

Saint John's Chapel – A Historic Landmark

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Written by Miss Muriel Grimmer, Chamcook, November 1966

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Early Days of Chamcook

Early in the 1800s there arrived in Chamcook, NB, an English gentleman, Squire John Wilson; that he was prepared to establish his home and several industries in that St. Andrews Parish community is well recorded. He was accomplished by several families who built their home and raised their children. They assisted in grist-mill operation and in shipbuilding as well as in clearing land for their farms. These early settlers have left us a unique evidence of their ability - a small stone chapel built on a hill, facing the Passamaquoddy Bay. Its proper name is the Chapel Ease of Saint John the Baptist but it is often referred to as in the title of my paper or even more simply, as Saint John's Chapel.

We know that rev. Samuel Andrews held religious services in Chamcook. This was brought out in the paper given Prof. Atcheson on denominationalism in Charlotte County. But it was during the rectorship (1819-1858) of his successor, Dr. Jerome Alley that funds were collected and a church building was erected.

Some records of this building to which I shall refer, refer to its early days but most refer to later periods. They include letters and items such as bills for labour (both on the building and on the grounds), for materials used and for board and transportation for workmen. But all of them for both periods were found among the effects of my grandfather, George S. Grimmer (1826-1887) who came to live in Chamcook in 1865 during the rectorship (1859-1901) of Canon Ketchum.

Grandfather purchased the home of the late Mr. Wilson, a large brick house which was named "Forest Lodge" by the Wilsons. This house was unfortunately lost by fire in 1882 but its name was saved and now applied to the house built on the same foundation, in which I now live. Mr. Grimmer was County Clerk. He was always active in church matters and it was as a Chapel Warden that he came by the papers I shall refer to.

Construction of Chapel

We have no records concerning the actual construction of the chapel which took place about 1846. But we do have a well preserved copy of a document that precedes construction. This is dated 14 June 1841, and its caption reads:

"We the undersigned Subscribers severally promise to pay to the Rector & Church Wardens of All Saint's Church or either of them, the Sums Set opposite our several names for the purpose of erecting a Chapel at Chamcook in the Parish of St. Andrews."

Then follows a long list of 51 donors with various amounts. John Wilson and John Townsend each gave one acre of land. The Honorable James Allanshaw gave "5000 refuse lumber" as well as his donation. The chapel was consecrated 16 July 1846 by Archbishop Medley while the Rev. Jerome Alley was the rector.

We have no records of the 1846 construction but Dr. A. Ruitenbergh, District Geologist, New Brunswick Department of Lands and Mines, states that it is built on local red stone. This belongs to the

Devonian period of geological formation and is the same rock that underlines most of the St. Andrews region. Besides this, there are a few basaltic pieces mixed in with the sandstone. The corners of the chapel are finished with large pieces of dressed grey sandstone that must have been brought from outside the district.

Just what the Allanshaw gift of “500 refuse lumber” was used for is not clear but it may have been as scaffolding. There were sawmills on the nearby stream from Chamcook Lake and quite possibly this lumber was sawn in one of them.

The chapel building was erected close to Highway No. 1 on the acre of land given by John Townsend. Its entrance at the south (southeast) end faces the road and there were three large windows on each side. We know little about the interior except that there was no proper chancel. The acre given by John Wilson was directly across the highway from the chapel and a shelter was built on it for horses of parishioners coming from a distance (...the shed was built in 1869 by Wallace Townsend. His fee, presumably for labour, was only \$8.)

The chapel was kept in good repair. In 1867 (two years after grandfather came to Chamcook and 21 years after construction) Robert Dinsmore and Daniel McCann put new shingles on the roof. We have their bill. Robert Dinsmore worked five days at \$1.12½ per day. He was paid \$5.62½, while Daniel McCann was paid partly in shingles and partly in cash (\$2.94). Total cost of shingling labour was \$11.36½.

In 1869 the interior of the chapel was painted by C. A. Kennedy and his helper. Mr. Kennedy was paid \$7.00 and his helper \$2.10. The paint cost \$4.05. At the foot of the bill submitted, Mr. Kennedy added that he had “*given the step-ladder a coat of paint free*”.

In those days it was customary to charge parishioners pew rent to supplement other church revenues. As Chapel Warden, grandfather was responsible for collection rents and turning them over to the rector. We have a receipt in Canon Ketchum’s handwriting for \$16.40, being pew rents and collections. Pew rents were \$4 per year, payable semi-annual. Large families had two pews but some pews were shared by two families.

Extension of the Chapel

Canon Ketchum was a great builder and in 1872 it was decided that a chancel/sanctuary should be added to the chapel by extending it southward toward the road. The entrance to the church was changed from the south end to the west side facing the railway. To do this, the rear window was altered on that side and partly closed to form a door and a porch was added. The outline of the upper part of the former window is still easily recognizable above the door, although the color of the bricks used to fill the gap is almost the same as the old Devonian sandstone in the rest of the wall.

Angus Stinson of St. Andrews built the chancel. He was also master builder of All Saint’s Church in 1867. Mr. Stinson and his helpers boarded at William Townsend’s while working in Chamcook. Their board was \$3 per week, and this was paid by the church corporation. Mr. Stinson’s bill of 25 July 1875 for labour and materials used is informative. Wages for helpers varied from \$1.25 to \$1.75 per day. Mr. Stinson was paid \$2.50 per day, and he worked 49½ days. He itemized all screws, nails, hinges, ect., that were used. Total cost of his crew amounted to \$291.34. The first payment was \$130 in cash plus three dozen eggs valued at 65¢. The remainder was settled in due time. In one corner of the bill Mr. Stinson has written:

<i>Chancel window frame...</i>	\$10.00
<i>Platform for font</i>	15.00
<i>(this is all inlaid work)</i>	
<i>One door frame</i>	3.00
	\$28.00

*Angus Stinson's subscription to the Church,
January 28th, 1875*

On January 30th, 1875 he signed this bill as "paid in full". That same year (1875) C. A. Kennedy repainted the new chancel and the walls and ceiling (about 25 feet high) of the main body of the chapel. The entire bill was \$67.57. Over the entrance to the chancel Mr. Kennedy has beautifully lettered the text: "*Glory to God in the highest an on Earth Peace*" and over the southeast window: "*Lord Evermore give us this bread.*"

The several beautiful stained glass windows were made by R. Lewis, London, Ontario, at 50 cents per square foot. The large north window is a memorial to the Wilson family. The smaller windows were given by the Johnson, Townsend, and Grimmer families. The chancel window is in memory of Mrs. Thomas Wyer. She was Miss Mary Hunt who is said to have been the first white child born in Chamcook. She died in 1801 aged 36 years. Her window depicts the Ascension of Christ with the text: "*I go to prepare a Place for you*".

To help pay for these alterations and repairs, grandfather arrange for a picnic at his home in Chamcook on 2 September 1874. We have a receipt from the New Brunswick and Canada Railroad for \$25, paid by grandfather, for a picnic excursion train from St. Andrews. It is signed by E. A. Julian. Other bills pertaining to this picnic were from the Saint Croix Courier for printing of 300 tickets, from H. O'Neill for supplying 55 lbs. of meat at nine cents per pound, and finally from Lee Street (who owned the drug store) for supplying tow baskets of perfumery at 45 cents, two bottles of plain and two fancy perfumery at \$3.10 and four ounces tartaric acid at eight cents per ounce. Besides the picnic, a concert was held at the Argyll Hotel, which stood near the present Lady Dunn Trade School, St. Andrews. The net proceeds from the sale of 134 tickets at 25 cents each help pay for alterations to the chapel.

Furnishings and Fittings

Cost of furnishings and fittings purchased at the time of the building are listed in other bills. Frames for the windows were made by Vroom Bros. in St. Stephen. Five of these cost \$5 each but the large north window frame was listed at \$29.

Pews and other furnishings were made in Woodstock, NB, by Charles W. Raymond and shipped by rail to Chamcook. Mr. Raymond's covering letter, dated 18 December 1874, asks "*that there be men ready to help unload quickly so as not to keep the train waiting and to hand things with care*". These include:

<i>18 Seats for the Nave</i>	<i>\$6.75 each - \$121.50</i>
<i>Two screens for fronts</i>	<i>\$5.00 each - \$10.00</i>
<i>Four choir seats</i>	<i>\$3.50 each - \$14.00</i>
<i>Two screens for choir</i>	<i>\$5.00 each - \$10.00</i>
<i>Prayer desk</i>	<i>\$1.50</i>
<i>Altar rail</i>	<i>\$7.00</i>
<i>Freight paid to Chamcook</i>	<i>\$12.00</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$182.00</i>

Mr. Raymond's letter goes on to say, "*Miss Elizabeth Ketchum has worked a very beautiful cover for a kneeling bench to the Prayer desk which I have made up and it and the kneeling bench cover is offered as a present to your church - I have also made a Vestry chair which, as Christmas is near at hand, I wish it to be my Christmas gift to the Church, with my best wished for its prosperity*".

The wood Mr. Raymond used for the above articles is ash and it has retained its pleasing appearance to this day. And Elizabeth's hand-worked cover for the kneeling bench for the reading desk is still in good condition after nearly 100 year. I myself worked a cover for the sanctuary kneeling bench. Its pattern and colors are the same as Elizabeth's, and it is in memory of Thelma Berriault, a god-child christened in the chapel.

In 1883 grandfather bought an organ for the chapel from Hunt Bros. of Boston, Massachusetts. It cost \$60 and in clearing it through Customs there was some difficulty in deciding who should pay the duties. A letter from Hunt Bros. settled this matter by saying: "*The value of the organ with duty paid will be \$80; - very cheap at that - we have no more to sell at that price.*" The organ was in service for about 65 years. Long used and lack of heat in the building damaged its chords. It was replaced by another of the same type which gave good service until 1967 when an electric organ was given by friends. It was consecrated by the Rev. Canon McAlden, a former rector of St. Andrews Parish, at a special service arranged by our present rector, the Rev. J. F. N. Jones.

Later Records & Modern Times

Electric lighting was added to the church in 1961 as a memorial to a former parishioner, by Mrs. H. Higgings. This had added much to the usefulness of the chapel because, until we had this facility, all services were held in the daytime. Now we enjoy Evensong during the summer months, and infra-red heating fixtures installed by All Saint's Church Corporation in 1964, make the building comfortable on cold days. The original heating unit was a large wood stove at the rear of the nave. This is still used in the coldest weather.

The chapel is well cared for and there are many beautiful memorials. The communion silver is a gift by the Johnson family which was prominent in the early days of the chapel; the alter is in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Davidson Grimmer; the brass cross on the altar is in memory of a former rector, Canon Bertram Hooper; two brass vases were given by the Grimmer family, one by the Sunday school for a former pupil, Francis Lee, and the fourth for a little child, Kenneth Staples. The brass alms basins, the new prayer books and hymn books were given by the Girls' and Junior W. A. of All Saint's Church. The brass candle sticks are in memory of Mr. Sydney Martin, given by his sister, Mrs. Alton Kelly. A brass plaque on the wall is in memory of Company Quarter Sergeant Harold Mackie Grimmer, Canadian Mounted Rifles, killed in action in France, 27 August 1918. The beautiful hangings for the various

church seasons were made and given by the Girls' Auxiliary of All Saint's Church under the direction of their faithful, long-time leader, Mrs. Clyde Tucker.

There have been some changes since grandfather handled the documents I have reviewed with you. We have mentioned some of these. But the chapel still ministers to the needs of the parishioners and visitors are always welcome at services conducted every Sunday by our rector. Infants come to be baptized, young couple to make marriage vows, and those whose lives are over come to be laid to rest in the quiet church yard with those who long ago built this little chapel by the side of the road.

On its door is this inscription that all who come may read: "*This house of God has welcomed worshippers for one hundred years or more. In commemoration of this fact this plaque has been presented in 1967, Canada's Centennial of Confederation years, 1867-1967*".



Saint John's Chapel
Chamcook, New Brunswick (2008)