

**Sunny Bank, Our Ancestral Home**  
**By Andrew Patterson (1995)**

**Chapter 8**

**St. Andrew's Church**

The Right Reverend Charles Inglis, who had become Canada's first Anglican Bishop in 1789, visited Gaspé in 1819. He appointed two clergymen for the coast, and Reverend John Suddard was assigned to the Gaspé Basin. Shortly after his arrival he oversaw the construction of the first Church, St. Paul's in Gaspé. Prior to this all services had been conducted by visiting clergymen or by laymen in private homes. These services, which may have been more accurately termed "prayer meetings," undoubtedly continued around the Southwest Arm. The only way to Gaspé was by horse and sleigh in winter and boat in summer, so visits to church were likely restricted to baptisms, marriages, deaths, and other important occasions. In 1845 St. James Church was built in Wakeham, making services more readily available to Sunny Bank families.

Nearing the end of the 19th century the people of York began discussing the feasibility of constructing their own house of worship. The people wanted it located centrally, but since York could continue to develop to the west, it was decided that the church be built near the west end. Thus, when Charles Grant offered to donate the present Church property in Sunny Bank, it was readily accepted. The graveyard was consecrated on July 18, 1893. Construction of St. Andrew's Church was undertaken in 1895 during the incumbency of Reverend John P. Richmond, pastor of the missions of Gaspé Basin and Wakeham. It was located in the middle of the cemetery plot and officially opened its doors in December, 1895. The bell wasn't purchased until 1906, at the cost of \$292.82. It arrived in Gaspé by boat on June 17 and was erected into place on June 20.



*Original St. Andrew's Church, which was located in the current cemetery where the cross has been placed.*

York's new Church only remained joined with Wakeham and Gaspé for two years. In 1897 the Missions of Sandy Beach and York were united and served by one incumbent. This was done to facilitate the minister's travel, as no bridges were yet constructed over the York River. By 1945, changes were again deemed necessary, and the area was

reorganized leaving it as it remained until recently, with one minister serving the parishes of Gaspe and Sandy Beach, and another serving Wakeham and York.

By the 1920's this church, which held only thirty to forty people, was deemed too small for the rapidly growing congregation, which already exceeded two hundred persons. A new and much larger building was needed, so the people of York set to work. As it was aptly described by Bishop Tim Mathews in his sermon of Aug. 19, 1979 at St. Andrew's 50th Anniversary:

“They asked George Miller of Sandy Beach to draw up the plans, and appointed Mr. John Eagle Sr. to supervise the work. The men of the congregation volunteered their labor and the ladies, organizations, and youth of the parish raised funds. By 1923 the ladies had raised over \$4000. The young people made ice cream and sold it. As Russell Keays wrote (and I quote) 'It was simply a dedication of people, young and old, who by determination put manual labor, tireless days and nights to work at the realization of this much needed Temple to the glory of God...'. Their architects, engineers, environmental consultants, accountants, and fund raisers were found in the persons of their own congregation and friends. Practical people of York, expressing their own views.

With \$4000.00 in hand the project was assured because practically everybody offered their services free. During the summer gravel for the footings and base was obtained from up the river and brought to the bridge by scows then hauled by horse the rest of the way. The cement for the foundation and the timber for the forms were purchased from Mr. Nicholas Simon of Rosebridge. The cement was shipped and the timber for the forms towed to Mr. Garnet



Patterson's mill in Wakeham to be sawed, then hauled by horse and rig to York. The cement was mixed by hand in wooden troughs with long handled shovels. George Miller, having drawn the plans, worked with the men and showed them how to cut the rafters. They erected the frame with block and tackle and one horse. The walls were boarded in and the roof put on during the first summer. Messers Alfred Palmer, Bert Palmer and John Eagle made all the bolts and nuts at Eagle's Forge. And so they used up all their money! Amongst those working on the project were Alfred Palmer, Edmund Palmer, Angus Miller, Hubert Miller, Alfred Miller, Ernest Miller, Peter Patterson, and Joseph Patterson.

More money was raised during the winter and following summer and the work progressed... Shingles from Howard Smith's were towed up by scow to Basil Patterson's Landing then hauled to the Church. Much lumber had to be used for the buttresses, but the pews and bell came from the old Church. However, more pews had to be provided and these were built in sections so they could be used with the old ones. The bell was hauled up by rope. The mounting of the cross was a splendid, breath-taking

demonstration of courage, strength and skill. Alva Miller of Sandy Beach carried it up on his back!

The largest outside purchase was for the windows which were milled in Quebec. The alter was paid for by the Young People with money they derived from their sales of home-made ice cream.

“And so, in 1929,” to Quote Russell Keays once more, “A project dreamed about six years before, became a reality.”

On August 19, 1929 the first service was held in what is believed to be the largest wooden frame church in the Quebec Diocese. This building still serves the people of York and Sunny Bank, and has been self-supporting, along with St. James in Wakeham, since 1953. However, like other churches in the area, its future is in jeopardy because of the declining English population. Recently the Churches from Little Gaspé to Perce united to form the Greater Parish of Gaspé. By pooling resources their survival seems more likely.

The following is a list of Incumbents who have served in St. Andrew's Anglican Church since it opened in 1895:

1895-1897	Rev. John P. Richmond (York, Wakeham, and Gaspé)
1897-1898	Rev. George P. Harding (York and Sandy Beach)
1898-1910	Rev. David Horner
1910-1912	Rev. A. R. Warner
1912-1923	Rev. Wm. DeGruchy
1923-1927	Rev. George Robins
1927-1828	Rev. Richard Ford
1928-1929	Rev. M. Way
1929-1935	Rev. A. V. McLaren
1935-1937	Rev. Walter Lack (resided in Sunny Bank)
1938-1941	Rev. John Comfort
1941	Rev. Norman Pilcher
1941-1942	Rev. Claude Brett-Pering
1942-1945	Rev. Guy Marston
1945-1952	Rev. Sydney Meade (York and Wakeham united)
1952-1955	Rev. Brian Whitlow
1955-1961	Rev. W. H. M. Church
1962-1964	Rev. Garth Morrill
1964-1988	Rev. Grover Kendrick
1988-1992	Rev. Stewart Pike
1992-	The Greater Parish of Gaspé, Rev. Stuart Pike and Rev. Hugh Matheson