

A Short History and Description of the Mission Parish of
WAKEHAM & YORK Diocese of Quebec, Gaspé Deanery by Rev.
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Situated on opposite shores of the Southwest Arm of Gaspé Basin and of the York River delta, the present Mission Parish of Wakeham and York extends from the western limits of the Village of Gaspé in a horseshoe arc around to the borders of Gaspé Harbour. It comprises about 230 Anglican families, and includes the settlement names of Gaspé West, Wakeham, Sunny Bank, Brassé, and York Centre.

Before the Autumn of 1945, when the present Wakeham-York set-up was tried out, (not officially instituted as a Mission-Parish until the Spring of 1946), both places were "second" congregations; York having been attached to the Mission of Sandy Beach, and Wakeham (or Gaspé South, as it was also called), to the Parish of Gaspé. This new grouping of congregations, I.E. Gaspé and Sandy Beach, and Wakeham and York had been considered for some years---and was finally adopted, mainly on account of the obvious geographical advantages.

Therefore, when this proposed change in mission boundaries actually took place in 1945, the newly-created mission-parish in taking stock of itself discovered that although assets included two fine churches-- St. James at Wakeham and St. Andrew's at York-- a clergy dwelling was conspicuously absent. A joint Parsonage Building Committee was formed in 1946-- and from then on the project was financed by both communities on a 50-50 basis. During the interim period, the mission was fortunate in having the ^{use} of the Old Hatchery dwelling, near St. Andrew's, York as a temporary parsonage. A site near St. James Church, Wakeham, was chosen by the joint group. and the Parsonage of St. James and St. Andrew's was built in 1948. The parish is grateful to the Director of the Gaspesia Nursery for his advice concerning lands capping, and to the Provincial member for a donation of trees and hedge.

(A) History:

Apart from Registers of Civil Status, the official records for both congregations are unfortunately not available---through loss or destruction by fire. Only the old land record book of St. James is at hand (at this present writing)--there are no early Vestry Minutes Books or building records discoverable for either congregation. (A check has not as yet been made with the Keeper of the Diocesan Archives.)

And, as is true of most "second" congregations, the history of both Wakeham and York before their union is in many respects the history of their senior partners; E.G. the list of incumbents before 1945 is the list given under St. Paul's, Gaspé, on the one hand, and under St. John's, Sandy Beach, on the other. This is, of course, but relative-- and some details of the early days can yet be reconstructed through the help of such source materials as diaries, memories of old folk, and the relative datings of marriages or burials.

I. ST. JAMES. WAKEHAM.....

This is the older of the two congregations. It takes its name, as yet unofficially, from the famous Commander Wakeham, who settled at Gaspé Basin-- a medical doctor and fishery officer, known at the turn of the century throughout the whole East coast, his circuit extending as far north-east as the Quebec Labrador. Wakeham, as a name, is as yet applied officially only to the postal area--- the municipal name is that of the township. Gaspé Bay South, but this is rarely used except for official documents. Until recently the congregation's name was Gaspé South, the junior partner of the Mission of Gaspé and Gaspé South---(which for a period was a self supporting Parish). However, the name ~~Wakeham~~ is being widely used for the whole community, and bids fair to have official recognition eventually.

Before there was a church at York, C.1895,--St. James Parish embraced the whole area-- it being within the memory of older people of the coming-over to services at Wakeham, mainly by boat-- ~~at~~ cross the ice in winter. (Boats are rarely used now in the upper basin; the river delta has spread rapidly and most of the upper Arm is shallow, with the exception of the actual river channel.)

The Land Record Book of St. James reveals that the first piece of land for the Graveyard and Church was donated by John Eden and Ellen, nee Boyle, his wife, on the 19th of April 1843. This is the site of the cemetery known as the "Old Cemerery"--in the middle of which stood the first church. (This old Churchyard is presently being levelled and landscaped.)

It is believed that the first St. James Church was built C. 1852, during the Incumbency of the Rev'd Wm. Arnold, second Incumbent of the Mission of Gaspé.

The second and present St. James Church stand, on a plot near the highway--purchased in June 1886 from Felix Wm. Boyle. (The old churchyard is out towards the water--and markings remain of the old "landing"-- used in the days when people came to church mainly by boat or over the ice.) The new building was completed in November of 1891; people tell of how the shavings were swept up just before the first marriage--Francis E. Annett and Charlotte Jane Boyle--- November 24th of the year.

The present St. James Church was consecrated during the Incumbency of Rev. J. P. Richmond by the Rev. Rev'd Andrew Hunter Dunn, Bishop of Quebec, on the 18th of July 1893. (The first year of his consecration.)

Among the relics from the former church, there may be seen the memorial tablet (in the vestry of the present church) to Ellen Boyle, wife of John Boyle, donors of the land for the first church

and the very valuable slate "Tables of the Law", of Jersey origin, and recently affixed to the sanctuary east wall-- the position they held in the old church.

In 1929, the congregation acquired another piece of land for a Graveyard, purchased from Mildred Balance Boyle,-- and known as the "New Churchyard"; it lies on the hillside about a third of a mile back of the church.

(II) ST. Andrews's church, York

York "Parish" is connected by road with Wakeham by a covered bridge over the York River, at about the tide-waters. Before the first bridge, there was a fording place at that point or just above it,--and at one time there floated an ingenious ferry barge-- with pulley-ropes attached to either shore-- whereby the passenger propelled himself by pushes or tugs.

The people of Sunny Bank (upper settlement, to the south of The York River mouth) and York Centre (lower down,) beside the Arm itself) were attached to the Parish of St. James (Wakeham or Gaspé South, as you prefer) from its inception c. 1857. Before that, in common with the whole area, they went to St. Paul's, Gaspé Basin the "mother-parish" of the district.

In 1893 a plot of land south of the river delta, and just below Sunny Bank, was procured for a graveyard--- consecrated on the 18th of July of that year by the himself-newly-consecrated Andrew Hunter Dunn, fifth Bishop of Quebec--- the same day on which His Lordship consecrated the present St. James Church. (We are indebted to an entry in the interesting diary of the first organist of St. Andrew's-- Mrs. Henry Falle-- for this date.)

The actual date of the completion and dedication of the first St. Andrew's Church, York, is not at the present writing quite clear

The land (at a point about the centre of the present graveyard) for the church was donated by Charles Grant--- and accepted after there had been some disagreement as to a proposed site in what is now known as lower Brassett-- somewhere on the hill overlooking York Centre and the Arm.

The construction is believed to be C. 1895; the first entry mentioning St. Andrew's Church, in the Sandy Beach Registers of Civil Status is dated 1897-- a burial, that of Anne, nee Boyle, wife of John Mullin, buried 18th December of that year. This indicates at least when the congregation was taken under the wing of Sandy Beach; it is presumed that, for a year or so before that, York services were taken by the Rev. J. P. Richmond, of Gaspé. (Sandy Beach became York's senior partner during the Incumbency of the Rev'd Geo. P. Harding.)

The second and present St. Andrew's Church stands to the south of the Graveyard; it is a much larger building-- said to be the largest wooden church in the Diocese. It was completed in 1928; dedicated on the 19th of August by Archdeacon G. F. Scott, of Quebec. and consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Lennox W. Williams, Sixth Bishop of Quebec. the following year on the 31st August. The Incumbent of Sanday Beach at that time was the Rev'd A. V. McLaren, presently of Maple Grove.

One of the recent memorials presented to St. Andrew's Church-- by St. Monica's Altar Guild-- is a Bishop's Chair-- to the memory of ANDREW HUNTER DUNN, who consecrated the first St. Andrew's.

(B) THE PEOPLE AND LIFE:

(i) SETTLEMENT: The settlement of this area was partly by discharged military or naval men, some being given large plots of land known as military "Kings" or Queen's Bounties"-- being gratuities for service in various campaigns, E.G. Napoleonic

Campaign, or some other; some indeed are descendent of men of Wolfe's army, (which wintered in the Bay of Gaspé just before the assault on Quebec.) The forebears of some were customs officials of the ancient Port of Gaspé, or came over with trading companies from Jersey, or were survivors of wrecked sailing craft bound up the St. Lawrence. In early days, too, there was a definite link with the "North Shore " and the Quebec Labrador-- in regard to fisheries-- and in particular the old whaling expeditions. The present Incumbent has talked with several of the older men here (since deceased) about the old days and the old people at places on the Labrador-- in particular, St. Paul's River. This link remains in part-- for several men from here still go across as fishing guides to Mingan and St. John's River on the North Shore.

At present, in this semi-circle which is Wakeham & York, there are no French-speaking families,-- and all are Anglicans-- with the exception of a very few. This is somewhat unique in our province. Wakeham and York each has a large Intermediate School, the former with five teachers, the latter with four; these present schools are the result of the amalgamation of two smaller schools in each case-- the two Wakeham schools joined up in 1939, and the York Schools in 1937.

(ii) OCCUPATIONS. The occupational picture is a varied one; for most people, jobs are seasonal; part-time farming, on a smaller and smaller scale in most cases; the cutting of pulp and fire-wood; guiding at fly-fishing camps; clerking in the stores and offices at some are in the skilled labour bracket; carpenters, painters. Gaspé Village./A few men fish smelts in season-- and even fewer have salmon nets outside the basin. Drilling for oil up the York River. has gone on for many years-- with as yet no real success. However. coooper has been found in paying quantities and quality in Holland

Township (mainly) up the York River some sixty miles. This project is now going forward rapidly-- and promises to be a major industry in this district. The advent of electricity in 1947-- the increasing use of the snowmobile, the plowing of roads in winter are they the shadows of more development cast beforehand be the future.

(iii) PARISH ORGANIZATIONS: (with dates of inception of each)

- a.) The W.A.; at York--revitalized in C. 1943 after a dormant period was first formed many years ago--died for a time about 1936. was re-organized in 1946 as a W. A. guild. (3 branches). at Wakeham-- the Parish Guilds linked with W. A. in 1947; (No W. A. here before that.)
- b.) The G. A. Guides and J. A. Brownies; In 1942 Gé Am. Guides were instituted at Wakeham by Miss Nancy Machin, a Diocesan Church worker. and at York a year or so afterward. J. A. Brownie Packs were begun about the same time.
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- c.) The Scouts; Originally a combined York Troop organized back in 1928 and in 1948 re-organized as two troops.
In 1928- Rev. Percy Clark Scouts master.
In 1930- Wilbert Eden Scouts master.
- d.) The Cubs. In York, instituted in 1946, and in Wakeham in 1947.
- e.) The Altar Guilds; At wakeham; St. Anne's A. Guild org. in 1947.
at York-- St. Monica's A. Guild revived in 1947.
first group founded C. 1943.
- f.) Servers' League-- Organized at York in 1948.
- G.) Vestrymen's Councils; formed at both places in 1948.