

Chapter 23

The Reverend R.A. Carson's Time in the
Mission of Peninsula and Little Gaspé

At a vestry meeting of St. Matthew's Church on September 19, 1955, it was agreed to build a garage for the convenience of the clergyman. Mr. Howard Mullin donated a piece of land north of the highway and adjoining the church property, for the building. It was decided to tear down the horse shed and use the material in it to build the garage. These decisions were acted on that fall and it was reported at the annual vestry meeting of January 1956 that the approximate cost of the garage was \$347.07. Thus, with the acquisition of the hall in February 1956, the church buildings numbered five - church, parsonage, barn, garage, and hall.

The Reverend R.A. Carson was inducted as minister of St. Matthew's and St. Peter's in November 1955. He and his family had arrived in the early fall, the Norrises having left for service elsewhere. As I remarked in the case of the Horners, Mr. and Mrs. Carson also must have been glad that the parsonage was roomy, as their family included their teenage son Billie, their little daughter Janet, and Mr. Carson's mother, Mrs. Pearl Carson. Later, (in 1958) another daughter, Pamela, was born. Their oldest child, Reg, did not come to Peninsula as he was already working.

The Carsons took up their work enthusiastically, and, during their six-year stay, were a part of many activities in the two parishes, not the least of which were regular services in the two churches. Mr. Carson also taught in Gaspé High School much of the time he was here and for a while went to Murdochville for service once each month.

One of the first events after their arrival was the Gaspé Deanery meeting which was held that year in Peninsula. Mrs. Carson wrote me a most interesting letter about the work she and her husband took part in here. Her comments on the Deanery meeting are as follows:

"All the clergy from around the coast and representatives from each parish, numbering between 90 and 100, came to Peninsula. Our day commenced with a celebration of Holy

Communion in St. Matthew's Church followed by dinner, meeting, and tea at Fort Peninsula Lodge. It was a commendable undertaking for our rather small group of ladies."

One highlight of the 1950s came near the end of the decade. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II came to Canada in June of 1959 to open the St. Lawrence Seaway, and a call at Gaspé was included in the itinerary of her trip. On June 21, a beautiful Sunday morning, the Royal party arrived on H.M.S. Britannia and the Queen and Prince Philip attended service at St. Paul's Church. Archdeacon Comfort, Rector of St. Paul's, invited all the local Anglican clergy to participate in the service of Morning Prayer. Another special visitor was Archbishop Carrington who was then Acting Primate of All Canada. It was he who preached at the service. Mr. Harold Ascah made a recording of the service and those who purchased the records have a permanent reminder of this special event in local church history.

At a Guild meeting on January 12, 1956, Mrs. Carson Sr. moved that parts of the constitution be rewritten to include the W.A. This motion was adopted and at the next meeting the revised constitution was read and approved. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find a copy of this constitution just as I could not find the preceding one of 1949.

During the next few years, W.A. work was undertaken by women and girls of all ages. Some years earlier Mrs. Carrington had set up a programme for girls, suited particularly to Gaspé. It combined the Girl Guide activities and Girls' Auxiliary programme and enabled both groups to operate and meet at a festival each year. Mrs. Carson organized the Girls' Auxiliary in Peninsula and was assisted by Mrs. Ivan Coffin. Brownies continued under the leadership of Mrs. Jimmy Mullin, Mrs. Leonard Annett, and Mrs. Lewis LeMesurier. This group later became the Junior Auxiliary, I believe. A Little Helpers group was also organized. Mrs. Carson wrote me that the G.A. or Guide programme included churchmanship, handicrafts, singing, dancing, and usually a play or some form of entertainment for presentation at the May festival. The Peninsula group usually showed up well at the festival. In 1956, the ten girls attending won the Challenge Cup and tied with the

Wakeham G.A. Guide Company for the First Aid shield. That year also the Brownie Pack won the handicrafts prize. Another year, the G.A. girls obtained the highest marks at the festival, giving them the right to have their name engraved on the Deanery Shield. The weekly meetings and work undertaken during the winter culminating in the festival in May must have provided good training for the girls and much enjoyment for both the girls and their leaders.

Mr. Carson trained a few of the boys as servers in church and led a small Boy Scout Troop; the boys participated in the usual Scout activities. Friday evening was meeting time for both Scouts and G.A. and the meetings were held in the school.

Mrs. Carson wrote that there were between 25 and 30 Sunday School pupils who came every Sunday at 1.30 p.m. Each year, she and the other teachers prepared the children for the presentation of a pageant at Christmas, and each year, too, the Sunday School session closed in June with "a joyful outing on the Point with all kinds of games and races". Mrs. Carson wrote that there was a large Sunday School at St. Peter's which met each Sunday an hour before service.

Before leaving the subject of young people, I should mention that another development after World War II besides those I have already described, was the setting up of a summer camp for the Gaspé Deanery. It was located on the site of the military base at Haldimand and was named Fort Haldimand Camp. All the local clergy, including the Norrises and Carsons and many others in later years, helped with the camp, and boys and girls from the various parishes attended. The camp still functions each summer.

In the mid-1950s, many parishioners felt that too little effort was being put into maintaining the cemetery. The Reverend Mr. Findly who had recently served the United Churches in the area had inspired an interest in the appearance of cemeteries by having extensive cleaning, leveling, and seeding of the various United Church cemeteries carried out. The new part of our cemetery had been mowed annually but little else was done to improve it. One of the people most keenly interested in this was Mr. George Patterson. Under his leadership in

1955, money was raised to erect a paling fence around the new part of the cemetery. The fence was made in panels, those along the road being taken down each winter as the roads were by this time being ploughed, piling snow on each side of the road. It was reported at the annual vestry meeting of 1956 that \$594.76 had been raised for cemetery improvement and this amount had been spent. From then on, an attempt was made each summer to mow and otherwise clean up the cemetery and in 1961 it was decided to clear the old graveyard of the trees, brush, and other growth which had grown up in it. Messrs. Douglas and David Phillips did this work.

On a national level, two important changes occurred in the church. For many years, the word "Anglican" had been used unofficially to identify what had been officially since 1861 "The Church of England in Canada" and since 1867 or soon after "The Church of England in the Dominion of Canada". In 1955, the name of the church became "The Anglican Church of Canada".

For some time, it had been felt that a revision of the Book of Common Prayer was needed. A revision of the hymn book had been accepted in 1937. After some years of work, a committee presented a revised prayer book; its use was approved in 1959 and ratified in 1962. In St. Matthew's Church, at the annual vestry meeting of January 25, 1960, it was decided "to order 10 copies of the new prayer book". Some new prayer books were given at about this time by the family of the late Mr. and Mrs. Frank Roberts in their memory. In addition, prayer books were donated by Miss Muriel Annett and Mr. and Mrs. Russell LeMesurier.

Mrs. Roland Miller was carrying on as organist at this time, and, as Mrs. Carson commented in her letter, Mrs. William Annett kept the church linen and silver "in A-one shape".

At the 1960 vestry meeting it was also proposed that a fire-proof container be purchased for the church records. Mr. William Annett, residing in Montreal for the winter, was contacted and he procured a small safe at a cost of \$75. Freight and cartage on it came to \$8.05 making a total cost of \$83.05. St. Peter's congregation paid \$42.02

of this amount and the safe was placed in the parsonage. Eleven years later, January, 1971, the Murdochville clergyman, Captain Smith, who was holding services in Peninsula and Little Gaspé, asked that the safe be loaned to Murdochville and used to store the records of all three churches. This loan was agreed to and the safe moved to the Murdochville rectory.

The two large repair projects of Mr. Carson's time occurred in 1958 and in 1961. In 1958, the exterior of the church was painted, some repairs were made on the steeple, a Selkirk chimney was installed to replace the old brick chimney, and other repairs were made. To finance this work, Dr. Camille Pouliot, the Member for Gaspé in the Quebec Legislature, was once more approached for a grant from the Department of Colonization and once more was able to give assistance. A cheque for \$700 was received from the Department of Colonization. Some of the men who did the work on the church were Messrs. Eric Scott, Ivan Coffin, William Roberts, Gilbert Miller, Cecil Miller, and Bruce Stanley.

A bequest of a \$500 bond was received by the church upon the death of Miss Flora Peters in 1957. At the annual vestry meeting on January 19, 1959, it was reported that \$314.19 of this bequest had been used in repairing the church roof and replacing the four east windows in the parsonage.

The 1961 repair project was the reshingling of the parsonage roof. The accounts show that 17,000 shingles were bought for \$102 and five gallons of roof paint for \$24. Mr. Wallace McAfee was given the contract to shingle the roof for \$175. He was paid an additional \$43.15 for painting it. The congregation was canvassed for donations toward his work, and help was no doubt received from the congregation of St. Peter's. In the winter, a bean supper followed by films brought in \$100.48. The Guild was continuing to hold sales and thereby provide funds. The total church receipts for 1961 were \$1833.03 and expenses \$1744.05. An interest was taken in helping others, too, as many contributed to missions regularly through their duplex envelopes, and St. Matthew's participated in a meeting concerning the Anglican Advance Appeal in 1955. Contributions were made to this fund.

Mrs. Carson wrote the following account about living in the parsonage:

"The Parsonage was comfortable too although they had removed the back kitchen section before we went there. I shall always remember the gorgeous sunsets from the front steps - looking over toward Gaspé. On a clear day we could see the bridge. I planted some flowers and shrubs the first spring & they always gave me a bouquet for the table."

Mr. and Mrs. Carson left Peninsula in 1961 to take up the incumbency of Port Daniel. Unfortunately, ten years later Mr. Carson suffered a serious illness and was forced to retire. They have lived since in Pierrefonds near their married children.

When the Carsons left Peninsula, two chapters in our church history, which had opened with the coming of Mr. Brooke in 1892 and the Baynes moving into the parsonage in 1895, were closed. Peninsula has not since had a permanent resident clergyman for more than a few months at a time, and, consequently, the parsonage was never again a real home for a clergyman and his family.

Chapter 24
The 1960s

In 1960, Archbishop Philip Carrington retired after twenty-five years as leader of the Diocese of Quebec and sixteen as Metropolitan of the Province of Canada. I think of him and Bishop George Mountain as the writing bishops. Bishop Carrington wrote several books, mostly of a historical nature, and contributed regularly and frequently to the "Diocesan Gazette", thus doing in the Twentieth Century what Bishop Mountain had done in the Nineteenth Century with his journals and other writings.

Bishop Russell Brown was elected to succeed Archbishop Carrington. Through the 1960s, he moved around the Diocese performing his duties and making friends. To the surprise of many, when he resigned as Bishop in 1971, instead of retiring, Bishop Brown took up a new career, teaching in the Far East. The new bishop elected in his place was Bishop Timothy Matthews who had been Archdeacon of Gaspé in the 1950s.

A man who had been brought up as a member of the congregation of St. Andrew's Church, York, was ordained on May 21, 1967, in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Mr. Francis Falle, after twenty-five years in the Royal Canadian Air Force, took his theological training at Diocesan College in Montreal before going out to Saskatchewan where he has worked ever since. He is at present Rector of a church in Saskatoon.

When it was decided that no resident minister would be at Peninsula, the Bishop asked that the congregation furnish the parsonage sufficiently that a student could use it in the summer. The Guild therefore arranged to purchase a bedroom suite, some kitchen furniture, bedding, dishes, and numerous other necessities. In addition, some furniture for the living-room and dining-room was donated. Some of the donations were a refrigerator by Mrs. Alvah Coffin and a dining-room table and chairs by Mr. and Mrs. James Ascah. In the past, students had often filled in during the minister's summer holiday. Now, a student arrived in June and stayed through the summer. Some of the students who were here in the 1960s were Messrs. John McIllmurray, Gordon Peabody, David Belden, Tom DeHoop, Harold Brazel, and Tom Thibeault.

During this time, too, at least three Church Army captains were stationed in the area and each served Peninsula and Little Gaspé for a time. The first was Captain Howard Hawes. He, his wife, and their baby came in the fall of 1964 and stayed through the winter in the parsonage. The wardens bought and installed an oil stove and secured a supply of wood for the kitchen range. In the spring, Captain Hawes left to prepare to take up work in a leper colony. Captain Delbert Garnet, the second Church Army man, was stationed in Murdochville from 1965 to 1967 and had the responsibility of Peninsula and Little Gaspé as well. In the short time he was here he visited in the parish and made friends with the people. In 1967, Captain Ronald Smith came to Murdochville and hence to Peninsula and Little Gaspé. He remained until 1971.

Of course, none of the students or Church Army men could have full responsibility for the services, and so the ordained clergymen in the area often came for Communion Services, weddings, and funerals, and in some years came for all services through the winter. The Reverend Garth Morrill from Wakeham and York held services often in the winters of 1962-63 and 1963-64. He would go to Little Gaspé for a service at 2 p.m. and be up here for service at 3:45. The Reverend David Thomas, who was in Murdochville from 1961 to 1965 also held numerous services in Peninsula and Little Gaspé. He and Captain Garnet were probably the ones who first proved that it was physically possible for a clergyman to serve two such distant points as Murdochville and Little Gaspé on a regular basis. I understand that Mr. Thomas went also to Rivière du Loup from time to time to hold services for the few remaining Protestants living there. Archdeacon Comfort, too, came to our churches for services on occasion.

When the Reverend Grover Kendrick replaced Mr. Morrill as rector of Wakeham and York in 1964, he became a frequent visitor to the two churches on this side of the Bay. Although as the foregoing indicates, we had been far from abandoned by the clergy, Mr. Kendrick's willing and consistent help was greatly appreciated. Because he made himself available in emergencies, took numerous funerals, weddings and baptisms, brought Mrs. Kendrick with him to play the organ, gave Holy

Communion to the shut-ins, and never seemed to be discouraged no matter how bad the weather or how small the congregation, Mr. Kendrick came to seem to be our clergyman.

The Sunday School continued to meet through these years, usually before service in the fall and winter months. Mrs. Ivan Coffin and a few of the other mothers were the teachers.

During this time, it was decided not to hire a sexton but to have the church looked after by the men and women of the parish. Soon, however, Mr. Dick Wagenaar was hired to make the fires, followed for a time by Mr. Elton McAfee, and then, in 1968, by Mr. Howard Mullin.

The return to Peninsula during the 1960s of such people as Mr. and Mrs. Howard Mullin, Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Beebe and Mrs. Allen Coffin, who had been away for a few years, made a significant difference to the community. Two couples who took an active part in the church were Mr. and Mrs. James Ascah and Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Ascah, both of whom came for the summer months each year. Other people who now spent the winters away and came back for the summer months were Mr. and Mrs. William Annett, Mr. and Mrs. Roland Miller, and Mr. and Mrs. Neil Ascah. Their continued interest and help in the church and the interest shown by other summer visitors was an advantage in many ways to the welfare of the church. I, too, was among the returned as I came back to stay in 1962 after twenty years in other places.

In the year 1962, a bequest of \$500 was received for St. Matthew's cemetery from the estate of the late Mrs. Gordon Ascah, widow of the Reverend Gordon Ascah. At a special vestry meeting on July 14, 1963, chaired by Mr. Peabody, it was decided to level the graves in the new part of the cemetery, leaving for the time being the boxes which were in good condition. It was also decided to make a plan of the cemetery. The leveling was carried out and wooden crosses were made to mark the graves not otherwise marked. The result of the work was a great improvement in the appearance of the new cemetery. A lawn mower was bought and ever since someone has been hired each summer to keep the graveyard mowed.

In July of 1966, a meeting was called to plan the renovation

of the old graveyard. Mr. Elmer Ascah was the leader of this undertaking and with the support of a committee including the wardens, Mr. Elton McAfee and Mr. Cyril Roberts, to plan the work, and with financial help from many members of the congregation, the Guild, and former parishioners living elsewhere, he succeeded in creating a place of real beauty out of what had become in recent years an overgrown and neglected cemetery.

On September 30, 1966, Mr. Ascah reported that the following had been accomplished in the old cemetery: the whole area was cleared of trees and brush and mowed by hand; the old fence was removed; all graves which could be identified as such were plotted on a plan and numbered (a total of 258 graves); the west part, about three-fifths of the area, was then ploughed and graded; the tombstones were replaced in their original positions, all being wire-brushed and broken ones repaired where possible; the area was treated with lime and seeded with grass. The total cost of the work was about \$300 with, of course, considerable donated labour by Mr. Ascah, Mr. Jimmy Mullin, and others. Time was allowed before the leveling for parishioners to make special requests or suggestions about the handling of their family graves.

During the following summer, the remaining portion of the old cemetery where some large tombstones could not be moved was also graded and seeded. A galvanized chain fence with metal posts was put up around the old cemetery and around part of the new where the wooden paling panels were rotting. A permanent chart of both cemeteries was completed by Mr. Ascah.

At a reception following a confirmation service in June, 1967, Mr. Ascah was presented with a letter of appreciation. This presentation was made by Bishop Brown and was an expression of the general feeling of gratitude to Mr. Ascah felt by many for the completion of his work of restoration.

Both the old and the new cemeteries were now mowed each summer. Some of those who did the mowing were: Barry McAfee, Brian Miller, Donald Roberts, Stephen Phillips, and Lewis Mullin. In more recent years the mowing has been done by Curtis Mullin and George Miller.

In 1969, plans were made to replace more panels in the paling fence and to procure markers of a more permanent material than wood for the unmarked graves. However, it was decided to do only the mowing that year in order that a more pressing project could be carried out.

The exterior of the church was once more in urgent need of being painted. At a special vestry meeting on June 29, 1969, chaired by Mr. Brazel, it was decided to canvass the parish for funds to pay for the materials and labour the painting would require. The canvass, which was carried out by Mrs. Elton McAfee and Mrs. Ray Miller, netted \$367 and the Guild gave \$200. The proceeds of a salmon salad supper, held the previous summer for the painting fund, and other sums donated gave a final total of \$882.94. Mr. Alex Coffin was given the contract to paint the church. At a vestry meeting on August 31, 1969, the work was reported completed at a cost of \$837.81. The balance was put in the general fund.

During the 1960s the Guild continued its usual support of all church activities. Mrs. James Mullin became the President in 1963 and has held the office ever since. Mrs. Gordon Mullin who had become the secretary treasurer in 1961 continued until 1968 when Mrs. Wallace McAfee took that office. The numbers at meetings, especially in winter, were few, but much sewing, knitting, and other handwork was done; rummage sales, food sales, and the annual summer and Christmas sales and Harvest Suppers were held. Many of the women of the church who did not attend meetings of the Guild supported the sales by generous contributions or by working or both. It was found in 1967 that the number of members was not large enough to continue support of the W.A. Therefore, membership in this organization was discontinued.

The Guild went on sending a small donation to the Church Bible and Prayer Book Society as it had done for years, and it continued to support the Sunday School, the prize fund at the Gaspé Bay North School, and other causes. In 1965, purchases of chairs, cups and saucers, tablecloths, and cutlery were made for the hall. In 1969, it was decided to buy a chesterfield, chair, and tables for the parsonage, do over the living-room floor, and make other repairs. In 1962, the material for white hangings for the church was obtained and paid for by donations

from parishioners and former parishioners living elsewhere. Mrs. Ivan Coffin made the hangings and Mrs. James Ascah made the burse and veil. Two bookmarks were bought and one was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Carson. Also in 1962, the candle lighter and extinguisher was donated by Mr. Peabody and a new set of hymn board numbers was given by Mrs. Flora Coffin. It was in 1970 that it was decided to order the material and make the purple hangings. They cost \$50.98.

A request was made in the fall of 1967 by a parishioner, Mr. Nelson Phillips, that he be allowed to rent the parsonage for the winter months. A special vestry meeting including representatives from St. Peter's Church was held on October 19, 1967, at which the matter of renting was discussed. It was agreed to rent at a charge of \$30 a month with fuel, electricity, and telephone to be paid for by the tenant. This arrangement was approved by church authorities and Mr. and Mrs. Phillips and their family occupied the parsonage during the winters from 1967 to 1971.

At the annual vestry meeting in January 1969, at which Archdeacon Comfort presided, Mr. Howard Mullin asked permission to tear down the parsonage barn. This building had been unused for many years, except for a few winters when Mr. William Annett rented it for his car. It was agreed to give Mr. Mullin the barn when consent had been received from the Bishop. However, at a subsequent meeting in June, Mr. Mullin offered \$15 for the barn and agreed to tear it down and clear the site. This offer was accepted and at an August vestry meeting a letter from Mr. Comfort confirming his acceptance of this agreement was read. Mr. Mullin then proceeded to dismantle the barn.

In 1969, some faithful members of the church passed away. Mrs. William Annett died in Montreal and Mr. Roland Miller in Ormstown. Money sent to the church in their memory was used to buy prayer books. Mr. Annett presented a new pulpit Bible in his wife's memory. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Roberts passed away here within a few months of each other, and their son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Roberts, gave the church a funeral carriage in their memory. A year later, the Scott family presented a sanctuary lamp in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Scott who had passed away.

The most notable event in the Roman Catholic congregations around the Bay in the 1960s was the completion of the cathedral in Gaspé. The work started in 1968; the roof on the basement erected thirty-four years before was removed and walls and a new roof were built. With its modern architectural features both inside and out, it formed a great contrast to the other large buildings in the town.

During the weekend of September 20 and 21, 1969, the cathedral was officially inaugurated as "La Cathédrale du Christ-Roi". On Saturday, September 20, there was an unveiling of a commemorative plaque and the blessing of the cathedral, followed by a reception. Several masses were celebrated on Sunday, September 21. In the evening, an ecumenical service was attended by a large crowd of people of all denominations. The service was presided over by the following: Monseigneur Gilles Ouellet, Bishop of the Diocese of Gaspé, the Most Reverend Howard Clark, Anglican Primate of Canada, and the Right Reverend Russell Brown, Anglican Bishop of Quebec.

During the 1960s there was much talk both officially among church leaders and informally among clergy and laymen in the various communities across Canada about church union. One evidence of this was the frequent and widespread occurrence of ecumenical services such as the one at the cathedral. The union of all Protestant denominations was envisaged by some and even the union of all Christians but the union of the United Church and the Anglican Church was the immediate aim. While this union seems farther off now, in 1978, than it seemed in the 1960s, certain concrete and lasting developments of that time point to the possibility of a union in the future. In the United Church and the Anglican Church, the women changed the name of their missionary organizations to the United Church Women and the Anglican Church Women with the hope that they would become one day just Church Women. (The first annual meeting of A.C.W. for all of Canada took place in Toronto in 1967.) The U.C.W. and the A.C.W., as they were familiarly known, now put out a single calendar each year. A hymn book based on the Anglican Book of Common Praise and the United Church Hymnary was prepared and authorized for use in conjunction with the older books. In a number of

communities, unions of United and Anglican congregations were worked out to use one building or to be under one clergyman licenced to act for both denominations.