Holloway Memorial Chapel

At Point Abino,

Ontario

1894 -- 1965

by

Mildred W. Magee

How little do we who worship at the chapel on Point Abino realize it’s early religious background.

Two hundred and Seventy-five years ago, a Jesuit priest, Pere Claude Aveneau left his home country of France.

He had been assigned to the Ottawa mission in Canada. He proceeded west and in 1690 he stopped at the point of land which now bears his name. He built a log cabin on the dunes and there he communed with his God and prepared himself for the mission to the Indians. He later moved on to the mouth of the Saint Joseph River in the limitless Northwest area of the United States which is now known as Indiana. There he preached and taught and was much beloved by the redskins.

Through the years the name point Aveneau was changed to Point Abino, and here in 1891 Mr. and Mrs. James Stafford built themselves a home. Mrs. Harriet Holloway Stafford was a devout woman in the mother of six children. She realized a need for their religious education and started a Sunday School for them in her home.

As the colony on Point Abino grew, other children came to be taught and so the idea of a chapel came into being.

In 1894 the chapel was built by Mrs. James Stafford on land owned by Alan Holloway on a site near the gas well close to the Point Abino gate. It was dedicated “To the glory of God, and in loving memory of Isaac and Mary Ann Holloway”, Mrs. Stafford’s parents.

How happy Father Aveneau would have been to know that there would be a chapel raised on the site of his work with the Indians, and that a man and his wife would fulfill his desire to bring the word of the Lord to this area.

The little chapel flourished in those early days and it was not only a church, but the center of the early Lake Shore community.

Prominent ministers came from Buffalo to preach on Sunday. One summer, Alfred Waite, a son of Sarah Holloway Waite and a grandson of Isaac Holloway filled the pulpit.

In those early days, Mrs. Stafford and Mrs. Everet Jameson, who was Julie Stafford, played the organ. Since there was no electricity in the chapel the organ had to be pumped by hand. Mrs. Frederick W. Danforth followed Mrs. Stafford as organist. Small boys of the community were impressed into pumping it. Alexander McNabb and Granger Wilson took turns. Granger often rode to church on his pony, which he tied to a tree back of the chapel, where it sometimes whinnied impatiently. The young lads often tired in the middle of a hymn and the organ stopped only to burst forth again at the urgency of the organist, when the pumpers made up for the lost time.

Mrs. Danforth organized a children’s choir. It was not too successful, because children had the idea that the holiday they were enjoying was not for choir practice. Mr. A. T. Brown lead the singing. He was married to a Miss Fargo, a member of a prominent Buffalo family. They had built a cottage in what was known as the Brown Cut.

Mrs. George Buck played the violin and Mr. Charles Kilhoffer and Mr. George Montgomery were soloists. Miss Kathleen Howard of the Metropolitan Opera sang at the community sings.

There are many interesting tales told about those days.

The wheezy organ, became the winter home of a family of mice. In spite of a thorough spring cleaning, one mouse met the churchgoers at the door of the chapel. He was chased to a window and locked out. However, Mr. Mouse insisted on vying for attention through the window all during the service. In a few weeks, either he, or one of his family, got his revenge. During the prayer, Mr. Mouse appeared and skipped back-and-forth over the brave preacher’s feet. Perhaps the preacher was poised, but it was said that the ladies were most unhappy.

In the early days of the chapel someone put varnish on the pews which became sticky during the warm summer days. When it was time to rise for the service there was often of tearing and rending sound from the starched skirts of the ladies. Added to the general creaking of the benches, it almost drowned out the sound of the music. It was told that one gentleman feared for his Sunday suit and refused to rise.

Sermon by an elderly Scottish clergyman became rather famous. It was based on the second Epistle of Paul to Timothy, fourth chapter, thirteenth verse:

“The *clook* that I left at Troas, with Carpus, when thou *coomest*, bring with thee the *boooks* -- but especially the *Paarrrchments*.” His very broad Scots accent brought forth prolonged and unrestrained giggles from the children.

In the early nineteen hundreds, a group of fathers and mothers living at Bay Beach, would gather their children together for the trip to the church. On calm days, they came up in the War Canoe, owned by the Buffalo Canoe Club. It was paddled by the young men, but led by Mrs. Allan McNabb who sternly called the stroke – “Paddle, paddle.” It was a status symbol in those days for any young lady to be invited aboard. Other days they walked through the woods behind the Yacht Club station. Sailboats and rowboats beached near the Chapel when the families came to worship each Sunday. Mr. Charles Bassett remembers his father bringing his family to church in a rowboat.

There was a Camp Fire Girls Camp in the cut which is now the property of Mr. William C. Baird. Every Sunday the girls and counselors marched to the church. Often they were entertained by the kindly members of the community after the service.

I think it very nice to hear such pleasant stories told by the young people of that day. Going to chapel on the Sabbath must have been part of their happy years.

During all these years, there were many who labored to raise the money necessary for the upkeep of the Chapel. The weekly collections were not large. It was through donations and active work on the part of the ladies of the Board that it was maintained. One early treasurer’s report gave a final balance of three dollars. The lady sponsored Baked Goods Sales, a Marionette Show, and in later years, and annual card party. At the present time the proceeds from a Strawberry Festival and a Rummage Sale held in alternate years provide the financial support.

1925 the Chapel was moved to its present location and the land was deeded to the church by Mr. Allan Holloway. With the advent of electricity in the Chapel, Mr. William Stafford gave a new electric organ in memory of his parents Mr. and Mrs. James Stafford. And so ended the era of the old hand pumped organ.

In 1951, Mr. William C. Baird gave an additional piece of land which added a graciousness to the new site. In 1956 he urged and financed the rebuilding and extensive remodeling of a little church. The old porch was removed, a steeple added, and it became a lovely facsimile of a Christopher Wren church.

The ladies worked hard, and were able to buy a new organ which was dedicated to the young men of the Church who had died during the Second World War.

The lights that glorify the Chapel each night, give to everyone, a feeling that the Lord is still with us. And so, from Father Aveneau until this day -- we who toil here, are fulfilling the aspirations of those who built the Chapel so many years ago.

According to the original wish of James Stafford and his wife, Harriet, the Chapel will continue to exist, only if it is non-denominational and welcomes all people to the worship.

We of this day follow their wishes, and extend to all men our welcome.

Come, praise the Lord.

Sing -- and listen to the words of these wonderful men of all denominations who come to this church to preach.

It is truly a memorial to those who built, and to all those who through these many years have labored.

After seventy-one years, it still stands in the loving memory of Isaac and Mary Ann Holloway and to the glory of God.

I would like to thank:

Mr. Walter Stafford,

Miss Alice Stafford,

Mrs. Ivan Hekimian,

and particularly Mrs. Henry Wagner, who is devoted notes and references, kept a continuity to this story of Holloway Memorial Chapel.

There have been many who let their light shine all these years; and not least of these were the early preachers, and those who preach today.

In 1925 – the preachers were:

Rev. Theodore Janeway;

Rev. Murray Howland;

Dr. Charles H. Stewart;

Rev. William McLennon;

Dr. Don Tullis;

Rev. Alanson Davis;

Rev. Thomas Newcomb.

In 1963 – the preachers were:

Rev. Albert Butzer, D.D.;

Rev. Dean Richardson, D.D.;

Rev. Peter Sturtevant;

Rev. James Carroll, D.D.;

Rev. G. Barrett Rich, D.D.;

Rev. Helmut Saabus;

Rev. Ray Kiely, D.D.;

Rev. Lee J. Beynon, D.D.;

Rev. Ralph W. Lowe, D.D.

Board Members in 1920:

Mr. A.T. Brown, Mr. George S. Buck;

Mr. J.B. Stafford, Mrs. James Dyett;

Mr. Allan I. Holloway, Mr. Walter Stafford;

Miss Florence Hayes, Mr. Alex Paterson;

Mr. R.H. Stafford, Mr. F.W. Danforth;

Mr. C.H. Barton, Mr. C.F. Adams;

Mr. B.F. Jackson.

Later and long Members of the Board:

Mrs. C.H. Booth, Mr. Erastus Knight;

Mrs. Albert Hatch, Mr. George Bassett;

Mrs. Hiram Watson, Mr. Edward Scheu;

Mr. G. Barrett Rich.

Board of Trustees – 1965:

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Miss Clara Paterson, Mrs. Robert E. Rich;

Mrs. John M. Quackenbush.

There have been many memorials given to loved ones who were much beloved by all who worshipped in Holloway Memorial Chapel. To those who gave and to those in whose memory they were given, we give many thanks.

Mildred W. Magee