

CHRONICLE

OF THE DIOCESE OF FREDERICTON.

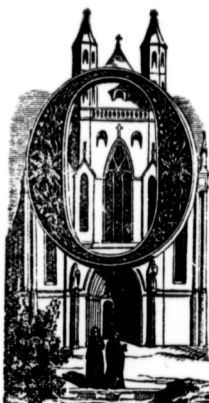
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The Parish Church of Fredericton.



NE hundred years ago Fredericton received and welcomed its first Rector, the Rev. Samuel Cooke. It was then but a little village, containing less than 400 inhabitants, exclusive of the 54th Regiment, which at that time was stationed there. The Rector held his first Service, in August 1786, in the King's Provision Store, which stood nearly opposite the present Bank of British North America. In the same year Church Wardens and Vestrymen were appointed; and, in 1787, the first steps were taken towards the erection of a Church, close by where the Cathedral now stands. This Church was completed in 1790 and called "Christ Church." Though thoroughly and substantially built, it must at first have been a very barn-like structure, having perhaps a low tower, but neither porch nor chancel. A *steeple* is mentioned in the old Vestry Book as having been added in 1819, and a *spire* in 1824, when £100 was given for that purpose by Mr. S. Grosvenor. The Communion Table and pulpit seem at first to have had their proper position at the East end of the Church; for in 1816 we find a resolution of the Vestry to remove them to the other end of the building, and they were certainly placed at the West end thenceforward. The length of the edifice was added to as the increase of the congregation made it

necessary, and large galleries along each side and across the East end furnished sittings for the soldiery, the college students, the choir, and others. From first to last the question of pews appears to have occupied a prominent place in the history of the old Church. In 1794 all the pews were let for seven years except one reserved for the Rector, one for Military Officers, and two for "public seats," whatever that may have meant. Benches on each side of the Desk were placed "for the use of such parishioners as cannot afford to pay rent for their seats." The *wall seat* in the North Gallery was allotted for "servants and people of colour."

Thenceforward the Minutes of the Vestry are a continual record of trouble and dissatisfaction about seats, and forfeiture and sale of pews for the non-payment of the annual rents. Doubtless many families were in this way alienated from the Church, and their descendants are not easily won back into her fold. What strong towers of pride and exclusiveness those old pews were! Square and roomy, and furnished with cushions and hassocks luxurious in proportion to the station of the owners, none might intrude with impunity upon their aristocratic privacy. Well does the present writer remember, though he has to look back upon the scene through the dim vista of five and forty years, the indignation which swelled his boyish heart at seeing a decent-looking woman, evidently a stranger, driven forth, literally at the umbrella-point, from one of these castles of devout retirement. Another scene also arises vividly before his mind. It was a sultry Sunday afternoon. The three great doors at the East end and the smaller door beside the three-decker pulpit at the West end were wide open. The venerable Rector was reading the prayers in a musical voice which contrasted greatly with the