



L'Église Épiscopale / The Anglican Church **Parish Historical Sketch** **Parish of Mansonville**

We may look to history as the story of the past, as a means to understanding our present, or as a basis on which to build for the future. I hope that this short sketch may serve all three purposes.

The history of the Protestant churches in this area has a common beginning. Baptist, Methodist, and Church of England circuit riders were common in this area in the early 1800's. These clergy, travelling by horse, by foot, by boat and, in winter, by sled, provides services of baptism, marriage, burial and general worship on a regular basis. By 1856 an Anglican parish had been formed in Mansonville, utilizing the Baptist Church which stood where the present St-Paul's Church stands now. The first priest of the Parish of Mansonville was the Rev. John Godden.

Names which are still common in the area dot the records of the first fifty years of the parish. Manson, Per-

kins, George, Eldridge, St-Onge, Heath, Peabody and Bailey are among those names and among those who have given their names to areas, roads and our town itself.

In 1902 the old Baptist Church was torn down and the present St-Paul's was built. At the time, the Church Hall was a two-story building, the "downstairs" being a stable for the horses of parishoners. We have many stories of the difficult winter travel faced by bishops, priests and people as they sought to be faithful. In fact, Bishop Bond once took three days to travel from Knowlton to Mansonville for a confirmation, Bolton Pass having been blocked by snow.

It was during the tenure of the Rev. A. E. Rollit that the Church Hall was shortened by one story. Leon Eldridge recalls that one evening, while he and Hazel were assisting the Rev. Rollit in overseeing a dance at the Hall,

he went outside for a few minutes. While outside he noticed that the building was swaying dangerously, and the oil lights were themselves dancing on their hangers. He immediately told Rev. Rollit, and they evacuated the building. (Oil lamps were being used because the electricity had been cut-off by the floods. This was 1927.) Accordingly, the building was lowered and rested on its foundation of cement blocks until this summer, 1982, when a new more secure foundation was built.

In 1924 the congregations at South Bolton and Bolton Centre were added and, later, the congregation of Glen Sutton, so that the Anglican Parish of Mansonville moved into the war years with four churches and four congregations. Well-remembered and well-loved, the Rev. J.E. King (Rector 1931-1946) and the Rev. Macklin (Rector 1946-1958) saw the parish through difficult and triumphant times. Then, as, now, the Parish of Mansonville was considered a Mission Parish, not quite able to be totally self-supporting and needing some help from the Diocese of Montreal.

With the departure of the Rev. Bob Albiston in 1967, the Parish of Mansonville was dissolved, Glen Sutton being attached to Sutton and Mansonville and the Boltons held in temporary limbo. In 1971 the Rev. Ian

Dodd became Rector of the Parish of Knowlton-Mansonville, with responsibility for six churches, including Mansonville and the churches in South Bolton and Bolton Centre. The Rev. J. David Stanway succeeded the Rev. Dodd, and, in 1979, the Rev. George Campbell arrived as Bishop's Missionary to the Parish of Knowlton-Mansonville. With the Rev. Stanway's departure from Knowlton in 1981, the parishes were restructured again. January 1, 1982, saw the new Parish of Mansonville, consisting of St. Paul's, Mansonville, Holy Trinity, South Bolton, and St. Patrick's, Bolton Centre, under the direction of the Rev. Campbell as Priest-in-Charge.

We remain what in one sense we always were, a small country parish dependent on the Diocese for aid and support. However, in a day when bigger is generally seen to be better, the Parish of Mansonville stands as a reminder that a loving witness to God has little to do with numbers. In a time when the world seems to be on the brink of more and greater wars, the Parish of Mansonville stands as a witness to the value of neighbor love and mutual cooperation. And in a world that tries to forget God, the Parish of Mansonville and their sister churches in this community stand as a beacon to the eternal and unforgettable love of Christ.