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St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

1862——1922

A HISTORICAL SKETCH

New Westminster,
B. C.

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St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

A

Historical

Sketch

THIS brief sketch of the early history of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, New Westminster, is issued at the request of the Session of the Church in the hope that it may be appreciated by many who are interested in the growth of Presbyterianism in British Columbia, and that there may be a lasting record of the early history of the first Presbyterian Church on the Mainland of British Columbia.

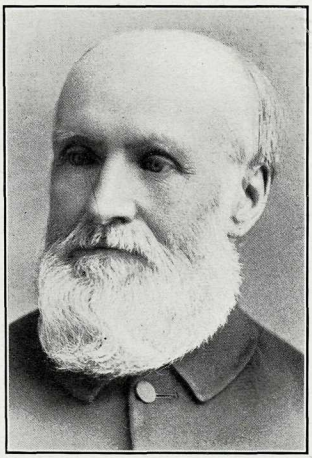
Albert E. Vert.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

A Historical Sketch

Over sixty years ago the Rev. R. Jamieson arrived in New Westminster and laid the foundation of the present St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

It was on the 12th day of March, 1862, that the Pioneer Missionary of the Canadian Presbyterian Church commenced and organized the Presbyterian Congregation of New Westminster under the style "The New Westminster Presbyterian Church."



REV. R. JAMIESON

The congregation first met for worship in the old court house, which faced Clarkson Street, and occupied the site where the addition to the present court house has been erected.

In January, 1863, the first Communion Roll was made up, consisting of the following names:

Mrs. A. Rogerson, Mrs. Ann Watt, Robert Jamieson (Rev.), Mrs. Robert Jamieson, John Robson, Robert Craney, Thomas McMicking, Beth Beaton, David Edmond, Malcolm Nicholson, Mrs. Nicholson, James Dickson, John Lynn, Mrs. Lynn, and Donald Sinclair.

The first eight named were received by certificate, and the remainder by profession of faith.

On February 8th, 1863, the first celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper took place, and all the beforementioned, with the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson, were present.

By this time the congregation had built a manse for Mr. Jamieson, who had come West accompanied by his wife and family.

That manse is still standing to-day, and is known as the old Dickinson property, and is still situated on the South side of Carnarvon Street, near the corner of Elliot Street.

FIRST MANSE

Very few are aware of the historic interest that surrounds this house.

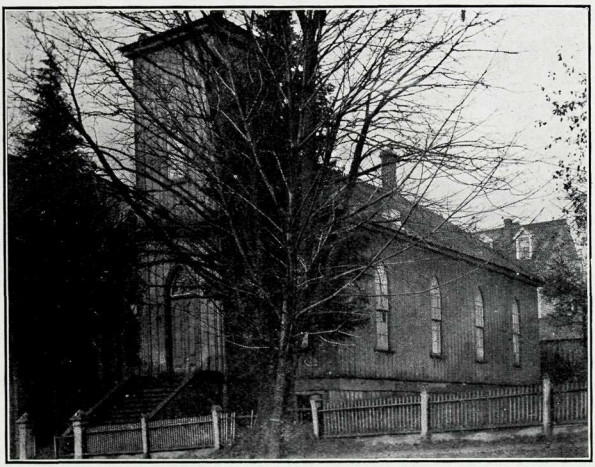
There were no public schools in those days, and in his largeness of heart Mr. Jamieson set apart a room in connection with his manse, for the instruction of the children of school age. Truly it was the day of small things, and little did any one dream that from that little room should emerge the magnificent public schools that to-day are a credit to New Westminster.

It was more than a year from the date of opening that one-room-school, that the provincial government provided a teacher.

During the Summer and Fall of 1863 the congregation worshipped in the Hyack Hall, facing Columbia Street, and practically where No. 1 Fire Hall now stands.

The congregation continued to grow—the Hyack Hall was no longer suitable as a meeting place.

A church was being erected, and contributions were received from all without regard to religious belief.



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

On December 20th, 1863, St. Andrew's Church, later known as old St. Andrew's, or the Lecture Room, and now to be known as St. Andrew's Hall, was completed and the congregation moved into its own home.

Then came hard times—many left the country, and the congregation passed through a very trying experience for some years.

In 1865 and on November 4th, Rev. R. Jamieson left New Westminster to take charge of the congregation in Nanaimo, and the Rev. D. Duff came from Cariboo to take charge of the congregation at New Westminster.

It was at this time that the congregation of St. Andrew's, Victoria, was formed, and those who were left in the First Church Victoria, were ministered to by the Revs. Jamieson and Duff.

By leaving Nanaimo and New Westminster vacant on alternate Sundays, the First Church, Victoria, was kept alive.

On the 3rd of April, 1867, Rev. Mr. Duff thoroughly discouraged by the many difficulties he was called on to face returned to Ontario, and Mr. Jamieson had charge of the three congregations.

Although Minister of Nanaimo, Mr. Jamieson found time to attend to many affairs in connection with St. Andrew's, New Westminster, and First Church, Victoria.

Only occasionally was Mr. Jamieson able to come to New Westminster.

For eighteen months, the church was kept open without a minister and without even an elder. Services were regularly conducted by some member of the congregation.

Guthrie's Gospel in Ezekiel was the food upon which the people fed during these trying times.

It was in 1869 that Mr. Jamieson returned to New Westminster, leaving Nanaimo in charge of the Rev. W. Aitken, who had just arrived.

It was only possible to give one service a day to New Westminster, as the Presbyterians at Richmond, Langley, Maple Ridge, Moodyville, all required attention, and the minister of St. Andrew's had these places for his out stations.

Shortly after the return of Mr. Jamieson, learning that the lot on which the present manse stands was to be sold at a tax sale, and fearing that it might fall into the hands of objectionable people, he purchased it for $80.00, and then collected the money from friends of the congregation, and made the deed out in the name of St. Andrew's.

I have spoken of the public school having its beginning in the first manse.

The first meeting of The Bible Society was also held there.

In 1873 the old manse was traded for the Finlayson property on which the Brick Church now stands.

There Mr. Jamieson and family resided until the time came when it became necessary to build the brick church.

Around this property was a hawthorn hedge, and the hawthorn tree that to-day stands near the South West door is all that remains of that hedge.

On the 1st of September, 1875, and within St. Andrew's Church, Victoria, B. C., the Presbytery of British Columbia in connection with the Church of Scotland was formed and consisted of the Rev. Simon McGregor (Moderator), William Clyde (Clerk), George Murray, Alex. Dunn and Alex. B. Nicholson, the last two being ordained at said meeting and their names added to the roll.

In 1876, Mr. Jamieson, feeling his loneliness and his load of responsibility very heavy, for it must be remembersd that he was without Session or Presbytery, and it is particularly doubtful if he ever at any time was regularly inducted into the Pastorate of St. Andrew's Church, together with his congregation of St. Andrew's in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada applied for admission and were received into the Presbytery of British Columbia, in connection with the Church of Scotland. The Home Mission Committee in Toronto continued to pay the necessary supplement to Mr. Jamieson's salary.

On November 1st, 1877, leave was granted by the Presbytery of B. C., to elect Elders and form a session in St. Andrew's Church.

The usual steps were taken and forms gone through and Fitzgerald McCleary, Warren DeBeck, and James Halliday were

ordained as Ruling Elders after Divine Service on Sabbath Evening, 24th day of March, 1878.

The Hon. John Robson, who was an Elder in St. Andrew's Church, Victoria, having removed to New Westminster, united himself with St. Andrew's Church and on the 15th of June, 1879, he was inducted as an Elder of this church.

At a regular meeting of Session on March 31st, 1882, at which Messrs. W. DeBeck and J. Robson together with Rev. Jamieson were present, it was moved and agreed that we do give up connection with the Church of Scotland, and that we recommend this course to the congregation, and that a congregational meeting be called immediately to take this recommendation into consideration.

The recommendation was agreed to by the congregation.

The severance asked for was granted by the Presbytery of B. C., on the 12th of April, 1882, and under instruction of the congregation the Session applied to the Canadian Presbyterian Church to be reunited therewith.

In 1882, Mr. A. Macdougal, formerly an Elder in the Langley congregation was, on the recommendation of the Session, admitted in the usual way to the Session of St. Andrew's.

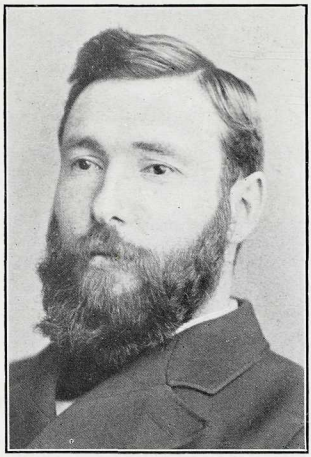
In 1884 the Session was further augmented by the election of Mr. J. C. Brown as an Elder of this congregation.

In April, 1884, the congregation and Mr. Jamieson were readmitted into connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada by the Presbytery of Toronto.

On the same date the Rev. R. Jamieson, owing to the failure of his health, resigned the charge of the congregation, retaining the Chaplaincy of the British Columbia Penitentiary.

The congregation in token of its appreciation of Mr. Jamieson's long and faithful service granted him the use of the manse and a retiring allowance for life.

Mr. Jamieson continued to reside in the manse until 1888, when he graciously gave up the manse to permit of the building of the new brick church.



REV. JOHN S. McKAY

Steps were at once taken to secure a successor to Mr. Jamieson, and Mr. John S. McKay, a licentiate of the Toronto Presbytery, having accepted the call to be pastor of this congregation, was ordained in Toronto on the 17th of June, 1884.

On the same day and at the same place he was inducted into the pastorate of St. Andrew's Church.

Even the address to the congregation was given in Toronto.

On the 1st of August he arrived in New Westminster, and on the 3rd commenced his ministry.

Late in the Fall of 1885, the present manse was started.

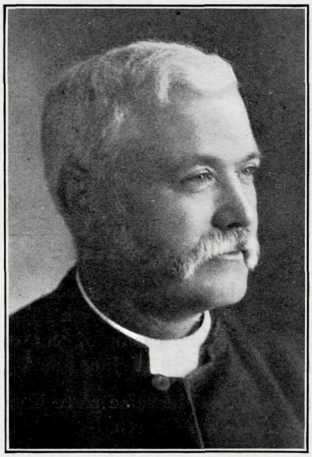
In 1886, Mr. McKay was compelled to go to California on account of his health, and Mr. Jamieson acted as Moderator in his absence.

On April 15th, 1886, Mr. McKay wrote to the Session stating his intention of tendering his resignation of the pastoral charge of the congregation at the first meeting of the Presbytery of Toronto, on account of continued ill health.

On May 6th, 1886, the congregation met and placed on record an expression of deep sympathy with Mr. McKay and requested the Presbytery to decline to receive his resignation, and to grant a further leave of absence.

On the 20th of May, 1886, Rev. J. S. McKay died.

During the vacancy the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. Mr. Taylor who came from Moose Jaw.



REV. T. SCOULER

On December 24th a call was extended to the Rev. T. Scouler of the Erskine Church, Hamilton, and the Presbytery of British Columbia fixed his induction to take place on the 19th of June, 1887.

In 1888 the new church was started, the corner stone being raised and lowered by Mr. Watson, now fire chief, while Mr. C. Smith applied the mortar.

The old manse, now vacated by Mr. Jamieson, was partly torn down, and part of it was used in building the infant class room to the rear of the old church or lecture room. This has since

been removed in carrying out the plans for the renovating of the old church.

On the 10th of February, 1889, the new church was finished and the Rev. Donald Fraser of Victoria conducted the opening services.

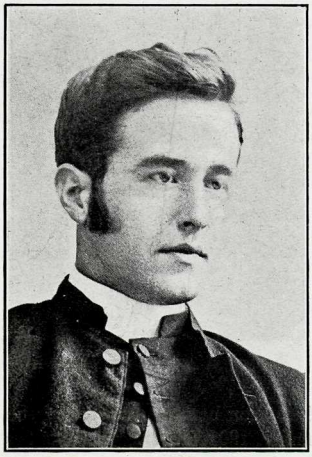
By a fire which occurred in the house of Mr. Wm. Rae on the 20th of December, the Session records from 1887 to the close of 1889 were destroyed.

On the 9th of September, 1890, steps were taken to form congregations at the West End, Sapperton and Mill Side, and on the 25th day of March, 1891, these new congregations were organized by authority of the Presbytery of Columbia.

Among those who handed in their certificates to Knox Church Sapperton, were Rev. Mr. Jamieson and family.

In 1893, at the age of 64, Rev, Mr. Jamieson passed away.

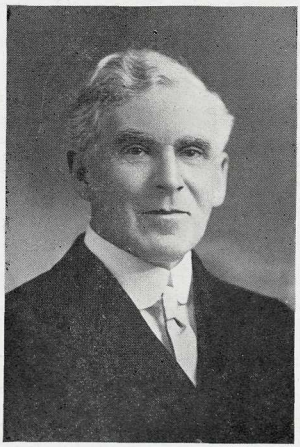
On the 7th of March, 1897, Rev. T. Scouler preached for the last time as minister of the congregation, and entered thereafter on his duties as chaplain of the B. C. Penitentiary.



REV. A. E. VERT

On the 2nd of September, 1897, the Rev. A. E. Vert was inducted as Minister of the congregation. The great fire occurred on the 10th of September, 1898, in which the Baptist, Central Methodist and Holy Trinity Cathedral Churches were destroyed. On September 15th, 1898, the Session agreed to offer the use of the lecture room to the Baptist congregation to hold a morning service and the church to Holy Trinity Cathedral, to hold an afternoon service. These offers were both accepted, and services were regularly conducted by these congregations until thir own church homes were ready for occupancy.

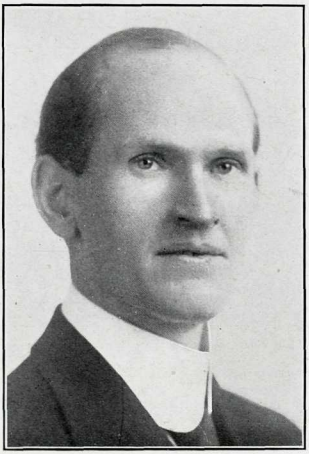
On the 13th of February, 1903, Rev. A. E. Vert resigned from the Pastorate of the congregation, and after the death of the Rev. T. Scouler on May 9th, 1904, was appointed chaplain of the B. C. Penitentiary, which position he still retains.



REV. J. S. HENDERSON

Rev. J. S. Henderson became minister of the congregation on the 18th of September, 1903, and preached his first sermon as such on the 20th of the same month.

He resigned from the pastorate of the congregation in the Fall of 1913, to accept the position of Social Service Secretary for the Provinces west of the Great Lakes, with residence in and oversight of British Columbia. He continued in that work until the Fall of 1918, when he was called to the Pastorate of St. Andrew's Church, Vancouver, and for the past four years has been in the service of that church. In 1917 Westminster Hall conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

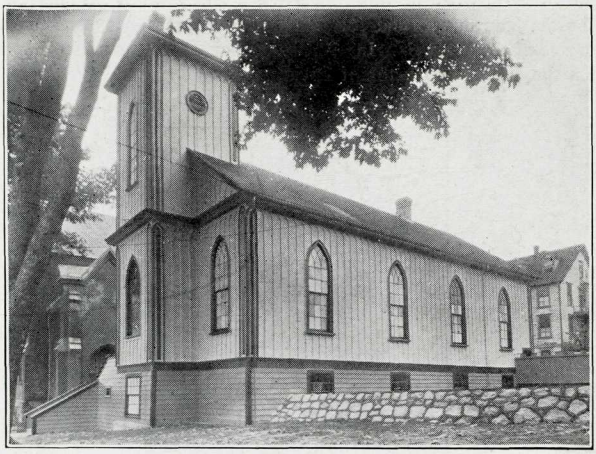


REV. F. W. KERR

The Revd. F. W. Kerr was inducted on February 12th, 1914, and served as pastor of the congregation during the trying period of the Great War. He took a prominent part in all war activities and was a leading spirit in the Victory Loan and Red Triangle campaigns. A considerable part of the church debt was removed during this period.

On the 4th day of January, 1920, he intimated that he had received a call to a Professorship in Manitoba College, and that he had accepted the same.

On the 25th of January he officiated at the Celebration of the Lord's Supper for the last time previous to leaving for Winnipeg, where he now resides.

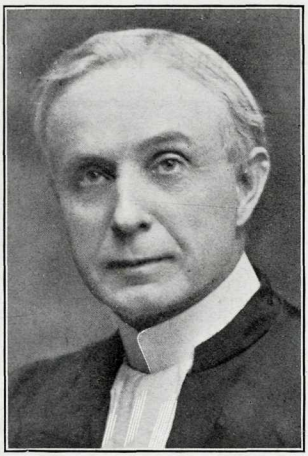


ST. ANDREW'S HALL
(Outside)

A unanimous call was extended by the congregation to the Revd. Thomas H. Mitchell, and his induction took place on the 15th of June, 1920.

Graduating in Arts from Toronto University, Mr. Mitchell studied at Knox College, Toronto, Manitoba College, Winnipeg, and received the degree of B. D. from Harvard University.

His first charge was in Barre, Vermont. Leaving there in 1905, he returned to Canada and became pastor of new St. James, London, and later old St. Andrew's, Toronto. His book "The Drama of Life," published after coming to St. Andrew's reveals the man and the scholar.

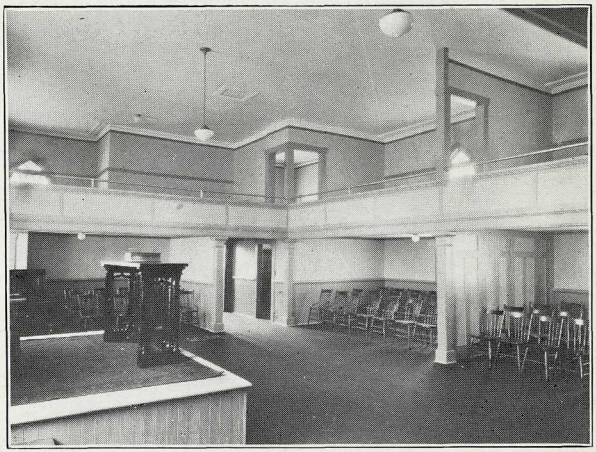


REV. T. H. MITCHELL

Coming to New Westminster from Edmonton, where he was in charge of the Robertson Church for some time, Mr. Mitchell soon felt that the lecture room was altogether unsuitable as a Sunday School, and inadequate to take care of the number of children attending the school. On the 14th of June, 1922, the congregation agreed to remodel the old church and to make it in every respect a suitable building not only for holding Sunday School but for other social activities in which the congregation is engaged. The plans were ready, and the day after the meeting at which the congregation agreed to proceed with the work the contract was let to Messrs. Sloan and Harrison. The building as renovated reflects the greatest credit on all who in any way are responsible for giving to St. Andrew's Church one of the finest and most up to date church halls in British Columbia.

Facing Carnarvon Street a beautiful Memorial Window takes the place of what was once the door into the old church. This window is a tribute to those brave men, members and adherents of the congregation who fell in the Great War. The inscription reads. "Their name liveth for evermore."—Ecclesiasticus 44:14.

Mrs. Dr. Clark's class has erected a bronze tablet on the south wall of the building, on which is inscribed "The oldest Presbyterian Church on the mainland of B. C. Erected 1863; Remodelled 1922."



ST. ANDREW'S HALL
(Inside)

In the auditorium, the reading desk, at which Mr. Jamieson so often preached the old gospel of salvation through a crucified and risen Saviour, finds place, and on it rests Mr. Jamieson's old bible, with his signature on the front page.

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