

Early Presbyterian Churches

The name William MacPherson, father of the Session, superintendent of Sunday School, appears in many documented records of the early life of Sharon Presbyterian Church so we are assured as to the authenticity of his diary contained in a file in the Public Archives, Halifax, which tells the story of the beginning of the St. John and Sharon Churches.

He tells of a discussion between himself and a friend, a Mr. MacKenzie, while walking home from church in New Glasgow on a Sabbath in 1862 as to whether Stellarton (at that time Albion Mines) residents were numerous enough to build a church for themselves. Since 1852 they had been attending worship in one or other of the three Presbyterian Churches in New Glasgow. In winter a few went by foot but most travelled by horse and sleigh. In summer some preferred to walk but the majority went by flatcar drawn by a horse on the railway which was placed at their disposal by the manager of the mines, James Scott.

Perhaps the two men walked along the very spot, this side of Duff Cemetery, where the pioneer settlers of the East River Valley had built their log church seventy-five years earlier. Fired by their religious zeal determined to discuss with their friends the possibility of having once again their own church and their own minister within the boundaries of their habitation.

Although these two men were as one in their determination to have a Presbyterian Church in Albion Mines it is interesting to learn that after consultation with their friends, not one but two churches were built, the St. John by Kirkmen of the Established Church of Scotland and the Sharon, whose supporters were Secessionists. Basically the two branches proclaimed the same doctrine and the same form of church government but for some time there had been rivalry between them in Pictou County as in Scotland. That any serious division was present is attested by the fact that ^{there were} proposals for union of the various branches of the church from time to time and on June 15, 1875 the Presbyterian Church in Canada came in to being.

Page One
(a) Introduction
(b) St John Presbyterian Church

Then
Page I

Sharon
Old Sharon Riverbank
New Sharon Present Location

St. John Presbyterian Church (The Kirk)

The original site of St. John Church was near the Crossroads on the east side of Foord Street, thus the name Kirk Avenue. The first minister, Rev. William M. Phillips, was inducted in 1863. His successor was Rev. Charles A. Dunn in 1871 who later accepted a call to Lyster, Scotland.

The minutes of the Session (1870-1907) in the Maritime Conference Archives, Halifax, reveal that the next minister, Rev. James Murray, caused some dissension and it is interesting to note that St. John Church had to get permission from the Egerton Presbytery ^{in Scotland} to accept his resignation. Rev. Mr. Rankin, Rev. E.H. Burgess and Rev. D.M. Matheson were followed by Rev. W.L. Cunningham, who was inducted in 1908.

At a meeting on 31, May, 1888, a discussion took place regarding moving the church to a lot farther south on Foord Street. The village, which was now called Stellarton, had grown beyond the nucleus of the mines area so some of the congregation wished to have the church in a more central location. There was considerable controversy as the Good Templars- Y.M.C.A. had jointly chosen the same lot for their new hall. However by September of the same year the situation had been resolved because the church records show that it was decided to dig the foundation, fill it to the surface with rubble stone and move the building on it when the frost came. There, on the east side of Foord Street, ^{between Bridge Ave} ~~approximately~~ ^{and Allan Ave} where Dale Motors automobile dealership now stands the congregation of St. John Church worshipped until 1934 when they united with Sharon to form Sharon and St. John United Church in Canada. Previously, in April, 1926, they had united with the congregation of the Stellarton Methodist Church, so it was actually a union of three churches.

" It was moved by John Fellows seconded by J.W. Henderson and unanimously resolved that this Board of Trustees of St. John United Church do now resign in a body in order that a congregational meeting of the Sharon and St. John United Church may have the opportunity of appointing a Board of Trustees which shall hold in trust for the benefit of the United Church of Canada all property now held and enjoyed by the Congregation of Sharon and St. John United."

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The St. John Presbyterian Church (the Kirk)

See p. III following

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It was moved by John Fellows recorded by

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That last Board of Trustees of St. John Church were the following:
Dr. G. M. Young, J. W. Henderson, H. S. Cutten, John Fellows, John Cavanaugh,
John A. MacKenzie, Peter MacDonald, John Ferguson, and Andrew Fellows.