

YORK MILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Pages 152-3 Pioneering in North York; a history of the borough by Patricia W. Hart, published by General Publishing Company Limited for the North York Historical Society in co-operation with the Borough of North York, 1968.

"Very little is known about the first York Mills Presbyterian Church, but it is certain that James Hogg was instrumental in its construction. William Marsh, who lived near St. John's Church, mentions in a letter to relatives in England on February 10, 1836, that he can see from his property "to the south in a valley a large Millpond... an object of admiration – there is now also a handsome Presbyterian Church building – new in addition to an Epescapealian (sic) and Baptist Church already built within ten minutes (sic) walk of our house." This church stood under the hill near Ivor Road and Rev. Thomas Wightman, who came out from Scotland in 1842, was minister at both York Mills and Fisherville from 1850 to 1856. His daughter, Sarah, became the wife of William Hogg in 1855.

Because the Church was located on a site without title, in 1859 Andrew McGlashan II, the tanner, gave two acres of land to the Church trustees. The old building north of Ivor Road was torn down and rebuilt with the same lumber on the west side of Yonge, on a plateau half way up the hill across from the Hogg store and hotel. It was a most commodious and substantial building and was opened for public worship on August 23, 1859. As there was no organ in the church, Willy Miller, the precentor, used a tuning fork to begin each hymn. The congregation was made up of many families from Don Mills who drove here to church each Sunday. They left their horses and wagons or buggies in the York Mills Hotel driving sheds and walked up a winding path to the church and cemetery. Another path gave access from Wilson Avenue on top of the hill. In 1854 Andrew McGlashan III bought a house and property on Yonge Street, north of York Mills Road, and it is believed that this building became the manse, or minister's house. Today it is an

historic site, marking the home of the late C. W. Jefferys, the outstanding Canadian historical artist.

As the years passed the church members from Don Mills wanted a church in their own area, and in 1885 they decided to buy the Bethesda Primitive Methodist Church on the corner of Lawrence and Leslie. The members remaining on Yonge decided to join a congregation in Toronto and were given permission to dispose of the church in 1885. Subsequently most of the graves were removed from the cemetery. It was 1950 before another Presbyterian congregation established a church on Wilson Avenue at Saunders Street, known as Armour Heights Presbyterian Church."

In 1927 the members of the McGlashan family, who had been interred there were removed to the Mausoleum on Yonge Street, just north of Highway 401. The cemetery was vandalized over the years and it is rumoured that some of the headstones were used in walkways in the yards of local residences.

In 1955 while Yonge Street was being widened, a number of skeletons were discovered. Construction of new houses on Eastview Crescent had to be delayed for a year until the cemetery was officially closed by the Government of Ontario. Twenty-five graves were found and identified; seventeen of were claimed by decendants and re-interred. The remaining eight, included two members of the Hogg family, were buried in a common grave in York Cemetery.

The land where the church stood remained the property of the Presbyterian Church until 1958, when it was sold to a developer.

The plaque is going to be placed on Yonge Street – stating that the church stood on the embankment above.

Additional material supplied by Glenn Bonnetta, Director of Archives and Robert McQuillan, member.