

HISTORY OF ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH, ALDERSHOT

(on the plains)

A Century and a half is a long time in Canadian History. To trace the history of our Church it is necessary to investigate the locality, and the people who originally settled here. The property on which St. Matthew's was built, is part of a parcel of land which was granted to the Honorable Peter Russell in 1796 by King George the third. The land grant extended from the Bay to the top of the Ridge (Waterdown), its limits on the west running from just west of the present church building and extending east to the location of the East Plains Church. The greater portion, if not all of this block of land was later sold to John Fonger (1804), whose decendants are still in the vicinity. The land was again divided and a small portion of 50 acres sold to Lewis L. Dennis in 1806. This was deeded to his son, Dennis L. Dennis in 1843, and in 1845 was sold to Henry Wyatt, the first benefactor of our Church.

It was during the time the property belonged Henry Wyatt that the church was built. To Henry Wyatt and his wife Emma must go most of the credit for building the Church; their names must be mentioned often in tracing the early history of St. Matthew's. The land on which the church was built, was presented by the Wyatts for a church building only. A note in one of the early Vestry Minute Books draws attention to this point, and a motion specially mentions that the land shall not be used for burial purposes.

The land on which the Cemetery was located was part of

another block of land given by Crown Grant to the Applegarth family. The first owner of this land, William Applegarth, came from Standop, County of Durham, England, in 1791. After arriving at Burlington, he built a house in the woods about the center of his property which reached from the Ferguson property, on a line with the church gate in the east, to beyond Oakland's in the west, and from the Bay Shore to the 2nd Concession. When other members of the family followed from England, on established what we now know as Oaklands and two houses were built; Oaklands and the other house (opposite Aldershot Motors) near the gate was known as Oaklands Farm House. In due course of time, this enterprising settler built the first grist mill in this neighborhood when salmon might still be caught in his own mill stream. This structure was burned to the ground in 1812, and its successor suffered the same fate later. The third and greatest of the mills was then begun. Miller Applegarth announced to his friends that neither devil or man would be able to destroy the stout stone structure being set up. He was right, but time, the great leveller, has succeeded in ruining almost every vestige of the once thriving mill. Only one gaunt gable remains as a monument to the courage and industry of the miller who was known near and far, as a "white man". No seeker of employment was ever turned away from his hospitable door. If there was no job for the prospective worker, Miller Applegarth created one.

It would be interesting to follow the history of this