

The Anglican Church at Peace River.

In 1879 the Rev. Alfred Garrioch sent his brother George, a farmer, to set up the Smokey River Mission, four miles from Peace River Crossing, hoping to supply the Dunvegan Mission. He was making progress, but resigned in 1881, and the project was abandoned.

In 1884 the Rev. John Gough Brick decided to move the Dunvegan Mission to either Old Wives Lake, (near present day Berwyn) or at the old Smokey River Mission. A building was erected at Old Wives Lake that year, and the next year constructed a small log house on the Peace - which would become the Shaftesbury Mission. Brick moved to Shaftesbury in 1886, and moved a cartload of all the moveable items from Dunvegan. "The development of the Shaftesbury Mission was possibly the slowest on record in the Diocese, and, for once, lack of funds was not entirely to blame. In a little over ten years, four different missionary workers strove to arrive at the desired state where Christian teaching would take preference over manual labour, and each of the four failed." (1)

The Rev. Brick spent most of his time "in agriculture", and in 1893 the small mission building was still being used as a house, a church, and a school.

In 1905 Robert Holmes arrived at Christ Church (Shaftesbury Mission) and was made a Deacon in 1906, and expanded his field of work to include Peace River Crossing. By 1909 the telegraph had reached the Crossing, and a ferry was in service. The area was growing! Synod set aside the basic sum of \$250.00, in the name of each new mission church - which really only built a shell.

"It would seem that the aforementioned financial restriction did not apply to the building of the log church of St. James, Peace River Crossing, because the church is later referred to as being, "*on a more expensive model than any other in contemplation*". The decision to construct a larger building was probably influenced by the size of the S.P.G. grant and the generous giving of the W.A. in Toronto, but the sudden increase in population both at the Crossing and in the district west of it after 1910, must certainly have been a consideration. Originally, Peace River Crossing - like Griffin Creek, Bluesky and Waterhole - was an outpost of the Shaftesbury Mission, under the care of the Rev. Robert Holmes. Beginning in 1906, Holmes made regular visits to the latter three points in the summer months, holding services in farm homes; while at the Crossing he had a small, but enthusiastic year-round congregation who gathered in the Hudson's Bay Company's house for services every Sunday. It was here, in the comfort of H.A. George's dining room, that plans were made in 1909 to erect a proper place of worship.

According to Mr. George, construction was commenced in that year on the property close to the old cemetery site, on the river bench directly above the present location of Bishop's Lodge. Only the walls were in place when Bishop Holmes decided that the location was not a practical one, and suggested that the church be built on land deeded to the Diocese by Pat Wesley in March, 1910. The move was carried out, and the builders continued their work on the church at its new site, on the five acre plot close to where the Cathedral now stands. Early in March, Archdeacon Robins reported to the S.P.G. that the pine log building, when completed, would have a nave 24 x 30 (with chancel extra) capable of accommodating 130

people. The expected cost, including the installation of the furnace, would be \$1,000.00. The lumber, from Fort Vermilion, was to be paid for by local collections and much of the finish work was done by Sergeant Anderson (later Inspector) of the N.W.M.P. After it was dedicated by Bishop Holmes on 7 June, 1911, Archdeacon Robins described it as, "*...a church of substantial structure, likely to prove of permanent benefit to the neighborhood of Peace River Crossing,....it stands on a prominent position immediately on the East bank of the Peace River,...it will be impossible for any traveller to pass through the place without seeing it. We hope that it will serve the purpose not only of public worship but that it will be also a silent and powerful witness to every person passing by.*" (1)

In 1916 Bishop Robins spoke with pride of a recent trip - "so improved are many of the roads that a few days before, I travelled by motor car from Peace River Crossing to Lake Saskatoon in 24 hours or slightly less". In 1914 at the request of the congregation, the Rev. Robert Holmes was moved to the Crossing where he became the first resident missionary of St. James Church, and the first to occupy the newly built mission house. When he was again transferred in 1915 - the mission house beside the Heart River became "Bishop's House", and a new rectory was built in 1916.

In moving the Diocesan See from Athabasca Landing in January, 1916, Bishop Robins was influenced by the same factor that had caused homes, shops and churches to change their locations. - the railroad.Peace River Crossing was now linked to almost every part of the country. From this point, not only could the Bishop keep in touch with Provincial and General Synod meetings, he could also visit, with relative ease, the majority of missions in the Diocese, including those in the south-eastern section, like Lac La Biche and Boyle that were being opened up about this time.

In 1930 the Rev. W.E. Harrison arrived, and became the first Honorary Canon in the Diocese and in July, 1933, the first editor of the Peace Messenger.

In August, 1932, the Province of Rupertsland's endowment funds, managed by a Winnipeg firm, had vanished. Everyone in the Province took voluntary cuts in stipend, and embarked on a fund-raising drive. This was in the midst of the depression, wheat was 22 cents a bushel-but by 1936 they had raised 3/4 of a million dollars!

In 1935 S.J. Attenborough, a London Attorney, announced that the "Anonymous Donor" would build a new church and a hall in Peace River. The first sod was turned in June, 1936, by Inspector Anderson of the R.C.M.P. The church was consecrated as a Pro-Cathedral on the 14 October of the same year. Malvern House was built in 1940, followed by Synod Hall in 1947. St. James had become self-supporting in 1941, under the Rev. F. Smith. The Rev. Roland Hill arrived in 1947, and moved into the new rectory in February, 1948.

On the 29th of April, 1949, St. James was declared the Cathedral of the Diocese; and on the 1st of May the Rev. Canon Roland Hill was appointed the first Dean of Athabasca, and the Rector of the Cathedral.

The Athabasca Hall was the largest facility in town, and was open for the use of all. The booking of the Hall fell on the shoulders of a very active A.Y.P.A., and later was passed on to ChiRho.

But the town kept growing and the bookings increased to the point that it became a full-time job; which culminated in the management of the Hall being turned over to the Peace River Recreation Board in 1972, on a 20 year lease basis. The agreement gave the town an excellent community centre, while still allowing the Parish the full use of the Hall. After his arrival in 1979, the Very Reverend Fabian Hugh (our first Dean Emeritus) conceived the idea of selling the Hall to the town, and with the proceeds build a new church hall connected to the Cathedral. His idea bore fruit, and on the 20th of October, 1985, the newly added two storey hall was dedicated by Bishop Gary Woolsey.

(1) from: "A Register of Service" by Betty McCrum.

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS
GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD

“The Crucifixion” Above the entry.

“The Ascent” Above the High Altar.

These two were paid by subscriptions to Bishop Sovereign’s pleas.
Each valued at approximately \$40,000.00.

“He is Risen” The north wall of the Baptistry. Given in memory of
Katie Raychyba. Approx. \$15,000.00.

“Let the Children come unto me” The west wall of the Baptistry. To the
memory of Bishop Sovereign. \$20,000.00.

“Mary and Child” Given by his family in memory of Samm Harris of
High Prairie. Approx. \$30,000.00.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Columbarium. A repository for urns containing ashes from a crematorium. Built by Gordon & Irene Paul.

Retables. The two resting on the Columbarium. The smaller one from the old log church, and the larger one is off the High Altar, removed when the Altar was moved away from the wall.

Cross over Columbarium. Fabricated by Gordon Paul using window trim taken from the old log church started by Bishop Holmes in March of 1910. Much of the inside finish work was done by Sgt. Anderson of the N.W.M.P.

Cross over Entrance. Made of olive wood from the Holy Land.

Organ. Manufactured by the Woodstock Pipe Organ Company.

Aumbry. Also called an "amarium". A cupboard to hold sacred vessels and reserved sacrament.

Processional Cross. Used to lead processions and made of sterling silver.

Bishop's Chairs. Found in the Sanctuary. The chair with the prés-dieu is the one used by Archbishop Clarke. The smaller chair was donated by Bishop Lucas of the Diocese of MacKenzie.

The W. A. Banner. Displayed in the glass case in the Lady Chapel. Due to a change in the status of women in the church, the W.A. was dissolved in 1967, to become the Anglican Church Women. In 1973, Teresa Cambridge, as President, became the first ex-officio member of the Diocesan Synod and the Diocesan Executive Council.

Pews in the Entry. From the old log church.

St, James Cathedral

A gleam in the eye of Bishop Sovereign

In 1934 Bishop Sovereign travelled to England to speak about the work of the Diocese, and to raise funds in order to carry on this work. After one of his talks, he received a phone call from a Mr. Stanley J. Attenborough, a barrister and solicitor in London; advising the Bishop that a widow who had attended one of his talks had come forward wishing to help. On being asked for a specific item, the Bishop replied that a small Cathedral would be welcome!

In June of 1935 Mr. Attenborough visited the area, and on his return to London sent a cable to the Bishop to advise that not only would a Cathedral be built, but also a Parish Hall with a completely furnished kitchen! All of the plans and blueprints were contributed through the benevolence of Messrs. Twizell, Architects, of Vancouver.

On the 3rd of June, 1936 the first sod was turned by Inspector Anderson of the R.C.M.P. (retired), one of the oldest members of the church. Much of the finish work on the interior of the old log church (dedicated in 1911) had been done by then Sgt. Anderson of the NWMP. He became an Inspector, and continued to serve in the RNWMP and then the RCMP. The Bishop laid the cornerstone on the 10th of July, and the Cathedral and Athabasca Hall were consecrated by the Bishop assisted by the church wardens: Dr.F.H.Sutherland and Mr. L.F.S. Watts **on the 14th October, 1936**. Mr. Attenborough was in attendance and made the presentation on behalf of the Anonymous Donor.

The land (5 acres) was given to the "English church" by Pat Wesley, a well known resident Metis. He was buried just behind the Deanery. (And some of the Deans have claimed he is a friendly ghost). He was well liked, and the creek running through the town bears his names. The townspeople referred to it as Pat's Creek, while the homesteaders called it Wesley Creek.