

St. Stephen-On-The-Mount: Mountain Church Has a Long History

The St. Stephen-On-The-Mount Anglican Church located at 625 Concession Street, just west of Juravinski Hospital, can trace its origins to 1903. Its newly formed congregation held their first service in the Summers Theatre on the Mountain brow at the head of the Wentworth Street Incline. Two years later they moved to Mount Hamilton's community centre, the Union Mission Hall which stood opposite the present Concession Street Library. As the church expanded, there have been many memorable events, but the congregation plans to celebrate the centennial of the arrival of Reverend John Samuel in 1914. This began a ministry that lasted 45 years at the church until his death in 1959. With his arrival, the church became a self-supporting parish and in honour of that church milestone, the congregation will hold a Celebration Service at the church on Sunday, November 2, 2014.

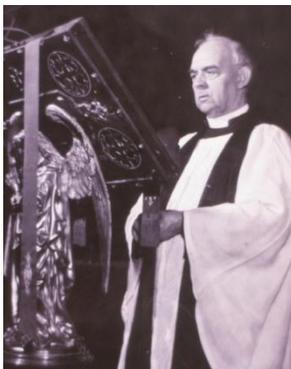
John Samuel was born in Wales in 1888. One of thirteen children he was forced to work in a coal mine at the age of twelve, but he continued to study at night. Very gifted in music, he became a church organist at the age of fourteen and mesmerized everyone with his wonderful singing voice. At seventeen, he saved five colleagues injured in a mining accident. With his survival, he decided to dedicate his life to the ministry in the Church of England and sailed to Canada. With his arrival at St. Stephen's he oversaw the development of one of the largest Anglican churches on the mountain and became the longest serving priest in any single congregation in Canada. He lived to see the building of a beautiful stone church and impressive, theatre-like church hall. Very active in the community, he rose to become Vice President of the Big Brothers of America.



In 1907 an unused wooden church in Strabane was disassembled and re-located to the corner of Concession St. and Viewpoint Ave. (as shown here) to become St. Stephen-on-the-Mount Church. It was later clad in brick and a belfry added. (Photo Courtesy Church Archives)



This 1997 view shows the new church built in 1958 on the site of the original church. The original altar was incorporated in the new building. The church hall, shown in the background was built in 1927 and became a centre for plays, dinners and musical entertainment on the mountain. It was replaced in 1998. A memorial bell tower in the centre of the photo, partially hidden by a tree, was erected in memory of Canon Samuel when he died of a heart attack at Henderson Hospital in 1959 at the age of 68. (Photo by R. Williamson)



Canon Samuel had 37 calls to other parishes but managed to spend his entire career at St. Stephen's, 1914-1959. (Photo Courtesy Church Archives)

Mountain Memories is written monthly by Robert Williamson for HMHS. See the Society's website (hamiltonheritage.ca) for more information.

(October 2014)