

DEC. 24/80

Colborne church will be commemorated

TORONTO—On Sunday, December 28, 1980 following a service at 2:30 p.m., a plaque commemorating historic Old St. Andrew's, Colborne, will be unveiled inside the church.

The historical plaque is being erected by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture and Recreation which is dedicated to the promotion and preservation of Ontario's cultural heritage.

The unveiling ceremony is the last event celebrating the 150th anniversary of the erection of the church and is being sponsored by the congregation of St. Andrew's.

A Director of the Ontario Heritage Foundation will present the plaque to the church and it will be unveiled by Mrs. Christine Chatterson, a long-time member of the parish and its first woman elder.

Others invited to participate in the ceremony include: Mr. Harry Bradley, Minister at St. Andrew's who will act as program chairman; Mr. Walter Rutherford, Reeve of Colborne; Mr. Charles Reynolds, Clerk of Session; Mr. George Hees, M.P. (Northumberland); and Mr. Russell Rowe, M.P.P. (Northumberland).

Mr. Duncan McGlennon, a parishioner, will give a brief history of St. Andrew's and, following the unveiling, Mr. Bradley will dedicate the plaque.

Refreshments will be served in the church hall at the close of the ceremony.

In the early decades of the 19th century large groups of Scottish Presbyterians settled in eastern Ontario. These immigrants, faced with the hardship of adapting to a new environment, wished to establish familiar religious institutions and the erection of places of worship was central to their aspirations.

A congregation was formed at Colborne, where in addition to Scottish Presbyterian there was a considerable number of parishioners of American background, soon after the area was settled. By November 1829 Presbyterians in the vicinity were petitioning the Glasgow Colonial Society, an organization formed to promote the interests of the Church of Scotland in the colonies, for a resident minister. A Mr. Watson was suggested for the charge on the condition that the congregation post a bond for his annual salary. The appointment was not secured, however, and though served by itinerant ministers the congregation pleaded that it was "without any outward means of grace except that afforded by the Wesleyan Methodists and occasional preaching from

Ministers of the Church of England". By September 1831 the Colborne congregation had grown to include approximately 200 members and an arrangement had been reached with Cobourg area Presbyterians to cover the stipend for a minister. Two years later the Reverend Matthew Miller accepted the call to the Colborne and Cobourg churches and on June 19, 1833 he was ordained by the Presbytery of Bathurst to this joint pastoral charge.

When he arrived Miller held services in a newly completed church building. By August 1830 the Colborne congregation had commenced construction of this structure on land reputedly donated by Joseph A. Keeler, a prominent local merchant. The trustees, John Steele, Josiah Farrar and David Brodie, were particularly solicitous concerning the erection of the church but, despite their efforts, problems arose. The building remained incomplete in November 1831, the congregation having fallen into debt, and was not in fact finished until two years later when the spire was finally erected. In June 1833 pews still had not been installed though, with the use of temporary seats, the church was opened for public worship.

Old St. Andrew's was designed by Archibald Fraser. An accomplished itinerant architect-builder of Scottish background, Fraser had a decade earlier constructed the elegant Neo-Classical St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kingston as well as St. Raphael's Church, Glengary, the premier Roman Catholic edifice in all of Upper Canada during the 1820's. He was later responsible for the Newcastle District court house and in 1833 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, both in Cobourg. For the Colborne congregation Fraser fashioned a plain and classically proportioned Georgian structure. The church measured forty by fifty feet according to a contemporary estimate and was constructed of local quarried stone.

Though the church was completed and the debt lessened with a 50 pound grant from the government, the congregation of St. Andrew's faced renewed difficulties. In 1834 Rev. Miller drowned. The following year many parishioners of

American background who did not care for the more rigid practises of Scottish Presbyterian proceeded, under the guiding impulse of an American missionary, to form a separate congregation. This problem was resolved, however, with the passage of time and particularly through the ministry of Rev. J. Smith (1849-1857), an Irish Presbyterian of a less formal cast than the Scots.

The Georgian exterior of St. Andrew's remained unaltered for some time, though the spire was lost. Later in the century, however, considerable renovations took place. The building was re-roofed, the eaves widened and supporting paired brackets added giving the church a decidedly Italianate character. In 1895, after a fire, major repairs were undertaken in the interior as well. Then in 1910-11 an addition housing the Sunday School was erected at the rear and the tower was heightened to create a belfry. Since that time the structure has not been significantly altered, though the stonework has recently been repaired, and St. Andrew's remains one of the earliest Presbyterian churches extant in Ontario.

Text of Ontario Heritage Foundation plaque

OLD ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

This church, built from local stone, was begun in 1830 on land acquired by the Presbyterian congregation from Joseph A. Keeler, a prominent local merchant. It was designed by Archibald Fraser, a Scottish architect-builder, in a plain and classically proportioned Georgian style and, upon completion in 1833, services were held under the direction of the Reverend Matthew Miller. Later in the century the interior was recast and a new roof featuring projecting eaves

supported by paired brackets was added giving the building a decidedly Italianate character. In 1910-11 the original tower was heightened, a belfry constructed and a hall housing the Sunday School erected at the rear. Little altered since then, St. Andrew's remains one of the oldest surviving Presbyterian churches in Ontario.