

Trinity Anglican Church

(By Rev. E. R. Woolley)

The history of Trinity Anglican Church is linked with the families of the early settlers in the Bradford area. Many of them came from England and Ireland and settled in West Gwillimbury Township where from 1832 to 1835 they were visited by the Rev. Adam Elliott, first travelling missionary of the home and Simcoe districts.

Mr. Elliott travelled extensively, and on one occasion he wrote of his labours: "Returning to West Gwillimbury I performed Divine Service there on Sunday, April 5th, 1835 and although the weather was very unfavourable, the people being obliged to assemble in a barn, a very inconvenient place, especially in this country, for the performance of sacred duties, it is supposed that two hundred and fifty people, mostly Episcopalians, were present; but only seven persons remained to receive the Holy Communion. This apathy, through the natural consequence of spiritual destitution, in which the people have been left, is greatly to be lamented and evinces in the strongest light the necessity of exertion to give them the regular preaching of God's word and the admonitions, the presence and prayers of his ministers more frequently among the people. Upon some occasions, however, in the same neighbourhood, I have administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to above thirty persons."

Mr. Elliott was succeeded by the Rev. H. H. O'Neill who carried on the work of the Church in West Gwillimbury until the appointment of the Rev. Featherstone Lake Osler. Mr. Osler was appointed missionary to Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Townships by the Upper Canada Clergy Society in 1837 and was welcomed by Mr. O'Neill who guided him to his parish.

During the next twelve years Mr. Osler worked in Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury. The following notice shows the affection of many of the people for him: "We the ladies of West Gwillimbury, being desirous of testifying our grateful sense of your arduous labours, request your acceptance of the accompanying gown. We gladly embrace the earliest opportunity since your return to express our attachment towards you and regret the inability to present you with a more costly token. December 13th, 1843."

In 1849 Mr. Osler was joined in his work in West Gwillimbury by the Rev. Arthur Hill and in 1851 West Gwillimbury was separated from Tecumseth, Mr. Hill taking charge of the new work. It was in this year that a Church in Bradford was built.

The first Trinity Church, Bradford was cruciform shaped and of frame construction. By 1854 it could be reported: "At Bradford we are shaking off the incumbrances that have hitherto hung so heavily upon us. The debt of our Church which at one time amounted to one hundred pounds has now been reduced to seventeen pounds and we hope will be liquidated in the course of the next few months."

By 1856 Trinity Church was flourishing and the Church Society reported: "The congregation presents an encouraging aspect; the attendance upon Divine Service has been steady and though we cannot boast of any large increase, there has certainly been no falling off. A new melodeon has been purchased at the cost of twenty-six pounds, five shillings, a bell has also been obtained and hung in the tower of the Church at a cost of sixty-four pounds, ten shillings. A stone foundation has been laid beneath the tower and part of the body of the Church. In carrying out these plans for the benefit of the congregation much energy and praiseworthy zeal have been manifested by the Churchwardens Messrs. Thompson and Swallow."

On April 12th of 1900 the first Trinity Church was completely destroyed by fire. The Font was one of the few items of its furnishings saved. But such was the zeal of the congregation that scarcely had the conflagration ceased and the embers cooled before rebuilding was underway. Under the energetic and capable leadership of the then rector, the Rev. George Benjamin Morley, a new Trinity Church was built on the site and it was opened, debt-free, for worship in December of that same year. The first service was held on The First Sunday In Advent.

An article headed, "Trinity Church," in The Bradford Witness, "Bradford in Picture and Story," issue of May 31st, 1906, states: "This handsome edifice is situated on the corner of Church and James Streets, and on December 2, 1900, was opened with imposing ceremonies, the rector, Rev. G. B. Morley, being assisted on the occasion by the Rev. Wm. Walsh of Brampton, Rev. T. W. Paterson of Toronto, a former incumbent, and Rev. A. C. Watt of Bond Head."

Over the years the people of Trinity Church have made many improvements in the fabric of their Church building. Among them are a completely equipped and modern kitchen and Sunday School Room, new Altar and Reredos, new electronic organ, the Church has been carpeted and

the surrounding grounds landscaped. In addition in 1956 the people of Trinity Church joined with the people of St. Paul's Church, Coulson's Hill and Christ Church, Holland Landing, the three congregations now forming the Parish of Bradford, to build a modern Rectory next to the Church.

Since the official opening of the present Church some sixty-five years ago, Trinity Church and her members have continued to witness for Christ and His Church in Bradford. But like Bradford itself the

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Church's congregations have changed over the years. Today many of the descendants of the hardy pioneers who settled the area have been joined in Trinity's pews to worship God by new Canadian families from many lands who have come to make Bradford their home.

The following is a list of the incumbents of Trinity Church since 1851: the Rev. Arthur Hill, the Rev. John Fletcher, the Rev. Charles Ruttan, the Rev. Thomas Wilson Paterson, the Rev. John Widmer Rolph, the Rev. Henry Burnand Owen, the Rev. Albert Warburton Spragge, the Rev. Charles Roles Bell, the Rev. Bernard Bryan, the Rev. Alfred John Greer, the Rev. Ernest Chilcott, the Rev. George Benjamin Morley, the Rev. Walter John Creighton, the Rev. Thomas Joseph Dew, the Rev. Albert Gordon Channen, the Rev. Harold Gordon Blake, the Rev.

Walter Sidney Johnson and the Rev. Edward Ross Woolley. The Rev. George Frederick Burton Doherty is listed as Curate in 1906.