

Chapter 7

The First Resident Clergyman

Mr. Harding's suggestion that Peninsula and Little Gaspé be made a separate mission was acted on in 1892. The Rev. Harold A. Brooke was appointed assistant to the Rev. G.T. Harding to take charge of the Mission of Peninsula and Little Gaspé. Mr. Brooke had come out from England and had obtained his college education at Bishop's University. He was a deacon when he came here.

Many people date the beginning of the church from his arrival. Mr. Brooke brought his sister Annie, who had just arrived from England, with him as he was not yet married. About seventy years later, Miss Brooke wrote an account of her stay in Peninsula and from it one can see the new impressions made upon her as she took up a new life so remote from her English one.¹ To the people here, having a young man and woman living right in the place to take the lead in all parish activities was a great pleasure and privilege.

After staying for a little while with the Hardings in Sandy Beach (where a new parsonage was under construction), the Brookes moved to Peninsula. They stayed for a short time with Mr. and Mrs. Louis Annett until Mr. and Mrs. Alpheus Ascah were ready for them. A baby had just arrived there, but Mrs. Ascah was soon ready for her boarders to move in.

Mr. Brooke said in his report for 1892 that he had regular Sunday services and also a service every Wednesday evening followed by choir practice. He gave a "course of addresses explanatory of the Prayer Book" and he wrote that he had a monthly service at Ship Head in the home of Mr. Samuel Roberts. Miss Brooke taught Sunday School and my mother, who was a little girl of seven at the time, remembers her as her teacher.

One of the highlights of the winter of 1892-93 was the preparation and presentation of two concerts. They were the first of many concerts during the next twenty or more years for which Peninsula became

1. Annie Brooke Hubbard: "Gaspé Seventy Years Ago". The Atlantic Advocate, May 1963.

quite famous. People sometimes drove from as far away as Mal Bay to attend. The singing and acting were greatly applauded. Mr. John Neil Ascah wrote about the first one:

"January 24, 1893: Had concert tonight in Henry Ascah's house. It was a decided success. Very large crowd. House full. They had tea at Rich Ascah's. 25¢ admission and tea. 2nd tea 15¢. They made \$76.

In April they were getting ready for another concert.

"April 11, 1893: They rigged up Capt. Baker's old house for concert. We practised there tonight."

At the vestry meeting that spring the "reboarding" of the east end of the church was discussed. A committee was appointed to examine the wall, and their report recommending that it needed to be reboarded, it was decided to buy the boards and the congregation would put them on. Mr. Ascah's diary reads:

"October 17, 1893: I worked with a crowd today, stripping off the clapboards and boarding in the end of the church with grooved boards."

This is the only mention I have found of the church being clapboarded. The clapboarding must have been done sometime after 1885 if the outside was then still "rough boards" as the records of the time indicate.

In the summer of 1893 there was another visit by the Bishop. Mr. Ascah gave this account of the event:

"Sunday, July 16, 1893: The new Bishop A. Hastie Dunn came on "Admiral" last night and his son and ArchDeacon Roe. They ordained Rev. Mr. Brooke in Basin Church and came over here and confirmed. There were 28 confirmed here. There were a lot of old men among them."

Unfortunately, Mr. Brooke suffered from asthma and found the climate here hard on his condition. Therefore, he left in September, 1893. Mr. John Neil told of his departure:

"September 24, 1893: There is such a crowd gone to Little Gaspé this morning to hear Mr. Brooke's farewell sermon. He leaves here with his sister tonight on S.S. Admiral for Scotstown and we are to have a new preacher.

Later same day: I went to hear Rev. Brooke preach his farewell sermon here this evening - they went over to take "Admiral" this evening and a crowd escorted them over."

Miss Brooke in her article in the "Atlantic Advocate" later in her

life told of their departure.

"It was at sunset on a beautiful Sunday at the end of September that we left the Peninsula... This time six men rowed us across (to) the Basin in a large whale-boat, and at midnight we steamed off in the old "Admiral" again for Dalhousie and its railway. I was no longer an immigrant."

That same September brought a significant turning point in the development of the Church of England in Canada as a whole. For years efforts had been made to unify all the dioceses of Canada which now existed from coast to coast. Finally, in September 1893, the first General Synod met in Toronto and soon the first Primate of All Canada, Bishop Machray of the Diocese of Rupert's Land, was chosen.

In some ways, the 1890s and the next decade or so seem to me to have been the heyday of St. Matthew's Church. Great as the interest was at other periods before and afterward, the written accounts that I have read of events then show an enthusiasm never quite matched at any other time.

		1901				
		\$	¢	\$	¢	
Dec. 12	Paid to Church warden	100.00		Dec. 12	By tea at Guild	3.55
	3 books	.25			Balance fr. last Guild	<u>103.65</u>
	2 thermometers	.20				\$107.20
	1 song	.25				
	postage	5				
	Cash on hand	<u>6.45</u>				
			\$107.20			

The meetings provided a social occasion once the work of the afternoon was over. The men often came for tea, and their contribution was a way of earning more money. The idea of having a tea and entertainment was proposed at the November meeting in 1894. The minutes of the next meeting read:

Dec. 1894. We had our 10 cent tea and sale of goods...
and it was a success for we realized about \$30. Now we are about starting a concert with a bazaar.

This was the first of many ten-cent teas. Special entertainment was sometimes provided. For example, on September 10, 1897, at a Guild at Mrs. Ed Coffin's the members and guests were entertained by a "graphophone" brought by "Mr. Alexander a gentleman from Lennoxville".

The members often did charitable work. One entry states: "We began collecting on a friendship quilt to be given to a needy person", and another: "We worked all the afternoon making clothes for a widow woman's children".

The guilds were held that first year (1893-94) at the homes of the following: Mrs. Alpheus Ascah, Mrs. Benjamin Mullin, Mrs. Robert Ascah, Mrs. Wm. Miller Jr., Mrs. Philip Coffin, Mrs. Felix Miller, Mrs. Edward Coffin, Mrs. Bayne, Mrs. Chas. Phillips, Mrs. George Ascah, Mrs. Richard Ascah and Mrs. Alex Ascah.

The minutes have been preserved in their entirety to the present year, 1978, except for those of a few meetings in 1909 on a page missing from the second minute book. Thus the group of women who met that day in April eighty-five years ago founded a very permanent organization.

Chapter 9
Peninsula in 1893

Only a couple of weeks after Mr. Brooke left Peninsula, the Rev. Norman Bayne, his wife, and his mother arrived on the "Admiral". They stayed temporarily where the Brookes had stayed, with Mr. and Mrs. Alpheus Ascah, and surprised the ladies the day after their arrival by attending the Guild being held at Mrs. Felix Miller's.

It had been decided that Mr. Charles Ascah's old house would be used as a parsonage, and so the people of the community proceeded to make it as comfortable as possible for the Baynes. Those who remember Mr. Lewis and Mr. Ab Ascah's houses can picture where the Baynes lived when I say that Mr. Charles Ascah's house was approximately between them.

From what I have read of him, I think that, just as Mr. and Mrs. Bayne lost no time in meeting with the ladies, so Mr. Bayne soon proceeded to move up and down the parish to meet all the people. If we try to look at the place with his eyes, we can get a picture of it as it was then.

Starting at the west end of the parish was the Mullin lot (included in the North West Arm in the 1831 census). On it were the homes of Mr. Alfred Mullin and Mr. Philip Mullin. Next east, bordering a little cove sometimes known then, as it became in later years, as Farewell Cove, was the Coffin lot occupied by Mr. Philip Coffin's house (the old house still standing next to Mr. Alex Coffin's house) and Mr. Edward Coffin's. This latter house was the one Mr. Mathers lived in for a year or two and it stood just a little in front and to the west of the one occupied today by Mr. and Mrs. Beebe and Mrs. Allen Coffin. Mr. Luther Coffin's house (Mr. Alex Coffin's today) was built very shortly after this.

A stretch of woods lay next until we reach where Mr. William McAfee's home is today. That lot was occupied by Mr. Robert Mullin and his sons, Brian and Clarence. My father often described Mr. Robbie Mullin as a very jovial man, offering rides to and from church to as many as could pile into his carriage, cart, or sleigh. His neighbours were

two LeMesuriers, Mr. Philip and Mr. Peter. This section was known as Braggs after some obscure resident of the past who was said to have beaten his son to death. More woods lay between the LeMesurier lots and Shallop Point. All the Shallop Point land and the lot east of it were owned by Annetts. It was occupied in 1893 by Mr. Henry Annett (son of the earlier Henry), George T. Annett who was in the process of building the house now owned by Mr. Reginald Annett, and John Annett and his son Louis whose long, yellow house stood just behind the location of the house where I now live.

A little brook called Ascah's Brook bordered the Annett land on the east and marked the beginning of the Ascah land which stretched from there east to the school lot. The homes of various Ascah families occupied this land, those of Richard, Henry, Alexander and his son Edward, George, William Sr., Christy (Mrs. Wm. West) and her sister Theresa (Mrs. Herman Schilling), Charles, and William Jr. To the people living east of this, all those living on the Ascah and Annett land were said to be living "up the creek" or "up the crick", after the body of water which bordered the land.

Next to the school lot, as I have already mentioned, was the home of Mr. Alpheus Ascah, and from his place down a good distance was Baker's property. Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Mullin had moved in with the two old Baker men, Mr. Thomas and Captain William, living in Mr. Thomas Baker's house which was approximately where Mr. Earl Phillips' house is today. Much of this land was uncleared and "Captain Baker's woods" was a great protection to people travelling on the road in winter gales, as were all the ^{other} wooded stretches.

The Miller land came next and it was occupied by three houses, two of which are still standing: Mr. Tom Miller's, owned until recently by Mr. Gilbert Miller, Mr. Felix Miller's, and Mr. William Miller Jr.'s, known to most of us as Mr. Roland Miller's.

More Ascah land bordered Millers' and it was occupied by three ^{brothers} borthers, Captain John Ascah with whom Mr. John Neil Ascah lived, Charles whose house was now the parsonage and who was living with the third brother, Robert, the father of the large family already mentioned.

A stream, known officially as Watering Creek but locally as the Run, where the Simons operated a grist mill which they had built about twenty-five years earlier, ran through the Ascah property and was bordered on the east by a long wooded hill. At the top of this hill were the two Phillips houses. The neighbouring property was owned by Mr. Charles Patterson, and next to it was a large Miller holding on which five Miller families lived. Mr. Edwin Miller had recently built his house, next was his father, William Sr., and next the old home, to which Mr. John Miller had come when he returned from Maine a few years earlier and which was now occupied by his brother, Fred. Wyndham Miller, another brother came next, and most easterly was still another brother, George. Just behind Mr. Wyndham Miller's house the Griffon Road branched off and continued through the woods to Griffon. More woods lay east of Mr. George Miller and between it and Three Runs some Briard men had built their homes. Unlike the rest of the people of Peninsula who were all Church of England, these men were Methodist with some of their families being brought up Catholic. Some distance down the road, in Little Cap aux Os was at least one Church of England family, that of Mr. James Roberts.

In those days a good deal of land was cleared, probably more than remains cleared today, and every household had some livestock. The fields were fenced, mostly with rail fences having a gate or barriers in front of each house. In summer, the cattle, sheep and horses were turned loose on the road to wander up to the marsh in the Creek or in along the Griffon Road, or to any other unfenced spots to eat whatever they could find. The road ran approximately where it does today, having been laid out some time in the early nineteenth century. The first road had been a path along the bank, a remnant of which could still be seen in Captain Baker's woods in the 1880s and 1890s. Footpaths ran between all the houses with stiles over the fences, making it possible to go up and down the parish without having to go on the road except to cross the bigger brooks. Many of the houses were up on the hills far back from the road, although the newer ones, such as Mr. William Miller's and Mr. Edwin Miller's, were being placed down near the road.

There were also barns, storehouses, sheephouses, pigpens, workshops, cooperage shops, outdoor toilets, and forges. There were well-

houses in the brooks and kenchhouses or storehouses and icehouses on the beach.

One can then picture the people coming from their houses on a Sunday and joining their neighbours as they walked or drove to church. The horses were tied to the fence around the church, and in winter there would be numerous pairs of snowshoes standing near the church door.

This was the Peninsula Mr. Bayne saw in his first year here.