

# HOW IT ALL BEGAN

## A (PARTIALLY ILLUSTRATED) HISTORY OF CHRIST CHURCH DEER PARK TO 1950

By the Venerable Ernie Hobson

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### Introduction

Before St. Paul's Bloor Street was built in 1842, the small city of Toronto was served by four Anglican churches: St. James, St. George the Martyr, Holy Trinity, (Trinity Square) and Trinity East, on King Street. The village of Weston, to the north west of the city had built St. Philip's and the village of Mimico had built Christ Church, both in 1833. St. Paul's L'Amoureux to the north-east was built in 1841 and the area north of Toronto had been served by St. John's York Mills since 1816.

Beginning with St. Paul's, Bloor Street, the rural area around Toronto began to build new Anglican churches. In the next ten years there would be St. George's Islington, St. John's Norway, St. Jude's Wexford, Christ Church, Scarborough and St. Mark's, Carlton village (West Toronto).

The third rector of St. John's York Mills was Alexander Laing Sanson, later to become the rector of Little Trinity where he served for over 50 years. There were many Anglican families living between St. Paul's in Yorkville and St. John's York Mills. During his time at St. John's he established a mission station in the home of the Lea Family in Leaside and the Lea family became members of St. John's.

In 1852, the Rev. Richard Mitchele became the rector of St. John's York Mills. He was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin and was married to the daughter of the Chief Justice, Sir James B. Macauley, whose younger brother had been the first missionary in charge at St. John's. The new rector set up a Church Warden's Account Book of Mission fund collections and in 1858 there is a record of the collections at "Christ Church". This was the mission that had been established in Leaside and had subsequently been moved to the brick schoolhouse near Davisville and Yonge.

In the fall of 1861, Dr. Mitchele left the parish on an extended trip to England and the following April, at the Annual Vestry meeting, the rural dean read a letter from the rector outlining the arrangements he had made for services at St John's and also at the Davisville Mission.

In 1866-67, John Lea was named as a lay delegate to the Synod from St. John's and representing the Davisville congregation. In 1868-69, Charles Magrath occupied the same post. Also at the St. John's Vestry meeting of 1868, Thomas Elgie and H. Jennings were appointed sidesmen at

the Davisville Mission.

An interesting note in the Churchwardens' records, at St. John's York Mills shows that five dollars was donated by the St. John's congregation and two dollars from the Davisville Mission towards the expenses to send the Suffragan Bishop, the Right Rev. A.N. Bethune, to the Lambeth Conference in 1867.

The Rev. Richard Mitchel made frequent visits to England and, when he left in 1863, the parish asked that a new rector be found. It would appear from the records at St. John's York Mills that the mission was neglected. After 1863, however, at the St. John's vestry meeting in 1868, Charles McGrath, Thomas Elgie and H. Jennings were appointed to represent the Christ Church Mission which had as its meeting place the Davisville schoolhouse.

## Part I : The First Church

In the Deer Park area things were happening. A two hundred acre farm lot west of Yonge Street was originally granted to Frederick Baron de Hoen, a German nobleman and officer with the mercenary Hessian troops, who fought for the British during the American Revolution. In 1837, Agnes Heath bought the southern forty acres for 1,050 pounds. The property was roughly bounded by today's Yonge Street, Oriole Road, St. Clair Avenue and Lonsdale Road. The house was located near the present intersection of Heath Street and Deer Park Crescent. She named her new property the Deer Park Farm.

In 1844, Agnes Heath moved back to Cobourg and her son bought the property and began to sell parcels of land to persons moving into the area from Toronto. In 1847, Colonel Arthur Carthew bought the six acres at the northeast corner, where Christ Church now stands, and built a large home called Lawton Park. In 1850, John Fiske, the founder of the Imperial Bank, bought Lawton Park.

In 1850, William Augustus Baldwin had built a farm called Mashqueth two and a half miles north of Toronto in Deer Park. The front wall of the farmhouse, facing west, stood in the middle of what is now Avenue Road, just north of Heath Street.

In 1866, Larratt William Smith purchased a large beautiful home called Summer Hill. He enlarged it so that eventually it had 35 rooms and stood in a park-like area of 35 acres.

In 1865, Joseph Jackes purchased a house called Rosehill. He wrote to his brother, "I shall soon have as nice a place as there is on Yonge Street. I have the best situation about Toronto, a fine orchard, splendid view, capital house, tip-top pony and buggy, a number one wife ¼."

These were the men who met at the Davisville School house on June 6, 1870. Those attending that meeting were Messrs. Frank Shanley, John Fiske, Dr. Larratt W. Smith, Edward Burke, Joseph Jackes and John Burke. It is interesting that the people appointed in the 1868 vestry meeting at St. John's: Charles McGrath, Thomas Elgie and H. Jennings, did not attend this meeting. The men who met on June 6th, 1870 were not from the farming community north of Davisville, they were the Toronto- businessmen who had recently moved into the Deer Park area.

In 1870, Deer Park, around what is now Yonge and St. Clair, and the areas north from there were strictly rural as they lay far north of the city of Toronto. The city of Toronto had managed to cross Bloor Street and had annexed the village of Yorkville, but it was still a struggling community whose population had only recently exceeded 56,000 persons.

Yonge Street was the main north/south thoroughfare and a stage ran daily from Queen and Yonge streets to Richmond Hill, stopping at Deer Park which still didn't have a post office, (that would not arrive until 1878). There was a deep ravine across Yonge Street, and to avoid the ravine the stage turned west soon after crossing St. Clair and went up what is now Lawton Blvd. so that it could cross the dam and the creek at Whitmore's Sawmill, near what is now Chaplin Crescent.

People came up from Toronto to watch football games played on the athletic field just south of St. Clair and Yonge. They would visit the Deer Park Hotel, a modest hotel of twelve rooms, and feed

the deer that still came in from the clumps of trees to be fed. Yonge Street was still not paved and a single street car track ran up the middle of the road.

Between St. Paul's Bloor Street and St. John's York Mills there were no Anglican churches and the group that met in 1870 felt there should be an Anglican place of worship in the St. Clair/Davisville area.

The meeting on June 6, 1870 agreed to ask the Bishop of Toronto to create a new parish. The name chosen was the name of the Davisville Mission, Christ Church. The Bishop and diocese agreed and a Building Committee consisting of Messrs. Frank Shanley, W.A. Baldwin, Edward Burke and Joseph Jackes recommended building a church on the piece of land between Yonge Street and the "detour road" that ran to west of Yonge Street beginning at Heath Street.

The land was purchased for \$100.00 from Thomas Griffith. It was a triangular piece of land between Yonge Street and the road we now know as Lawton Boulevard. In those days the site was referred to as the Yonge Street Gore. Work began on October 5, 1870 and the building was completed in eleven weeks at a total cost of \$3,000.00. (Whoever said that life was at a slower pace in the last century.) The building project included a driving shed and fence.

John Ross Robertson described the church as having "a commanding site overlooking the city, with a glimpse of the blue water of the lake" and being a "pretty suburban parish with many earnest workers". In 1872, a rectory was built on Heath Street West, on land donated by John Fisk and a schoolhouse was built north of the church in 1881.



The first incumbent was the Rev. Archibald George Lister Trew. His father was the Assistant Commissary-General in Ontario and his mother was the daughter of the Hon. Neil McLean, St. Andrew's Ontario. A.G.L. Trew was born in Cornwall Ontario, August 26, 1842. He was a graduate of Trinity College, receiving his B.A. in 1862 and his M.A. in 1869. He was ordained deacon in 1867 and priest in 1868.

He was locum tenens at Markham, Ontario in the absence of the rector and afterwards was the curate at St. James Cathedral before being appointed the assistant at St. George the Martyr in downtown Toronto. In 1873, when St. John's York Mills was without a rector the Rev. Trew conducted afternoon services there and provided pastoral assistance to that parish.

He resigned due to ill health in 1876 and went to California on leave of absence. He later decided not to return to Toronto and was appointed Dean of Southern California and rector of Our Saviour, San Gabriel's, Diocese of Southern California. He was later appointed the Examining Chaplain for that diocese. He was periodically elected as one of the four delegates from that diocese to the Episcopal General Convention.

In 1889, he received a Doctor of Divinity degree from Trinity College, Toronto.

The original boundaries of the parish were Cottingham Street on the south, Eglinton Avenue on the north, Dufferin Street on the west and the Don River on the east. Lying as it did along almost the entire northern boundary of the City of Toronto it had many challenges. Missions were established from time to time to serve new settlements that sprang up.



The second incumbent, appointed in 1878, was the Rev. T.W. Paterson. He was born in Toronto and was educated at Trinity College. He was ordained deacon in 1871 and priest in 1872 in the Diocese of Toronto. He was in charge of the Mission at Hastings from 1871 to 1873 and then moved to the parish of Bradford, 1873-1877. In 1877 he went to England and was the curate at Shoreham in Kent until he returned to the Diocese of Toronto to be the rector of Christ Church in 1878.

A mission opened on Birch Avenue later united with a mission on Davenport Road to become the Parish of the Church of the Redeemer. A mission established in Leaside became St. Cuthbert's parish and a mission at Fairbank, under the charge of the Theological and Missionary Society of Trinity College became the Parish of St. Hilda.

The little frame church served the parish for nearly forty years but by the turn of the century it was obvious a larger building was needed.

The area around the intersection of Avenue Road and St. Clair was booming. William Augustus Baldwin had died in 1883 and the estate was subdivided. Thirty acres were sold to Upper Canada College and the school left its premises on King Street west and relocated "to spacious grounds, beautifully situated in the northern suburbs of the city".

Early in the century, Bishop Strachan School on College Avenue had purchased a large block of land west of Upper Canada College and began to prepare to move to that district which was then known as "College Heights".

In the southwest corner of the parish Henry Pellatt began, in 1909, to implement his grandiose dream of a castle on the bluffs overlooking the northern end of Spadina Road. This we now know as Casa Loma. Also in the southwest corner of the parish was "Ardwold", the lavish home of Lady Eaton, with its 50 rooms and private hospital, which was completed in 1911.

In 1909, the village of Deer Park was incorporated into the City of Toronto and housing starts east of University Avenue were on the increase.

## Part II : The Second Church

It is little wonder then that the rector of Christ Church Deer Park and the wardens began early in this century to consider the need to build larger and more prestigious parish church. The small wooden church built in 1870 needed to be replaced and so plans for a new building were prepared by Messrs. Symons and Rae and building operations began in 1909. The new church was to be a brick church situated on the site of the original church between Lawton Boulevard and Yonge Street.

The opening services in the new church took place Thursday, June 1910.



But there were other developments in the Diocese of Toronto that would create a lot of tension and ill will. At the time that Christ Church was formed as a parish there was an area in the City known as St. John's Ward. It was the area between University Avenue and Yonge Street, running north from Queen Street to the city limits at Bloor Street. It was thickly populated and was served by Holy Trinity Church.

In 1873, an organization known as the Church Association was formed in the city. It included over two hundred of the most eminent members of the diocese, and was dedicated "to maintain the principles and doctrines of our Church as established at the Reformation and to preserve the simplicity of her Protestant worship and the purity of her scriptural teaching". It was this association that was responsible for the founding of Wycliffe College in protest against Trinity College's high church domination.

Several members of the Church Association worked to establish a parish in St. John's Ward and in 1874 Grace Church became the fifteenth Anglican Parish in the city. Its boundaries were Bay Street on the east, University Avenue on the west, Queen Street on the south and College Avenue on the north. The church was to be located on Elm Street between Bay and Elizabeth.

But, by 1910, one-half of the parish area was occupied by hospitals, armouries, factories and office buildings. In addition there were many churches of other denominations. Few members of

the parish lived within its boundaries and then, in 1910, its rector, The Rev. A.J. Fidler, accepted the rectorship of St. Clement's Eglinton. The Bishop believed that the time had come to move the parish to the suburbs but the church officials wanted to remain in the mainstream of Toronto life and to preserve the traditions, associations and memorials of the parish.

Enter two prominent Anglican gentlemen. Mr. K.C. Symons, K.C. and a member of St. Simon's, who would later be the Chancellor of the Diocese had moved to Warren Road in the "Hill District". In 1910 he approached his rector, the Rev. E.C. Cayley, the rector of St. Simon's to see if St. Simon's would consider establishing a mission in the Hill District. (Incidentally, the Rev. E.C. Cayley was the grandfather of Ed Cayley a parishioner here at Christ Church Deer Park.) Mr. Symons later approached Mr. Dyce Saunders of Poplar Plains Road who was a member of St. Thomas's Church on Huron Street and they approached the Bishop with a plan to establish a congregation in the Hill District.

The Bishop advised them that Grace Church wished to move and Mr. Symons then got in touch with Mr. J.S. Barber who had been the Sunday School Superintendent at Grace Church, a warden and also a lay member of Synod. Meetings were held and it was agreed to move Grace Church to the Hill District and that the new parish would have a form of service similar to St. Simon's. Finally in 1911 a delegation from Grace Church met with the Bishop and the boundaries of the new parish were established.

The boundaries were: on the east, a line running 300 feet west of Avenue Road from Clarendon Avenue to Eglinton Avenue; on the west, Kendal Avenue north from St. Clair Avenue to Eglinton Avenue; on the north Eglinton Avenue and on the south Clarendon Avenue west to the ravine and to Kendal Avenue. There were two conditions laid down: the new church building was not to be located south of St. Clair or east of Warren Road and Grace Church was to contribute 15% of the sale of their present property plus 15% of a legacy they had received to be shared between Christ Church, the Church of the Messiah and St. Michael and All Angels.

When this information became public, the Rev. T.W. Paterson, the rector of Christ Church Deer Park, was furious. He addressed a memorial to the Synod which said in part:

*Acting upon the amendment to the Canon on the Disestablishment of Parishes adopted at your most recent session, the few remaining members of the disestablished parish of Grace Church in Toronto decided to form a new parish in one of the wealthiest districts of the city and suburbs, and to hand over to the rich people living two or three miles distant from, and having no connection with or interest in Grace Church, the property amounting to from twenty thousand to thirty thousand dollars which had been procured years before for the benefit of a downtown district.*

*Naturally the rich people to whom so large a free gift was offered at once petitioned to have a parish formed for them; and this was done. The new parish was taken from the parish of Christ Church, which had just incurred a large debt in building a new church to accommodate these very people, and the less advantaged portion of the parish was left to shoulder the whole debt for a church which was now larger than required.*

*Not content with the gift of one church the people of the new Grace Church parish now desire to obtain also the old Christ Church which had been placed in position to be used as a hall and parish house, and accordingly entered into negotiations for the purchase of the old church at a merely nominal sum. A meeting was called at Christ Church to consider the proposition, which was attended by eleven members of the vestry. Of these, seven voted for the sale of the church, six of whom reside outside the parish, four of them being residents in the new Grace Church parish itself, while the rest, together with the rector, all residents in the parish opposed it.*

Later in a letter to the Synod, Mr. Paterson said:

*Surely that law should be amended which permits the Executive Committee of Synod selling - or practically giving away - the property of one parish to another against the wishes of the rector and the parishioners.*

*And why this determined and persistent effort to weaken, and despoil, and perhaps ruin the*

## *parish of Christ Church? Why must Christ Church be sacrificed for Grace Church?*

In 1914 the First World War took over centre stage and by its conclusion Upper Canada College had gravitated to Christ Church Deer Park while Bishop Strachan School had become associated with Grace Church on the Hill. One hundred and thirty-one men and women enlisted and twenty-seven men were killed in the conflict.

There is little recorded about the second church, but that is understandable as it existed for only twelve years and four of those years were consumed by the events of the war.

In 1914 the Rev. T.W. Patterson, who had been the rector of Christ Church for thirty-five years, resigned as rector but did not retire. Instead a vicar was appointed to assume the pastoral responsibilities of the parish while the Rev. Patterson continued "in charge" as the rector emeritus.

The person appointed vicar was the Rev. Henry Arthur Brooke. Mr. Brooke was born in Ruyton, Shropshire, England and came to Canada in 1884. He was educated in England and at Bishop's University at Lennoxville, Quebec. He had been ordained in 1892 and had served at Gaspé, Scotstown and Stanstead. He then was appointed curate at the Church of St. James the Apostle, Montreal and later was appointed rector of St. Luke's pro-cathedral, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. While rector of St. Luke's, he was appointed a Canon of the Diocese of Algoma. Mr. Brooke was appointed vicar of Christ Church Deer Park in May 1914 and brought with him some of the catholic traditions of the Diocese of Algoma.

In 1920 the city of Toronto was considering widening Yonge Street from Heath Street to the city limits. The proposal, if adopted, would mean the demolition of Christ Church Deer Park. At the vestry meeting in January 1921, a committee was formed to monitor the city's plans and to keep the parish informed. Also in 1921 the parish of the Transfiguration was formed which removed from Christ Church parish everything north of Davisville and Imperial Avenues.

In November of 1921, the Rev. H.A. Brooke resigned as vicar on being appointed rector of St. Matthew's parish. He succeeded the Rev. Charles Allen Seagar who had been appointed Provost of Trinity College. Soon after the resignation of the Rev. H.A. Brooke, the Rev. Patterson retired.

The first few months of 1922 were hectic times for the parish. In January, at the vestry meeting, the special committee appointed the previous year reported that the City of Toronto had purchased the church and property for \$92,100 and the sale had been approved by the diocese. They recommended that the parcel of land at the corner of Heath Street and Lawton Boulevard be purchased at a price of \$46,918.78. The vestry agreed and a building committee was established.

At the same time the parish began its search for a new rector and the Rev. H.F.D. Woodcock was appointed the third rector of the parish. At the time of his appointment he was a Canon of the Diocese of Niagara and the rector of Oakville. Canon Woodcock was a graduate of Trinity College and following his ordination had served in both the dioceses of Ontario and Niagara. He had been a chaplain in the First World War and had been wounded at Bernville in 1918. The Rev. H.F.D. Woodcock was inducted as rector on Thursday, February 16, 1922.

Eighteen days later, on March 6th, plans for the new church buildings were presented to the parish and approved. The first sod was turned in April and the cornerstone was laid on Saturday, June 17th. A local newspaper reported that a line of choristers and clerics processed from the old church and marched sedately to the covered platform in the rain; but as the first hymn was being sung the rain ceased and the sun broke through the clouds. The cornerstone was laid by Mrs. Haughton Lennox, wife of Mr. Justice Lennox, who was the Chairman of the Building Committee.

## **Part III : The Present Church**

Soon after the cornerstone of the third church was laid, the second church was demolished and services were held in the Deaconess House which was at the corner of St. Clair Avenue and

Avenue Road. By fall, the new parish house was sufficiently completed so that services were held here beginning on November 5th.

The first services in the present church were held Easter Day, April 1, 1923; there were five services, 7:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. and 7:00p.m. Total attendance was 2,338 and there were 630 communicants. The service of dedication was held on Friday, April 27th.

The plans for the new church included an aumbry on the north wall of the sanctuary. Soon after the church was completed, a large sedilia was given as a memorial and placed on the north side of the sanctuary. It wasn't until 1981 when the new organ was installed and the sanctuary re-ordered that the sedilia was moved and the parish "found" the aumbry that had been hidden for over a half a century.

When Mr. Woodcock came to the parish, the Rev. Paterson was still living in the rectory and so Canon Woodcock had a house built at 38 Oriole Gardens. He later sold it to the parish and it continues to be the rectory. Canon Woodcock was an astute business man: at one point he learned that the land on Heath Street, west of the church, was going to be sold and could be purchased for \$6,000.00. He immediately collected over \$3,000.00 from two parishioners and then presented the matter to the corporation who raised the balance, an action which gave the parish the property to the west of the church.

The thirties brought with it the economic problems that followed the stock market crash of 1929. This presented real problems because the parish was determined to pay off all the debts associated with the building of its new church and become debt free. This was finally accomplished in the forties and the church consecrated by the Most Rev. Derwyn T. Owen, Primate of Canada, on January 18, 1944.

During Canon Woodcock's tenure, Canada was again plunged into war. During the war years Christ Church Deer Park was the centre for the Deer Park Women's Patriotic League. The 10th Scout Troop was also in the news during the war as it had the best record of any scout troop in Canada. Approximately 110 boys collected 510,000 pounds of salvage for the war effort. They bought a truck and went into the "junk business" in a big way, eventually raising enough money to buy an ambulance for the Air Force.

Canon Woodcock resigned as rector in 1948 and was succeeded by The Rev. Northcote Burke. Northcote Burke, a witty Irishman and graduate of Trinity College, came to the parish from St. John's Church, Ottawa. It is interesting that at his induction the sermon was preached by the Dean of Ottawa, Howard Clark, who later became the Primate of Canada and who, after his retirement, was closely associated with Christ Church Deer Park.

Along with many parishioners, I remember Northcote Burke and can recall his inspirational sermons and great humour. By 1950, I was living in Toronto and it would be difficult to pursue the parish history beyond 1950 and remain objective and so I leave to other to write the events after the end of the forties.

## The Incumbents of Christ Church Deer Park



- 1870 - 1878 Rector The Rev. A.G.L. Trew



- 1878 - 1922 Rector The Rev. T.W. Paterson
- 1914 - 1921 Vicar The Rev. H. Arthur Brooke

- 1922 - 1948 Rector The Rev. H.F.D Woodcock
- 1948 - 1953 Rector The Rev. Northcote Burke
- 1953 - 1967 Rector The Rev. F. Arthur Smith
- 1967 - 1973 Rector The Rev. Fraser Bournes
- 1974 - 1987 Rector The Rev. Ronald R.Davidson
- 1988 - Rector The Rev. Canon R. Timothy Elliott

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