

The History of St. Saviour's Church, Queenston

As preserved in the records of the early settlement along the Niagara River

§ I. The Settlement of the West Landing

Following the War of Independence between Britain and the United States, the east side of the Niagara River, which had been under the control of the British, was settled by the Americans around Fort Niagara. Britain subsequently purchased the west side from the Mississauga aboriginals for settlement by Britain. Four settlers originally arrived, with more to follow, and the West Landing became Britain's portage around Niagara Falls. It subsequently was named Queenston and became a major trading centre with goods arriving up the St. Lawrence from Europe and Britain and with furs coming down from farther inland.

§ II. The First Congregation (1788–1792)

In Queenston a congregation of United Empire Loyalists had, by 1788, formed a church congregation consisting of a strange mix of denominations and beliefs. They were served by various missionaries. They carried on with some recriminations and built a church in the area now best located as being near the present York Road and the Niagara Parkway. The first service in this building was held in 1792 by the Rev. Mr. Addison, Rector of St. Mark's in Niagara-on-the-Lake. A watercolour of this church is in the John Ross Robertson collection in Toronto. A likeness of the church is on the back wall of St. Saviour's.

§ III. The Ministry of Rev. Bridges Stevens (1820–1821)

In 1820, The Rev. Bridges Stevens was a Military Chaplain at Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake. In that year he assumed the pastoral care of the Queenston congregation. Although the church had been built, it had no designated denomination.

The Rev. Stevens had considerable powers of conciliation and the church became Anglican and was named St. Stephen's. The Rev. Stevens left in 1821. He had served St. Stephen's without pay and had also presented the church with a silver chalice and paten, dated 1761, which is still used by the present congregation.

§ IV. The Lightning Strike of 1830 and the Wandering Years

In 1830 St. Stephen's was struck by lightning and largely demolished. The remains are now buried and because there was some doubt about the legality of the land deed, the church was not rebuilt. For the next forty years, the congregation met in the Methodist Chapel in Queenston, which had been built in 1786. Initially, the congregation paid \$30 rent, annually, in two instalments, but, subsequently, when the Methodists required more space, the St. Stephen's group met in the Lowery Stone Barn at the corner of Partition and Queenston Streets or in the Dee House at the corner of Dee Road and Queenston Street. Both houses are still standing.

Encouragement came to the St. Stephen's congregation from the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in England in 1848. This encouragement was expressed in the form of a Bible

and Prayer book, which are displayed presently in a glass case at the back of St. Saviour's. The members of the congregation, at that time, took turns conducting the service when a clergyman was not available.

§ V. The Dream of a New Church

The congregation had dreams of building another church and the wives of Mr. Robert Hamilton and Mr. Dee, both prominent traders in Queenston, were driving forces behind these efforts.

Sir Isaac Brock's family in Guernsey was contacted and, although unable to send money, they gave 200 acres of land to the church to use as it saw fit. The actual receiving and disposition of this land is cloudy, yet the correspondence about the initial offer still exists. Mr. And Mrs. Dee and Mr. And Mrs. Young of Trenton, and Mr. Chilton Mewburn (father of Mrs. Young) of Hamilton, gave three lots of land for a church and rectory to be held in perpetuity in care of the Rector and Wardens and never to be encumbered by any debt. The lot numbers, at the time, were 133, 134 and 135.

§ VI. The Building of St. Saviour (1877–1879)

The present church building, overlooking the Niagara River, was begun in 1877 and completed by hard work two years later. Some of the labour was given as a gift. The total cost, which included a fence, was **\$2,542.92** but there was \$400 still owing at its completion. Because there was never to be any debt associated with the church, members of the building committee absorbed the debt so that it could be dedicated. The building is constructed of local limestone and the name of the church was changed to **St. Saviour, the Brock Memorial Church**.