshall | J. Crearer | J. Young | T. M. Gibson |
| | Miss Proudfoot | | Miss Gibson | |
| | Robt. Reid | | Miss McKenzie | Miss Fleming |
| | Mrs. Dodd | | | |



Rev. John J. A. Proudfoot

Rev. John J. A. Proudfoot

1851-1889

Four months after the death of Rev. William Proudfoot, his son, Rev. John J. A. Proudfoot, became his successor, being inducted on May 28, 1851. Born in Perthshire, Scotland, August 21, 1821, he had come to Canada with his father in 1832 and had shared the hardships and labors of clearing and tilling the farm which was for many years a source of subsistence for the minister and his family. He received his theological training under his father at the Divinity Hall, London, and was ordained by his father on July 19, 1848.

Rev. John Proudfoot was minister for 38 years, retiring in 1889. The original church on York Street having been burned, a new site, the present one, was chosen, and in 1861-2 a new edifice was erected at a cost of about \$5,600. In 1865, a vestry and Sunday School room were added at a cost of

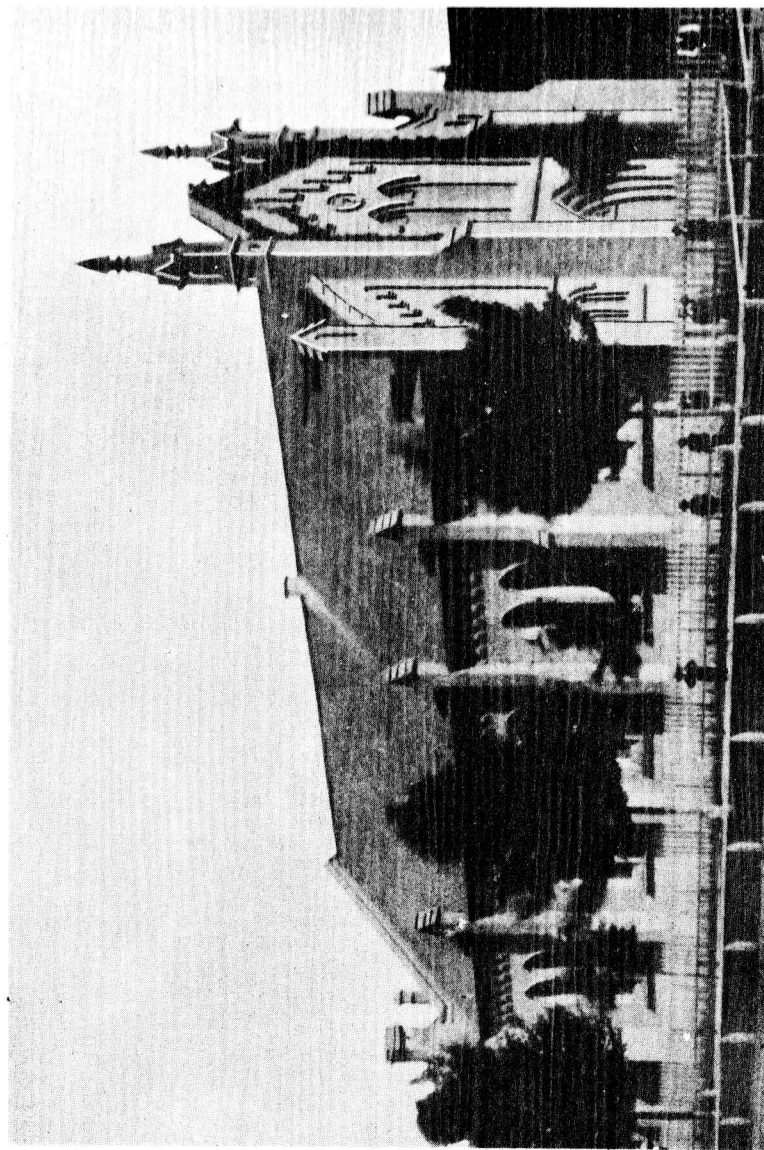
\$700. The introduction of the weekly voluntary offering system in 1885 was attended with excellent results. The annual report for 1887 shows that in that year the average contribution per member was \$18.84, and per family \$34.04, "which," says the report, "is most creditable and ahead of any other congregation in Western Ontario." In the first three years of the weekly offering system the debt on the church was cut in half.

During Rev. John Proudfoot's ministry the outlying groups which had been joined to make up the original congregation began to separate from the parent stem and to organize as new congregations. In the early 'fifties, some forty members separated to form the Crumlin congregation. In 1854, one hundred members were disjoined by the Presbytery to form the new church at Westminster, while soon after, fifty others were organized as the congregation of South Nissouri. In the early 'eighties again, a considerable number united with the church in London East. A congregation scattered over as large an area as that which Rev. William Proudfoot had originally served was bound to take new form as time went on. In the year 1884, the congregation

of First Church had been reduced to about two hundred members, though there were many adherents.

In 1867, Rev. Mr. Proudfoot was appointed lecturer in homiletics, pastoral theology and church government in Knox College, Toronto. This necessitated his absence from his congregation during most of the week for a considerable part of the year. Prayer meeting had to be held on Friday night, and an early member has recalled that weddings of young people within the church had also to take place at the end of the week. The work of the church would probably have been seriously handicapped by the pastor's absence but for the fact that the women of the church organized and did much of the visiting, a faithful group serving in this way for many years. In the end, however, it was realized that the general situation was not in the best interests of the church, and in 1889, Rev. Mr. Proudfoot resigned. He continued his professorial work at Knox College until advancing years compelled his retirement in 1901. His death took place at London on January 14, 1903.

It is interesting to note that all of Rev. Mr. Proudfoot's successors in the pulpit of First Church were among his students at Knox College. He is recalled as a man of somewhat stern exterior cloaking a certain shyness, but of an exceedingly tender heart. His text-book on homiletics was regarded as an excellent piece of work, and is still used as a text-book on that subject. In 1871 he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Monmouth College.



The Original Church on present site. Erected 1861-2



Rev. W. J. Clark

Rev. W. J. Clark

1890-1907

The retirement of Rev. J. J. A. Proudfoot as minister at the end of the year 1889 marked a distinct crisis in the history of the church. For the first six months of 1890 the church was without a minister, and it was recognized that upon the choice to be made much would depend. From the vantage point of years the wisdom of the choice that was made steadily grows more manifest. On May 23, 1890, the congregation decided unanimously to extend a call to Rev. William John Clark, a recent graduate of Knox College, for whom London would be his first charge. The call was sustained by the Presbytery and accepted by Mr. Clark, who was formally ordained and inducted on July 2nd.

For seventeen years Rev. Mr. Clark ministered to the people of First Church. Those were years that are well remembered, not only by members of

his own congregation of that time, but by many other citizens as well. All departments of church life were quickened by his counsel and encouragement, and the pulpit of First Church became famous in Western Ontario. Mr. Clark was a man whose religion ran in deep channels, and his sermons were the reflection of his own high spiritual nature. Before his hearers he laid down the great programme of God for man in words that carried conviction.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the impression that Mr. Clark's coming made upon the church members and upon the community at large. His sympathetic nature made him a welcome and inspiring guest in every home. His breadth of view attracted to his services many who had been previously indifferent to any church connection. His clear and sympathetic understanding of the problems which faced the individuals in his congregation often lifted the burden from many a weary heart and many a life was made fuller and richer because of his ministrations. Citizens of London who have moved to all parts of the country still speak with the warmest feeling of gratitude of Mr. Clark's services in First Church.

When in 1907 he accepted a call to the Westmount (Que.) Presbyterian Church, it was to begin the second chapter of his ministry, which he is now bringing to a close in this centenary year of his first charge. His ministerial life has thus been divided between these two Canadian congregations. His place in the life of the church at large was shown when he was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly at the Winnipeg meeting in 1922.

Among the outstanding developments of church work in Mr. Clark's term as minister, mention should be particularly made of the rebuilding of the church and the founding of the mission in the south end of the city, which has since grown into Chalmers Presbyterian Church.

During the year 1892, plans were under discussion for the rebuilding of the church which had been erected in 1861, and these plans were carried out during 1893. From March, 1893, until January, 1894, the congregation worshipped in Victoria Hall, the reopening of the new church taking place on January 21, 1894. Mr. Robert Reid was chairman of the committee having charge of the building

programme. Eight years later the steady advance of the work of the church made it advisable to make further provision for the carrying on of the work, and in 1903-4 the present Sunday School and lecture hall were added, certain improvements also being made to the church building itself at this time.

In the annual report of the church for 1891, mention is made of a proposal to establish a branch Sabbath School for the south part of the city, to meet in the school-house at the corner of Waterloo and Grey Streets. This work was inaugurated on the first Sabbath of 1892, with an attendance of seven, which increased a week later to forty. The success attending this mission was noteworthy. The first officers of the Sabbath School were: John Anderson, superintendent; Harry Bapty, assistant superintendent; Miss M. Law, organist. In 1895 came another forward step in the decision to engage a young theological student for six months to work in the southern district. Knox Presbyterian Church co-operated with First Church, paying one-third of the cost. During 1896, Mr. Peter Scott, B.A., officiated for nine months, being followed by Rev. Walter Moffat. A year later this venture became

an organized congregation with Mr. Moffat as minister.

Around the turn of the century, some of the pioneer members who had played large parts in the work of First Church passed from the scene. In 1899, Adam Murray, who had been a member of the congregation for 63 years, and an elder for a long period, passed away. His departure broke a long cord of association. In that same year Mr. Robert Reid died. He had for many years been the mainstay of the Board of Managers, his business ability being long devoted to the interests of the church. In 1900, Mrs. William Grieve, an old-time member, passed on, as did also Andrew Denholm, who had been sexton of the church for more than 37 years. Older members will recall the circumstances of Mr. Denholm's death. Arriving at the church on a Sunday morning and finding it locked, some members went to his house where he lived alone and found him dead. He was a faithful servant.



Rev. J. G. Inkster

Rev. J. G. Inkster

1907-1912

The announcement early in 1907 that Rev. Mr. Clark had accepted a call to Westmount Presbyterian Church came as a distinct shock to the congregation of First Church and the city at large. Pastor and people had worked together so harmoniously and well for seventeen years, that it had seemed as if the bond between them would never be broken. Few ministers have left London for other charges with as marked public regret attending their departure as was shown to Mr. Clark. During the vacancy that ensued Rev. David James, of San Rafael, officiated most acceptably, and in due time a call was extended to Rev. John Gibson Inkster, of Montreal, which he accepted. He was inducted on February 27, 1908, and remained in London five years, leaving the First Church in 1912 to accept a call to Victoria, B.C. He is now the pastor of Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto.

Rev. Mr. Inkster was a native of the Orkney Islands. When he came to Canada as a youth in 1886, he had united by profession of faith with Christie Church in West Flamboro. This church had been founded by and was named after that Rev. Thomas Christie who came to Canada in 1832 with Rev. William Proudfoot as a fellow missionary from the United Associate Secession Church. It was under the influence of Rev. Simeon Fisher, one of Mr. Christie's successors, that Mr. Inkster was led to enter the ministry. There was thus a certain historical connection between this fourth minister of the First Church and the elder Proudfoot, the founder of the congregation.

Coming to London in 1908, Rev. Mr. Inkster found a congregation in which every department was organized for Christian work and a congregation that was in a healthy spiritual condition. Mr. Inkster was a preacher of considerable power, and his Scottish ancestry revived some of the sentimental connections of the church with its Scottish background. During the years that he was in London, Mr. Inkster gained a wide circle of friends and took

part in a number of civic activities, being a member of the Board of Education for a time.

It was during Mr. Inkster's ministry that Church Union became a live question. Mr. Inkster strongly urged the largest possible vote in favor of the movement.



Rev. W. J. Knox

Rev. W. J. Knox

1913-1921

Following the departure from London of Rev. Mr. Inkster, there was a vacancy of seven and a half months in the pulpit before the induction of the new minister. An interesting event of this period took place on August 25, 1913, when Miss Bertha Hodge, an active young worker in the congregation, was formally designated as a missionary to China, a field in which she is still in active service.

The fifth minister of the First Presbyterian Church was Rev. William J. Knox, who was inducted on September 18, 1913, and died on January 29, 1921, having had a little more than seven years' service in London. In his first pastoral message, printed in the church report for 1913, he set down what may be taken as the keynote of his ministry. "Let us," he wrote, "seek that maturity of Christian growth in which we shall concern ourselves not

primarily with what we can get out of life, but with what we can put into it." He himself gave of the best that he had and all that he had to his work in London. He was minister during the terrible days of the war, and from year to year, his pastoral messages reflected the tragedy and the woe of the times. His heart burned for the sorrow of the world in those days as it rejoiced at the end of 1918 in the coming of the peace and the hope that for mankind a new day was at hand. "More and more," he wrote in 1919, "must we make the labor of establishing the Kingdom of God the supreme passion of our lives. . . . In the religion of Jesus alone can we trust. The positive life of love and sympathy is the one power that will lead men into right relations with one another."

It was not given to him to see the working out of things in the era that succeeded the war. In the strange mystery of things eternal he was stricken down by an unconquerable disease while at the zenith of his powers.

In the pulpit of First Church Mr. Knox was equally fearless in his proclamation of that which he

believed was right, and in his denunciation of that which he believed was wrong. He was intolerant of hypocrisy or self-seeking and could be righteously impatient with those who seemed to him to be delaying the Kingdom. Earnest of purpose, dignified in his office, believing in the sanctity and the responsibility of his calling, he was above all a teacher, flooding with new light the real meaning and purpose of the Master's life and teaching. The principles laid down by Jesus were to him eternal principles, applicable to every age, though he believed that the Spirit constantly vouchsafed new revelations to men.

A minister of another denomination in London has recently penned this tribute to Mr. Knox, whom he held as a friend: "What caught me about him was his complete freedom from denominational bias. He was so sure of his own faith that he could, in the most generous way possible, welcome the sincere faith of others. He had achieved in his own thinking a very real sense of that unity of the spirit which is the bond of peace. He was essentially Christ's man. He had a highly developed mystical sense. His own life and attitude were the best

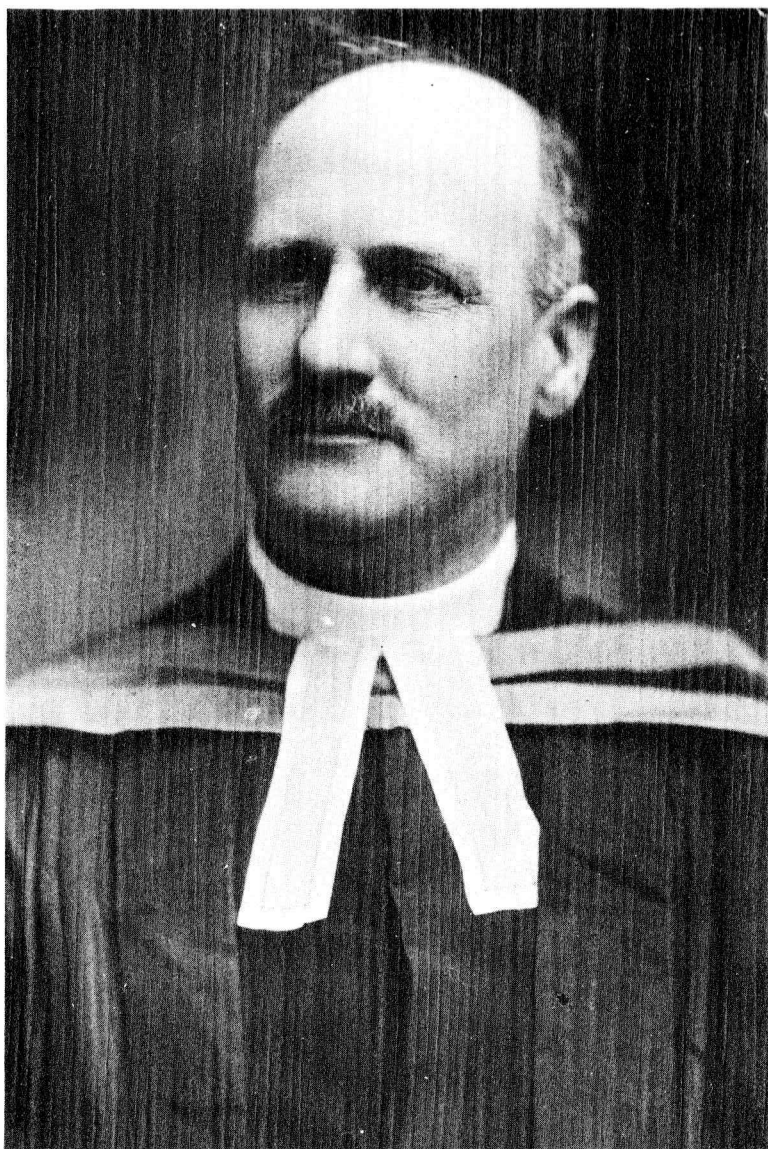
apologetic. And in addition to all in the way of witness, he had the ability to express his convictions in a scholarly way. I feel highly honored to have had even a slight association with him."

One who sat in his congregation during his London ministry has remarked on his scholarly characteristics: "He never mispronounced a word, he never uttered an ungrammatical sentence, his sermons were not only an inspiration but an education, and to those who were able to appreciate the quality of his work, the period of his ministry seems like a great mountain peak in our church's history."

The period of Rev. Mr. Knox's ministry covered the tragic years of the Great War. The annual report of the church for the year 1914 lists fifteen men from the congregation who, in the first few months of the struggle, were either at the front or in training. Year by year the list printed in the annual reports grew in size, and in the 1918 report there were portraits of eight men from the congregation who had made the supreme sacrifice. These were: Lieut. Harris McClure Mills, Lieut. James Douglas Aiken, Lieut. Leonard Charles Jarvis, Lieut. John

Elder, Pte. John Horne Hamilton, Pte. Charles William Thorne, Pte. Charles Philip Graham and Trooper Peter Stewart.

Near the close of Mr. Knox's ministry, the Rev. Dr. D. L. McCrae, who had recently retired from the active ministry, united with First Church, and was Moderator of Session during the vacancy of seven months that followed Mr. Knox's death. His services were highly appreciated by the congregation, and his ripe experience, combined with the breadth of his views, gave an authority to his message that was highly appreciated by the whole membership of the church. Dr. McCrae's benign influence remained long years after his death. "He being dead yet speaketh."



Rev. William Beattie

Rev. William Beattie

1921-1932

Colonel the Rev. William Beattie, D.D., became minister of First Church at the end of 1921, after six years and ten months of military service. Minister of Cobourg Presbyterian Church when war came, he went overseas in 1914 as chaplain of the 2nd Battalion, and to France early in 1915 as chaplain to the 2nd Brigade. In May, 1915, he was invalided to England, being recommended at this time for the decoration of Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, which was conferred upon him by King George in 1916. He returned to France in the autumn of 1915 as senior chaplain of the 2nd Division, and in March, 1917, was made assistant director of the Canadian chaplain services. He continued in this duty until 1918, when he was recalled to Canada and made director of chaplain services for the troops in training. This post he filled until July, 1921. He was twice mentioned in despatches and twice promoted on the field.

[Forty-One]

Few could realize more than the new minister, himself separated by seven years of war experience from regular pastoral work, the changed conditions which faced the work of the church. True, there were some effects which were in the nature of advance. Church union, for example, was to be brought to fruition in the early years after the war. First Church voted decisively for union, 366 favoring and only 58 dissenting. Of the latter only about a score separated from the church. Once the decision was made the Board of Managers announced that the historic name would be preserved; henceforth the congregation would be known as the First United Church, London.

Working out of church union was by no means the only problem of the post-war period. Increased seeking after material wealth seemed to be one of the greatest hindrances to religious growth. It was to this danger that Dr. Beattie alluded when in his pastoral message of 1929 he said: "The periods of greatest danger and decline have always synchronized with those of luxury and ease. To-day everything tends to make men soft and life easy. The element of challenge, however, is not lacking. Opportunity and challenge shout from every side."

In 1930 there passed away two veteran members of the church, Mr. A. M. Hamilton and Mr. Arch. Sharp. In the annual report for 1928 special mention was made of Mr. Hamilton, then ninety-three years of age, and who seventy years previously had been made treasurer of the congregation, which office he had filled until a few years before. Few churches have ever had a more worthy steward than First Church had in Mr. Hamilton. It was with him a matter of conscience that finances should be sound, and one may wonder if there were not times when from his own purse there came that which would bring the balance that was expected at the end of a year. Mr. Arch. Sharp, never absent from his place in the church and for many years a member of the Board of Managers, was another example of fidelity and a man whose influence will be lasting. Another loss to the congregation about the same time was the death of Mr. C. G. Jarvis, for many years Chairman of the Board of Managers. His services were invaluable, his courtesy and tact unfailing, and at the annual congregational meetings he was a model chairman.

The new associations in which the congregation found itself as a result of church union were interesting and pleasant. Prior to 1929 summer union services had always been with St. Andrew's Church, but in that year services were united with those of the Metropolitan United Church. In that same year the minister of the church was selected to represent the United Church of Canada and carry greetings to the Presbyterian Church of the United States meeting at Charlottesville, Virginia.

Looking forward to the approaching centenary of the church, various improvements were made to the church during 1932, reopening services being held on Sunday, September 11.

A striking feature of the last ten years has been the increase in the missionary givings of the church. From an annual total of about \$2,500, where the givings to missions stood a decade ago, there has been an increase to two and even three times this amount, the givings to missions in one year during this period even approaching \$8,000. If the vitality of a congregation may be measured by its missionary spirit, then First Church has indeed stood high and has maintained the missionary tradition that was set by its first minister.

Reviewing the Century

1832-1932

Reviewing the century since William Proudfoot organized this congregation, one may discern certain characteristics that have developed. In the earlier years there was exerted upon the church the strong personality of its first minister. It took courage, and devotion to a cause, and something of a spirit of adventure as well, to leave a settled parish in Scotland in the year 1832, as did William Proudfoot, and voyage to America to enter upon the life of a missionary among the pioneers of a remote inland Canadian province. To him surely, as much as to any man of his time, can be applied the title pioneer.

There seems to have been born back in those days, and to have continued alive in the church, something of the pioneering spirit of its founder. When the vital interests of the church and of the things for which the church stands could be secured

by a departure from tradition and accepted methods, this congregation has been ready to adventure. There are instances of it all along the way.

In a day when the question of having an organ in the church as an aid to worship could become a matter for the Presbytery and stir up as much controversy as a point of doctrine, First Church led the way among the Presbyterian congregations in having an organ. Records of the year 1858 indicate that the Presbytery of the day was a little horrified by the innovation which, it would appear, had been introduced a year or two earlier. Two messengers were sent by the Presbytery to remove the organ, which was done. Dr. Proudfoot carried the matter to the following meeting of the General Assembly in Halifax, and by a majority of one vote permission was given to have the organ reinstalled in the church. Subsequently this original organ was replaced by the first pipe organ. In the records there are recurring references to the organ, to organists and to an office that has disappeared in these days, that of "Organ Blower," which in the 'seventies called for remuneration to the extent of thirty dollars a year.

Reference has already been made to the introduction, during the early 'eighties, at the suggestion of the treasurer, Mr. A. M. Hamilton, of the weekly envelope system of giving. Such a system is to-day a commonplace in almost any church, but fifty years ago it was scarcely heard of, and First Church was one of the earliest in this district to take up the plan, with a success that has already been noted.

In the introduction of a surpliced choir, First Church was again a pioneer in London apart from the Anglican churches. If there were those who thought that this was a dangerous innovation they were little heard from, and the idea was generally approved.

A later development has been the heating of the church from the neighboring central heating plant of the London Life Insurance Co. It was at the suggestion of the late Mr. Chauncey Jarvis, then chairman of the Board of Managers, that this plan was adopted—the first instance of a church in London being heated in this manner.

In broadcasting services by radio, First Church was again a pioneer in London. In 1925, through

the kindness of a late member, Mr. S. Frank Glass, broadcasting of Sunday services was made possible. Mr. Glass had been confined to his bed over a long period through illness and knew the comfort and pleasure that could be brought to those who were shut in by means of radio. The development that has since taken place in the broadcasting of religious services is familiar to all. Somewhat akin to the use of radio has been the use of the lantern and slides for illustrated sermons on Sunday evenings during Dr. Beattie's pastorate. That through the eye as well as through the ear should come impressions and lessons needs little argument, and genuine success has attended the innovation.

Of all that which has come from the past, nothing is finer than the record of lay service through the years. Mention has already been made of some of those who over lengthy periods of time filled posts of responsibility in the church. The list of devoted workers might be almost indefinitely extended. Records of this kind can never be complete, and there are many who gave of their time and talents whose record was never written.

From an early date there were devoted workers in the Sunday School, but we know the names of few who in the earlier years directed the religious education of the young. From annual reports of the last half century may be gleaned the names of superintendents in that time: John Anderson, J. Crombie, Lawrence Gibson, Dr. George Hodge, James I. Anderson, W. C. Ferguson, E. E. Reid, Fred H. Heath, Dr. E. S. Detwiler, Fred Phelps and G. A. Wheable.

Clerks of the Session have included Adam Murray, James I. Anderson, Lawrence Gibson, Harry Bapty, John Anderson, C. G. Watson and John S. McLarty.

The fine service given in later years of the ministry of Dr. John Proudfoot by a body of lady visitors has already been mentioned. The annual report of the church for 1890 gives the names of those who served in that year: Mesdames James Ferguson, A. M. Hamilton, John Mills, G. C. Dobie, Alex. Hotson, L. Gibson, Thos. Kent, James I. Anderson, James Reid, H. Bapty, McGuffin, John Cameron, George Burns, Dr. Arnott, Dr.

Hodge, J. Anderson, Robt. Reid, S. M. Fraser, Adam Murray and Vincent and Miss Fraser.

The work of the choir has through the years been an important contribution to the services of worship of the church. Deservedly the choir of First Church has long enjoyed a high standing in the musical life of London. Miss Erith was the first to hold the position of organist, although Miss Bella Craig, later Mrs. T. H. Purdom, used to play the original little reed organ. Miss Erith was followed by Mr. William Ellis, but the modern period may be said to have begun with the appointment of Miss Raymond, who was followed by Mr. William Caven Barron, who held that office for thirteen years. Those who have since officiated are: George C. Phelps, Vivian Reeve, George Lethbridge, Clarence Gilmour. In 1931 Mrs. Ward Cornell was appointed to the position of Director of Music, with Mr. A. E. Harris as organist. A new organ was installed in 1912.

Of those still active in the work of the church, exception may well be made in recording the long and faithful services of Mr. W. C. Allen. In

addition to many years as a member of the Board and Session, he has filled for many years the office of Pew Steward with faithfulness and patience. At all times Mr. Allen has shown his loyalty to the church by performing to the very best of his ability any task entrusted to his charge.

Various organizations during the church's existence have served excellent purposes at different periods. Amongst these may be noted, in the 'eighties, a Literary Society, of which Mr. Bapty was the first President, and which served in its day to develop splendid debating and other talent amongst the younger element in the congregation.

In 1890 a Christian Endeavor Society was organized, and while it did not carry on for any great length of time, many can look back to its history with gratitude for the influence that it had upon their lives. In seeking an outlet for their energies, the members of the Christian Endeavor Society were asked to undertake a Mission in the southern part of the city, and it was through this organization that Chalmers Church was established, full reference to which has already been made.

The Ladies' Aid Society was a most effective organization, and has developed into the Women's Association, which throughout the years has proven of inestimable value to the welfare of the church.

An organization that has been notable in its vitality and accomplishments is the Victoria Mission Band, which was formed in June, 1887. It has remained in continuous existence since then, has stimulated interest in mission work amongst the young people throughout the intervening years, and continues to-day a vigorous and valuable organization in the work of the church. The first officers of this organization were Miss L. Fraser, President; Miss E. Ferguson, Secretary, and Miss M. Kennedy, Treasurer.

A senior Mission Band which carried on the Proudfoot name for many years, called "The Proudfoot Mission Band," did most effective work and was finally merged in the Women's Missionary Society. Many other organizations served useful purposes in their day, but it is impossible to note them all.

The first three pastorates of First Church covered a period of seventy-five years. Some notably lengthy memberships have also characterized the church's history. Perhaps none exceeded in length that of Mr. S. H. Craig, who, from the age of one year until his death, remained an adherent and member of the church.

It is interesting to note in the Session's Annual Report of 1889 the following resolution, which was adopted: "Resolved that in future the congregation stand while singing instead of sitting as at present."

The ravages of time are seen in the fact that of the 24 members of the Board and Session twenty years ago, there are but six left to-day.

One who might read the minutes of Session over a period of years would be impressed with the extreme care that was taken in earlier years with admissions to church membership and with dismissals to other congregations. The most careful scrutiny was made of the character of those who desired to become associated in membership, and it was impressed upon them that their part in the life of the church was a serious responsibility. Equally

careful was the supervision of elders over the relations of members of the congregation with their church and with one another. Always impressive is the record of the communions, the distribution of communion tokens in early days, of communion cards at a later date, and the preparatory services. A deep religious life shines from the faded records of these days gone by.

Members of Session and Board of Managers

The following are the names of those who served as Members of Session and of the Board of Management during the period for which records are available.

MEMBERS OF SESSION

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| David Adams..... | (1909-1917) | Henry Hall..... | (1921-1932) |
| | (1923-1929) | F. H. Heath..... | (1908-1910) |
| A. Aikenhead..... | (1919-1932) | Dr. Geo. Hodge..... | (1890-1900) |
| W. C. Allen..... | (1925-1932) | Harry Hooper..... | (1929-1932) |
| Jas. I. Anderson..... | (1887-1897) | Dr. A. Hotson..... | (1890-1897) |
| | (1901-1907) | | |
| John Anderson..... | (1890-1924) | M. Frank Irwin..... | (1909-1914) |
| Dr. H. Arnott..... | (1880-1908) | | (1926-1928) |
| | | | |
| Harry Bapty..... | (1890-1932) | W. D. Jackson..... | (1926-1932) |
| M. W. Bruce..... | (1921-1927) | | |
| Thos. Bryan..... | (1898-1920) | J. H. Langford..... | (1921-1926) |
| | | H. M. Lay..... | (1898-1899) |
| John Cameron..... | (1890-1907) | John Levie..... | 1898 |
| D. Campbell..... | 1887 | | |
| J. Crombie..... | (1876-1887) | A. A. Maver..... | 1900 |
| A. E. Crouch..... | (1909-1912) | F. W. Merchant..... | (1901-1907) |
| W. J. Curran..... | (1912-1923) | T. B. Miller..... | (1900-1902) |
| | | John Mills..... | (1890-1914) |
| S. F. Fraser..... | (1880-1891) | Adam Murray..... | (1876-1898) |
| | | Dr. A. J. Murray..... | (1925-1927) |
| L. Gibson..... | (1890-1914) | | |
| Geo. Gillespie..... | (1908-1924) | W. T. McClement..... | (1894-1895) |
| C. M. R. Graham..... | (1919-1924) | R. D. McDonald..... | (1923-1932) |
| Donald Graham..... | (1923-1932) | A. M. MacIntyre..... | (1927-1928) |
| A. Greenlees..... | (1894-1900) | John McLarty..... | (1922-1932) |
| W. Grieve..... | (1876-1880) | C. B. McLean..... | 1921 |

MEMBERS OF SESSION—Continued

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| George H. Nichol.....(1914-1920) | W. Smibert.....(— -1876) |
| | Alex. Stuart.....(1901-1908) |
| Geo. Ollerhead.....(1901-1904) | John Stuart.....(1919-1932) |
| E. E. Reid.....(1919-1932) | A. P. Templeton.....(1900-1920) |
| Hugh Rennie.....(1921-1932) | Wm. Turnbull.....(1908-1932) |
| Prof. A. D. Robert- son.....(1930-1932) | C. G. Watson.....(1914-1928) |
| | G. A. Wheable.....(1925-1932) |
| J. F. Sangster.....(1912-1932) | D. Wilkie.....(1914-1918) |
| H. S. Saunders.....(1894-1900) | C. Russell Wright.....(1925-1932) |
| T. W. Scandrett.....(1925-1932) | |

BOARD OF MANAGERS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| C. Frank Adams.....(1926-1932) | E. S. Crawford.....(1916-1932) |
| J. B. Aikenhead.....(1916-1925) | J. C. Crombie.. (1892-1898) 1902 |
| T. P. Allan.....(1925-1932) | |
| W. C. Allen.....(1899-1918) | Dr. E. S. Detwiler..... 1919 |
| | George E. Douglas..... 1932 |
| James I. Anderson.....(1885-1890) | |
| | 1908 |
| John Anderson.....(1885-1890) | H. V. Eckert.....(1922-1932) |
| Dr. D. H. Arnott.....(1902-1907) | C. H. Elliott..... 1898 |
| | H. M. Elliott..... 1887 |
| | J. B. Elliott..... 1885 |
| Dr. J. B. Balfour..... 1891 | Wm. Elliott..... 1876 |
| | (1910-1912) |
| H. Bapty.....(1885-1890) | |
| | (1909-1916) |
| R. R. Bland.....(1910-1912) | W. C. Ferguson.....(1897-8) |
| J. B. Boyle.....(— -1876) | R. G. Fisher.....(1896-1912) |
| | (1915-1918) |
| M. W. Bruce.....(1919-1922) | G. W. Forrest.....(1916-1921) |
| Thos. Bryan..... 1876 (1895-1898) | J. H. Fraser.....(1885-1891) |
| T. A. Bryan.....(1911-1913) | M. D. Fraser.....(1885-1890) |
| | |
| J. A. Campbell.....(1922-1926) | G. B. Gerrard..... 1910 |
| S. B. Coon.....(1893-1897) | L. Gibson..... 1876 |
| R. K. Cowan.....(1899-1902) | G. H. Gillespie.....(1896, 1908) |
| S. H. Craig.....(1907-1912) | Wm. Gilmour..... 1876 |
| W. J. Craig.....(1887-1900) | C. M. R. Graham.....(1911-14) |

BOARD OF MANAGERS—Continued

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| J. F. Grant.....(1910-1918) | John McLarty.....(1910-12) 1922 |
| A. Greenlees.....(1892-4) | C. B. McLean.....(1919-1921) |
| | A. McPherson, Sr.....(1891-1907) |
| A. M. Hamilton.....(— -1929) | A. McPherson, Jr.....(1909-1910) |
| G. H. Heighway.....(1917-1932) | |
| R. Henderson.....(1891-1898) | R. Preston.....(1892-1894) |
| A. Hotson.....(1885-1887) | E. E. Reid.....(1900-1906) |
| W. Howie..... 1891 | (1910-1912) |
| Dr. F. W. Hughes.....(1915-1918) | R. Reid.....(1885-1899) |
| G. J. Hughes..... 1931 | D. Ross..... 1885 |
| | |
| M. F. Irwin..... 1909 | Arch. Sharp.....(1885-1915) |
| | Hugh R. Shuttle- |
| W. D. Jackson.....(1926-1927) | worth.....(1922-1932) |
| C. G. Jarvis.....(1901-1914) | J. R. Shuttleworth.....(1896-1897) |
| | (1919-1929) |
| | (1902-1921) |
| W. T. Lawrence.....(1916-1921) | Walter Simson.....(1899-1902) |
| Wm. Lind..... 1876 | A. Smibert.....(1885-1887) |
| | |
| F. W. Merchant..... 1901 | A. Templeton.....(1897-1900) |
| Ralph A. Millar.....(1928-1932) | W. W. Thomson.....(1905-1912) |
| P. M. Millman..... 1915 | Wm. Turnbull.....(1906-1908) |
| W. D. Mills.....(1925-1929) | A. E. Turner.....(1923-1924) |
| John S. Moore.....(1901-1905) | Wm. Tytler.....(1899-1900) |
| A. H. Morgan.....(1919-1924) | |
| Rowland Munro.....(1922-1926) | T. Gordon Weir.....(1927-1932) |
| Col. K. A. Murray.....(1926-1932) | N. Wilson.....(1876-1887) |
| | Dr. H. S. Wismer.....(1931-1932) |
| | Dr. J. N. Wood.....(1899-1912) |
| T. P. McCormick.....(1910-12) | C. R. Wright.....(1923-1925) |
| | W. D. I. Wright.....(1910-1915) |
| | (1915-16) |
| S. B. McCready.....(1903-4) | |
| R. D. McDonald.....(1910-1918) | H. H. Young.....(1910-1914) |
| C. W. McGuire.....(1913-1915) | J. C. Young.....(1927-1932) |

The Year 1932

Once again, as a hundred years ago, a world war is in the recent background, and men and nations bend beneath its legacies of destruction and death.

Millions of men who might have been a part of this generation are in their graves—thousands of them in nameless graves. Dark shadows are around and whole nations fear the future.

The times call for courage and for faith. "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear."

O God of Bethel, by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led.

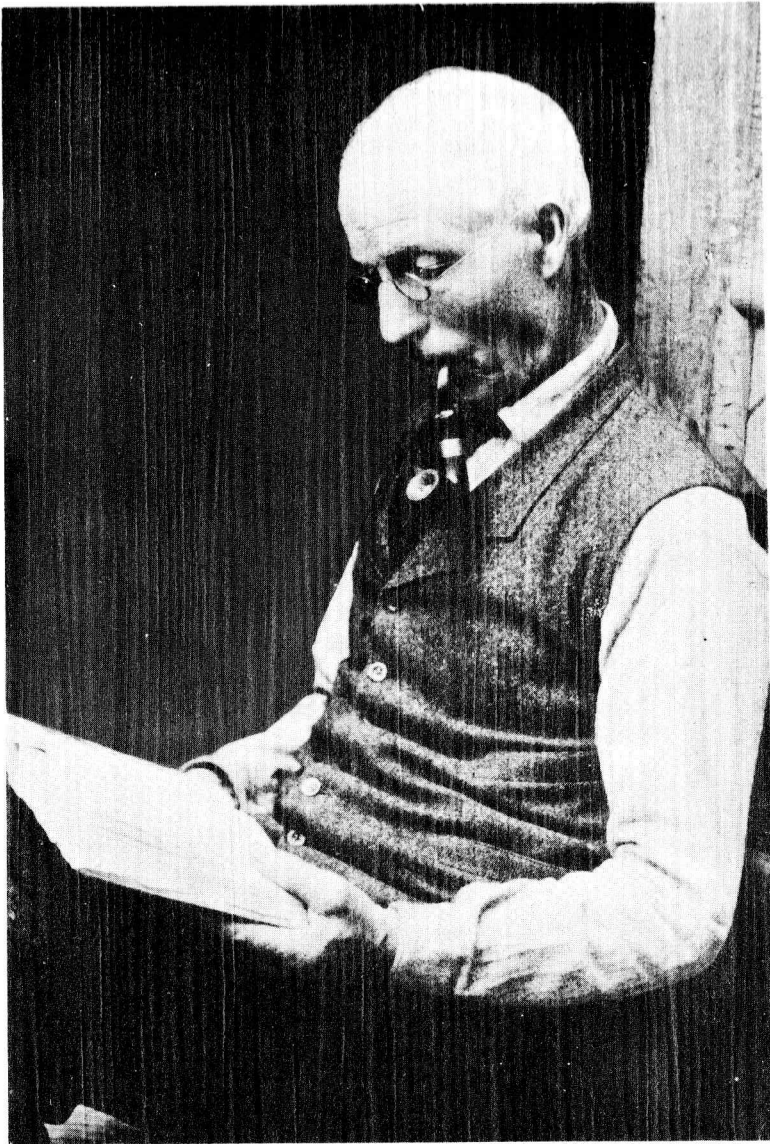
Our vows, our prayers, we now present
Before thy throne of grace;
God of our fathers, be the God
Of their succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life
Our wandering footsteps guide;
Give us each day our daily bread,
And raiment fit provide.

O spread thy covering wings around,
Till all our wanderings cease;
And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace.

Such blessings from thy gracious hand
Our humble prayers implore;
And thou shalt be our chosen God
And portion evermore.

[Fifty-Nine]



Andrew Denholm

During the latter half of the last century, Andrew Denholm was the controlling force about the church so far as material matters were concerned. It was not uncommon for him to commence preparations for the Sunday services by starting fires Friday night and living at the church until Sunday morning. He had a philosophy of his own and was accustomed to maintaining his own opinions against all opposition. He formerly lived in a cottage at the entrance of Oakland Cemetery, the fine fir trees of which all were planted by his own hands.