

The following is an excerpt related to the Lutheran Church in Williamsburg and Morrisburg from the "Story of Dundas: Being a History of the County of Dundas, from 1784 to 1904" by J. Smyth Carter.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

St. Lawrence parish of the Evangelical Lutheran church comprises St. John's church, Riverside, and St. Paul's church, Morrisburg. The settlement of this portion of the northern shore of the St. Lawrence has already been referred to. No sooner had those German Loyalists (many of whom were Lutherans) landed on the shores of Dundas than they began to establish religious institutions. Meetings for public worship were held, and in 1787 they sent a messenger to Philadelphia for a "Book of Sermons" and a hymn-book, both of which were used under the direction of a lay reader until they obtained their first pastor.

In 1789 they began the erection of a church, the first Protestant church built in Upper Canada. It was a quaint white edifice of the Dutch style of architecture. There was nothing especially peculiar in its appearance, nothing to arrest the attention of the passing stranger, nevertheless it possessed a history all its own. More than a hundred years have elapsed since its erection. Generation after generation have grown up about it. Generations have come into this world, grown old and died, still the old bell in the low tower continued to call the worshippers together. The scattered inhabitants met here for prayer half a century before Morrisburg was born.

The first pastor in connection with this early church was Rev. Samuel Schwerdfeger, a native of Saxony. He organized the congregation and dedicated the church "Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church." In 1792 the Lutheran congregation petitioned the Government for the lot, containing about seventy-five acres, upon which the church stood, as a glebe. They received a "license of occupation," with the further promise that a deed would soon be issued. With this assurance they cleared a portion of the lot, built a parsonage and made other improvements. In 1799 a description of the land was issued from the office of the Surveyor-General in place of a deed, as the government was not yet in a position to issue deeds for such lands. In the meantime the labors of the pastor were unremitting, and congregations had been organized in Osnabruck and Matilda; both of these congregations have long since ceased to exist, the members having proselyted to the Episcopal or Methodist churches. Mr. Schwerdfeger's faithful pastorate closed at his death, in 1803.

The second pastorate began in 1804 and extended over a period of three years. The pastor, Rev. Frederick Augustus Myers, was a son of Rev. Frederick Myers, first pastor of the Bay of Quinte parish.

The third pastorate, from 1808 to 1811, was conducted by Rev. J. G. Weagant, a native of Hanover, a university graduate and a school fellow of Rev. F. A. Myers. In 1811 Mr. Weagant apostatized from the Lutheran church and was re-ordained in Quebec by Bishop Mountain of the Episcopal church, but remained in Williamsburg as a Lutheran pastor. When the fact of his apostasy became known the Lutherans feared that by the new arrangement they were to be absorbed into the Episcopal church and the indignation of some of them was undisguised. The invitation extended them to unite with the

English Church was accepted by a few families, while the great majority stood aloof from the proposed arrangement. In the meantime, during the war of 1812-14, church affairs had been much neglected, and at the close of hostilities some members of the disbanded regiments came to Canada. More than one of these German soldiers possessing a liberal education visited the Lutherans in Williamsburg under the title of Lutheran ministers. Some of the people were greatly imposed upon, and one of these imposters especially proved himself to be "a wolf in sheep's clothing."

The fourth pastorate began in 1814 under the direction of a former minister, Rev. F. A. Myers. Some difficulty then arose, as Rev. Weagant refused to vacate the parsonage and glebe and also prevented the Lutherans from using the church. Rev. Myers for a time preached in the homes of his flock until by agreement the Lutherans secured the use of the church for a portion of the time. In 1817 Rev. Myers also apostalized to the Episcopal church. He then settled in Matilda (Iroquois) and continued to officiate there as an Episcopal minister till his death.

On Oct. 7th, 1818, the church wardens conferred upon Colonel Henry Merkley the power of attorney to secure from the government the patent deed for the clergy land granted by license of occupation to Salem Lutheran congregation, called since Rev. Weagant's apostasy St. George's Church, but their efforts were of no avail, and for nine years they were without a pastor.

In 1824 a minister in the person of Rev. I. L. Senderling was secured. He, however, declined the pastoral call on account of the inadequate salary, and during his brief stay labored as a missionary.

The fifth pastorate of the church began in 1826 when Rev. Herman Hayunga accepted the call. Mr. Hayunga was a native of Denmark, who had received his education in Germany. He was a very active and successful pastor and during his stay St. Peter's Church, North Williamsburg, was founded. In 1837 owing to ill health he resigned his charge. His interest in the church was, however, preserved, and at several interims during succeeding years he was supply administrator.

The disputed church property long continued a bone of contention until by act of parliament a division of the land was made, the Episcopalians retaining the south half with all the improvements, while to the Lutherans remained the unimproved portion to the rear. This settlement was unfair to the Lutherans, who later received a government grant of \$2,000 to partially atone for the loss of their church and glebe.

During the early thirties Mr. Conrad Frymire donated the congregation three acres of land a short distance above the old church and there the Lutherans rebuilt. The corner-stone of the new church was laid April 20, 1833; the last Lutheran service in the old church was held June 16th, and on July 14th, 1833, Rev. Mr. Hayunga consecrated their new "Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Church."

Between 1837 and 1839 is recorded the sixth pastorate of the church under the care of Rev. Simeon Dederick, a graduate of Hartwick Seminary.

The seventh pastorate began April 21, 1840, when Rev. Sharts preached his first sermon in the field, where he remained during the next eighteen years, the longest pastorate in the history of the congregation. A new parsonage was erected in 1842, and in 1856 Rev. Sharts secured subscriptions to the amount of \$3,070 for the erection of a new church, but for some years the work was held in abeyance. In 1858 Rev. Sharts resigned, and during the next three years Rev. Hayunga was again acting pastor. In 1858 the parish as then constituted of St. John's Church, Riverside, and St. Peter's Church, at North Williamsburg, was divided, the latter withdrawing from the ministerium of New York to enter the Hartwick Synod.

Rev. J. H. Hunton ministered during the eighth pastorate, from 1861 to 1872, and during that interval the present church at Riverside was erected, the dedication being held August 16, 1863. About that time St. John's congregation was dismissed from the ministerium of New York, and was received into the Canada Synod. In 1862 Rev. Hunton began preaching in Morrisburg, and later service was regularly held in the town hall there.

During an interim of one year, before the appointment of Rev. L. Hippie as pastor, Rev. J. D. Roth, of St. Peter's Church, North Williamsburg, supplied the congregation. By the resignation of Rev. Hippie in 1874 the ninth pastorate was concluded.

The tenth pastorate was also brief. The pastor, Rev. Augustus Shultz, although remaining but one year, made a deep impression in favor of conservative church life and practice. During his pastorate the erection of St. Paul's Church, Morrisburg, began.

Rev. J. Fishburn, President of the Canada Synod, was pastor for about one year, and by him was dedicated St. Paul's Church, Morrisburg. In October, 1876, his son, Rev. M. H. Fishburn, became pastor of the parish, consisting of St. John's Church, Riverside, and St. Paul's Church, Morrisburg. He remained in charge until February, 1882.

The twelfth pastorate extended from 1882 to 1890, Rev. A. H. Kinnard being superintendent. In the winter of 1886-87 the parish was divided, Rev. Kinnard remaining in charge of the St. John's congregation, while Rev. J. M. Long became pastor of St. Paul's Church.

In 1890 the two congregations again united, and the thirteenth pastorate was entered upon under the care of Rev. W. L. Genzmer. During the latter part of his ministry he also officiated at St. Peter's Church, North Williamsburg, which pastorate had for a time been vacant.

Rev. O. D. Bartholomew became pastor in 1893, and his resignation was presented in the spring of 1895, thus closing the fourteenth pastorate.

The next minister was Rev. S. L. Keller, who, finding the parsonage at St. John's Church ill conditioned, tendered his resignation in May, 1898. He however made an appeal on behalf of his successor for a parsonage in Morrisburg. The need in this department was satisfied by Mrs. T. Dardis, who in 1898

donated the present parsonage, an ideal home, to St. Paul's congregation. Rev. Keller's resignation not being accepted he remained until impaired health caused him to sever his connection with the parish in the year 1900. Other changes were resulting. In 1899 St. John's Church was greatly repaired, and on September 17th of that year was re-dedicated. G. J. Cook, of Toronto, also added a beautiful fence to the cemetery at St. John's Church.

The present and sixteenth pastorate began in 1900. The pastor, J. C. F. Ruff, is a native of Pennsylvania, a graduate of the Pennsylvania College of Gettysburg Theological Seminary, and received ordination August 31, 1884. In August, 1902, there was bequeathed by the will of the late George J. Cook, of Toronto, the sum of \$10,000 to St. John's Church, and \$4,000 to St. Paul's Church, as a perpetual endowment towards the support of the pastor. Mr. Cook's parents were members of St. John's Church, and in that vicinity the donor had spent his boyhood days, and his action in bequeathing so generously will ever be deservedly esteemed.

In September, 1902, the St. Lawrence parish was separated from the Canada Synod to join in the organization of the Synod of New York and New England for the prosecution of English work.

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, NORTH WILLIAMSBURG, AND DUNBAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

Soon after the initial settlement of Dundas county a number of Lutheran families settled in the vicinity of what is now North Williamsburg. Among these were included the names of Berkley, Casselman, Schell, Merkley, Haries, Whittaker, and others. They worshipped at St. John's Lutheran church, Riverside. Finally the apostasy of their pastor, Rev. Weagant, and the fact of inter-marriages caused religious matters to grow somewhat intricate.

In 1825 Rev. Sender ling put forth an effort to build a church at North Williamsburg, on a site given by John Cook. After much labor in this direction the Lutheran and Presbyterian bodies decided to build a union church. Rev. Hayunga became pastor in 1826, preaching in a private house until 1827, when the proposed church was built. Both denominations used the church, but finally some difficulty arose between them in reference to the payment of the church debt; these unpleasant conditions continued until 1836 when matters were satisfactorily adjusted.

Rev. Dederick became Lutheran pastor in 1837, and two years later Rev. Hayunga supplied at North Williamsburg. In 1840 Rev. Sharts became pastor, serving with some intermissions until the year 1858. Some difficulty arose about that time and Rev. Bridgeman caused a division in the congregation and built a church at Bouck's Hill, a short distance to the east of North Williamsburg.

Rev. Hunton became pastor in 1863, and the following year Rev. J. Fishburn was placed in charge. In 1864-5 the present Lutheran church, a large and commodious house of worship, was built at North Williamsburg independent of the Presbyterians; succeeding pastors were, Revs. Hunton, Boyer, Fishburn, Roth and Hippie.

Some time previous to 1874 Lutheran services were instituted at Dunbar and during Rev. Hippie's pastorate the present comfortable Lutheran church was built at that place.

Rev. Prof. John Whittaker served the North Williamsburg parish for a short time, and in 1884 Rev. M. H. Fishburn was the stationed minister.

His successors have been Rev. Genzmer (1890), Rev. Murray (1893) and the present able pastor, Rev. John Shunk.