

A Brief History of St Simon-the-Apostle Anglican Church

Early History

St. Simon's church was started in 1884 as a mission of St James Cathedral by The Rev'd Canon DuMoulin, to serve Church of England people in the North-east part of the City. For four years a small group of parishioners worshipped at the funerary chapel of St James-the-Less in St James Cemetery. An early watercolour of St James-the-Less can be seen today in the church.



St James-the-Less

The First Rector

In 1887 The Rev'd T.C. Street-Macklem, the curate of All Saints' church, was appointed the first rector of St Simon-the-Apostle Parish, - the boundaries being established as the Don River, Wellesley Street, Sherbourne Street and "the northern limit

of the City of Toronto”. Eventually the northern boundary was established at Glen Road, as Rosedale was developed and the city spread north of the Rosedale Ravine.

Present-day St James Town formed the original parish.

A charming Arts-and-Crafts style half-timbered Elizabethan chapel, — originally designed as a Sunday School, was soon erected at the head of Ontario Street, set on a lot 150 feet wide x 600 feet deep, extending down into the Rosedale Ravine. St Simon-the-Apostle Church opened for services on March 18th, 1888.



CHURCH OF ST. SIMON, ROSEDALE, TORONTO.
STRICKLAND & SYMONS, ARCHITECTS, TORONTO.

The line drawing above, from “The Canadian Architect and Builder” Volume 1 (1888), illustrates the original chapel as designed by the firm of Strickland & Symons, Architects. The drawing is signed “Eden Smith, del”, who apprenticed as a draftsman at the firm from 1888 to 1892. The official designer of St. Simon’s was the English-trained architect

William L. Symons who, according to Angela Carr, author of “Toronto Architect Edmund Burke: redefining Canadian architecture”, instilled a genuine Elizabethan flavour to the composition. A charming watercolour of the chapel, signed “Eden Smith 1899”, is held by St Simon’s Church.



St Simon-the-Apostle

The nave walls were constructed on a Credit Valley reddish-brown sandstone foundation, and carefully described by John Ross Robertson as being “with red brick walls to the window sills, and then ornamental rubble and timber work to the roof, the whole intermingling arrangement being very ornate and tasty. The long line of the nave is broken by a fine gable at the west end, surmounted with a cross. Underneath this is a

beautiful cloistered entrance, and near it, on the southern side of the church, a graceful porch; the gables of the baptistry at the [west] end give the building a novel but effective finish. Clerestory windows pierce the chancel walls, the roof of which has been raised for the purpose; while above the organ chamber gable a little bell-turret is erected in harmony with the chimneys and ventilating shaft. The fine quality and finish of the wood, stone rubble and brick work taken with the graceful harmony in colour of the terra cotta tile give the church an unusual but artistic and even picturesque appearance." The sanctuary was described as "being enriched with a ribbed elliptical bronzed ceiling and ornate friezes". The east window was described as "a handsome window with a central cross of ancient cathedral glass; above the altar it is diapered in richly coloured bronzes." The carved wood pulpit and brass lectern, as described are still found at St. Simon's in their original positions. The chancel was illuminated with four seven-branched gas standards, which along with the English-manufacture brass lectern, were presented by the rector to the congregation. Robertson describes the "sweet-toned bell, weighing 1794 pounds, [which] swings in the petite turret and sends out its glad notes out over the ravine so becomingly beautified by this handsome church." The turret (and original bell) is still used, but hidden above the later south extension roof and just visible from Howard Street. Only the chancel, sacristy, organ loft and belfry of the original chapel exist today in their original form as part of the present church.

Communion was celebrated twice on Sunday, with choral Litany at 4:15pm and evensong at 7pm, all the services being "very largely attended". The "inexperienced" surpliced choir of 30 voices was accompanied by a reed-organ Vocalion played by Mr.

Ernest Wood; the choirmaster being Mr. J.W.F. Harrison, and thus the first music director of St. Simon's.

The Rebuilding

At the Easter vestry meeting of 1892 the decision was taken to reconstruct the church. The original plan was to use the chapel for ten years then, after the debt was paid off, erect a permanent stone church in front of the chapel and convert the chapel to Sunday school purposes. It was decided however, that the church nave was to be rebuilt to double its capacity: the nave was extended westward; and the north and south walls were taken down, to be replaced with cast iron columns and new elegantly-vaulted transepts beyond. The changes were described by Robertson as “pleasing, dignified and churchly.” Only the chancel and vestries remained intact. By October 1892 the church was finished and services recommenced, the congregation having worshipped back again at St. James-the-Less for the summer. As part of the new works, a new pipe organ was installed, noted as “being very sweet-toned, although the addition of a third manual is needed to render it as powerful as it ought to be for the size of the church.” The original specification for the organ was as follows:

- Organ - Violin diapason, stopped diapason, gamba, traverse flute, flautina, oboe, cornopeon
- Great - Open diapason, doppel flute, dulciana, gamba, principal, twelfth, fifteenth
- Pedals - Double open and Bourdon

Couplers - Octave coupler-to-swell, swell-to-great, great-to-pedal,
swell-to-pedal, two combination pedals and tremulant

Electricity was used for lighting and ventilation, as well as for a small electric motor for the organ blower. This innovation was probably bought about at the behest of Capt. H.W. Pellatt, who founded the Electrical Development Company of Ontario in 1903 and was Churchwarden at St Simon's between 1893 and 1896.

The choir under the direction of Mr. Harrison soon formed "the very front rank of church choirs in Toronto" a tradition that has carried on to this day. The parish prospered and by 1896 the number of parishioners was by today's standards, huge: on Easter Day of that year 2,199 persons received communion at St. Simons.

The Second Rector

The Rev'd Professor Edward Caley was appointed Second Rector of St Simon's church in 1900. That year the Choirboys of Westminster Abby visited St Simon's on a tour. The growing congregation required even more space and in 1901 the Wardens purchased the adjacent property through to Glen Road. In 1906 Eden Smith, now an independent practitioner, was commissioned by the Churchwardens to design a Parish Hall. The building was connected at the northwest corner of the nave through a small windowed passage and meeting room. The simple but gracious clerestory Hall also provided a mezzanine Choir practice studio at the west end for the growing Choir, and a basement gymnasium. A Sunday school chapel (now converted to the main kitchen) was provided at the northeast corner of the Parish Hall. Smith also designed a large

Rectory, originally located to the north of the church just west of Edgedale Road, before Bloor Street existed. Bloor Street east of Sherbourne Street was created in 1918 to connect to The Danforth via The Prince Edward Viaduct, and because of the resulting noise and electric streetcar traffic, the decision was taken in 1922 to move the rectory. The building, according to the Rector's daughter, later Mrs Osler, was moved on rollers, and slowly towed by horses across the tennis courts to its present location at 9 Glen Road. The Rector reportedly remained in the house during most of the move.

In 1911 the organ was replaced once again (at a cost of \$6,500) and was described as "a beautiful instrument quite suitable for a larger edifice." In 1914 the church was redecorated. Ornate Arts-and-Crafts style decoration, heavily influenced by the work of Walter Crane, and possibly executed by the firm of PC Browne & Co., was applied to the plastered upper east-end sanctuary wall and the choir and chancel arches. A frieze, decorated with escutcheons illustrating the four Old Testament prophets and the four New Testament Apostles, was applied to the three walls of the sanctuary. It is believed that the Geometric decoration was added to the choir ceiling at this time. A new electric lighting system was installed in the church.

Mr J.W.F. Harrison, who had been organist and Choirmaster for twenty-eight years, ever since the opening of the church, resigned and Mr George Crawford was appointed in his place.

During the Great War, over one hundred and eighty men from St Simon's enlisted in the armed services, with the loss of thirty-eight lives. The Assistant, The Rev'd E.G. Burges-Bowne was given leave of absence to serve as chaplain of the 166th Battalion.

In 1921 the Rector died after a short illness.

The Third Rector

The Rev'd F.H. Brewin, was in 1921 appointed the third Rector of St Simon's. During this period community outreach in the parish became a priority, and through an endowment by Sir Edmund Osler, a social worker was added to the staff of the church, to help care for the less fortunate. During the Great Depression a Men's Club, a Nursery School, summer camps for women and children, and a daily Vacation Bible School were run for the less privileged in St James Town. In 1922 The Parish Bulletin was started.

In 1923 the beautiful carved oak Chancel Rood Screen, designed by [Edmund Burke?] architect Eustice Bird, partner of Eden Smith from 1894 through 1909, was donated in memory of Susan Isabelle Lockhart by her children. A Reredos, consisting of oak panels decorated with winged angel heads, was erected in 1920 in memory of the men of St Simon's who lost their lives in the Great War. The Last Supper carvings, set above the retable within an ornately-decorated screen, were executed by the local firm of Lionel Rawlinson Limited, and presented by William G. Parsons in memory of his mother Alice E. Parsons [d.1914]. A bronze plaque containing the names of the War Dead was erected at the west end of the nave and unveiled by Governor General Lord Byng in 1925. Above the plaque is a wooden cross that originally stood over the grave in France of Trumbull Warren, and was brought to Canada by his mother.

Between the Wars

In 1928, the Choirmaster, Mr George Crawford, resigned and was replaced by Mr J Davidson Ketchum, who raised the standard of music in the church to new heights. The choir was regularly called upon to sing at public events such as the annual Armistice Service in Massey Hall. Hymn-singing instruction was provided for the congregation after the evening services, and the level of competence of the choir was raised such that St Simon's was known throughout Toronto for its excellence. At this time a Carol Service was instituted.

Three years later Mr. Ketchum was obliged to resign and was succeeded by Mr. Eric Lewis, a student of Dr Healy Willan, who for the next 34 years maintained an extremely high standard of excellence in the men and boys choir. The Annual Carol Service was held for the next thirty years in the Eaton Auditorium (now the Carlu), complete with period costumes and scenery, and always to a packed house. Around this time the west-end organ case, mounted high on the west wall, was taken down by Casavant and rebuilt as the pedal stop case which now projects out from the south-side transept arch. The facing pipes were gold-bronzed. Evening Services were regularly broadcast during 1936 over the radio. The choir regularly won top honours at the national Kiwanis Music Competition.

At this time the innovation of Altar Lights were first used at the Service of Holy Communion, — until this time no candles had been used on the Altar.

The debt of the church was retired in 1938 and a Service of Consecration took place Sunday evening October 30, with the primate The Most Rev'd Derwyn T. Owen officiating before a congregation of 550 parishioners.

The Second World War broke out in 1939 and again many men and women of St Simon's enlisted in the armed services. By 1941 seventy-seven men had enlisted, fourteen never to return. In 1941 Mr. Brewin resigned as Rector due to poor health.

The Fourth Rector

Mr. Brewin was replaced that autumn by The Venerable C.A. Moulton, Archdeacon of Simcoe, who subsequently served at St Simon's until 1958. After nearby St Augustine's Church was destroyed by fire, the Rector had invited the congregation to make St Simon's their spiritual home until they could rebuild. In 1942 the processional cross was presented in gratitude by St Augustine's Church to St Simon's.

The Thanksgiving Appeal of 1946 resulted in raising over \$60,000 towards the building of the Memorial Chapel and Vestry. Designed by the prominent firm of Marani, Rounthwaite and Dick Architects as a memorial to the Second World War dead of the Parish, the Chapel was dedicated on November 16, 1952 by The Right Rev'd A.R. Beverly at the Remembrance Day Service. Also at this time alterations were made to the basement of the church (to provide a curate's office) and to the Parish Hall (presumably to convert the Sunday School Chapel into the present day kitchen). Substantial bequests were provided by Mrs Alice Dyson Chamberlain and Miss Harriet Vallack Ellis to complete the new chapel.

The Second World War Memorial Tablet located at the west end of the nave was unveiled October 19, 1947 by His Excellency Viscount Alexander, Governor General of Canada and dedicated by The Right Rev'd G.A. Wells, Assistant Bishop of Toronto.

In 1950 an offer to purchase the Glen Road Rectory was received and accepted by Vestry, and a new rectory was purchased shortly thereafter at 12 Maple Avenue in Rosedale.

In the spring of 1952 a new organ console was installed, with two new stops added and the reeds re-voiced. The console was moved from facing west, to face east on the north side of the choir, and was now set in a pit dropped nineteen inches below floor level. At this time new clergy stalls and choir seating was installed in memory of Mrs Sarah Trumbull Warren, out of whose bequest these improvements were purchased. In 1954-55, \$152,000 was subscribed by St Simon's, with \$45,000 set aside for Church Extension by the Diocese, and the balance used to improve the Parish Hall gymnasium and the basement rooms under the church proper. The original wood floor of the basement was replaced with vinyl asbestos-tiled concrete, and the rooms reformed into two larger spaces as exists today. New lighting was installed in the church and hall.

The Fifth Rector

In 1958 The Rev'd Hugh M. Bedford-Jones was appointed the fifth Rector of St Simon's Church. In 1962 the current organ, incorporating earlier elements, was installed by Casavant Freres in its present configuration of about 2000 pipes. The organ now consisted of four divisions: the Great main component; the Swell contained in a

mechanically operated louvered box enclosure (to moderate the volume); the Choir facing north into the chancel; and the Pedal division facing west (containing the larger and deeper sounding pipes.) In 1966 Mr. Ned Hansen was appointed Choirmaster. In the 1970s the choir travelled to Europe, where they sang at Westminster Abby and Windsor Chapel.

The Sixth Rector

In 1972 The Rev'd Canon David H.M. Crane was appointed sixth Rector of St Simon's Church serving until his retirement in 1988. In 1977 The Rev'd Colin R. Johnson was appointed assistant curate to Mr. Crane.

Sometime between 1966 and 1980 the original chancel and sanctuary wall decorations were painted over in an attempt to improve the light levels for the choir and organist and modernize the interior of the church. At the same time the interior brickwork of the church was varnished, in an attempt to improve the acoustic brightness of the space.

In 1981, the choir was taken over by the eminent composer, organist and musician Dr Derek Holman, who maintained a very high standard of music in the parish and again took the men and boys of the choir on numerous acclaimed visits to English Cathedrals and Westminster Abbey.

In 1977 the buildings were registered under Part 4 of the Ontario Heritage Act as of cultural and historic interest by the City of Toronto. In 1980 the organ console was again rebuilt by Casavant and fully computerized.

Mr. Crane became ill in the late 1980s, and in 1987 The Rev'd Dr W. David Neelands, Dean of Divinity at Trinity College, was appointed Interim Priest-in-charge of the parish, a position he held until Mr. Crane died in January of 1988.

The Seventh Rector

In 1988 The Rev'd Randal W.D. Johnson was appointed the seventh Rector of St. Simon's Church. Mr. Johnson was previously the Rector of St. Jude's Scarborough. He was inducted as Rector on October 30, 1988 by The Rt Rev'd Terence Finlay, Coadjutor Bishop of Toronto. In 1988 the Parish entered into a Provincial heritage easement agreement with the Ontario Heritage Foundation (now Trust) to ensure the preservation of the building as an historic site. At this time a new wood shingle roof was installed over the Church and Parish Hall and the brickwork was repointed. The heritage easement was triggered by the acceptance of a significant grant from the OHF to assist in the re-roofing and brick repair project: completed in 1991 at a cost of over \$400,000.

Mr Johnson's poor health resulted in his early retirement. The Rev'd John K. Saynor who had served as curate with Mr Johnson, left the parish upon his ordination. The Bishop to appoint The Rev'd Frederick Etherden as Interim Priest-in-charge of the Parish.

Around 1995 the parishioners of St Simon's founded the first Out-of-the-Cold programme for the homeless in Toronto. Originally staffed for one night per week by volunteer members of the parish, the facility unfortunately proved to be needed on a full-week year-round basis.

The Eighth Rector

In 1997, The Rev'd Robert C. Clubbe was appointed the Eighth Rector of St Simon's Church and The Rev'd Barry Brown was appointed Honorary Assistant. Ms. Andrea Budgey served as Lay Pastor. The Most Rev'd Edward (Ted) Scott, former Primate of Canada also served as an Honorary Assistant at St Simons, until his death in 2005.

During Mr. Clubbe's tenure a Board of Directors was appointed to direct a newly-formed independent St Simon's Shelter Corporation, which today is funded by the City of Toronto and offers year-round transitional accommodation for men in what was the parish gymnasium. The shelter is today highly regarded for its management under the leadership of Mr. Bob Duff, the high standard of accommodation provided to its guests, existing discretely with its own entrance off the west-side of the Parish Hall.

In 1998 Mr John Stephenson took over the helm of the choir and was succeeded shortly thereafter in 2000 by Mr Thomas Bell. Mr. Bell let in 2006. Mr Maurice White, the long-time music director and organist of St John York Mills, returned from retirement as interim organist during this period of change. The choir was transitioned by Mr. White into a mixed choir of adult volunteers and paid leads, as it became increasingly difficult to find families with boys interested in choral singing.

In 2000 a project was undertaken to improve the general accessibility and core infrastructure of the now aging facility. The parish raised significant funds to construct an addition between and to the north of the original buildings that would contain up-to-date service facilities, including an elevator, washrooms and much needed narthex and cloakroom facilities to accommodate the large community events and concerts that

regularly occurred at St Simon's. Improvements were made to the Out-of-the-Cold facility washrooms and services at this time. A spired tower and entrance portico was erected to mark what had been the unadorned rear of the complex as a now prominent church facing Bloor Street. The new porch acted as an accessible link between the 1953 chapel and new narthex, and thus formed a quiet cloister-like basement level courtyard.

Designed by architect Mr Spencer Higgins in a modern manner sympathetic to the adjacent Arts-and-Crafts church and hall, the addition was completed in 2004.

In 2006 Mr. Clubbe became seriously ill and took a leave-of-absence. The Rev'd Frederick Etherden once again returned to St Simon's as Interim Priest-in-Charge. Mr. Etherden was eventually succeeded by The Most Rev'd Michael Peers, former Primate of Canada, as Interim Priest-in-Charge. The Rt Rev'd Patrick Yu then acted as Interim Priest-in-Charge until the arrival of the new rector.

The Ninth Rector

The Rev'd Canon Dr David Barker was appointed the Ninth Rector of St Simon's in February of 2007. He continued his predecessors strong commitment to preaching, the importance of the teaching of the Gospels, and how they influence and guide society today. The Very Rev'd John VanNostrand Wright assisted Dr Barker in his early days at the parish. Mr. VanNostrand was executive director of the Anglican Foundation and former Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria before his retirement in 2005. Dr Barker was assisted by The Rev'd Andrea Budgey, Chaplain to Trinity College, who acted as an Honorary Assistant at St Simon's. Dr Barker retired in 2012.

In 2007 Mr Kirkland Adsett was retained as Music Director. Shortly thereafter a unique parish outreach project entitled Reaching-Out-Through-Music was started by Mr Adsett, loosely-modeled upon the highly successful Children's Orchestra of San Caetano Brazil founded by Mozart Vieira. The programmes chief mandate was to offer private instruction to inner-city children who cannot otherwise obtain music lessons for financial reasons. ROTM, as it is presently known, has since been placed under the control of an independent board of directors and has obtained charitable status to enable it to function independently of the parish and thus carry out its own fundraising events in the greater community. Mr Kirkland resigned in 2010.

In 2008 the wall decorations of the south wall of the sanctuary were restored by church decorator Andrew Kwiechinski as the first phase of an ambitious project to restore all the missing decoration in the chancel. Mr Kwiecinski was earlier responsible for the execution of the restored wall paintings of The Church of the Holy Trinity in Toronto in 1984.

Mr Robin Davis was appointed Music Director and Organist of St Simon's in 2010 and the current adult mixed choir presents a varied repertoire in the English choral tradition at all main services. Mr Maurice White, the associate organist, generously continues to provide his considerable playing skills and long-established teaching experience to the choir and parishioners.

The Tenth Rector

The Reverend Rylan Montgomery was appointed the Tenth Rector of St Simon's in March of 2013. After completing theological studies at Knox College, U of T, he began his ministry in the Presbyterian Church as Senior Minister (Incumbent) at St Andrew's Presbyterian (Brighton, ON) and Old St Andrew's Presbyterian (Colborne, ON) from 2003 to 2007. Having then decided to join the Anglican Church, he returned to Trinity College for a year before his ordination as deacon in May 2008. From May 2008 to May 2009 he was Curate at St James Cathedral. He was ordained priest in February 2009.

Current Day

The Anglican parish church of St Simon-the-Apostle stands today as a centre of community life, social outreach and excellence in traditional Anglican church music and liturgy. The parish is liturgically broad in nature and continues a strong social justice lineage. All are welcome at St Simon's Church. Services are a blend of traditional Book of Common Prayer morning prayer and choral holy communion, with alternate contemporary liturgy choral communion. A quiet said Book of Common Prayer service with sermon is held every Sunday at the early service in the Chapel. The tradition of choral evensong and carol services is carried on at various times throughout the liturgical year.

The Parish of San Lorenzo currently utilizes the facilities of St. Simon's Church Sunday afternoons to provide services in the English language for members of the

Phillipino Anglican community in Toronto. Numerous other groups including the community-based afternoon St James Town After School Homework Programme (jointly funded by St Simon's, Rosedale Presbyterian Church, St Andrew's United Church, and City Hope), Reaching Out Through Music and Gerrard Resource Centre a municipally-funded Drop-in centre for parents, caregivers and children, fully utilize the basement facilities. Currently a yoga group, AA and OEA occupy the meeting rooms on a regular basis. Wedding receptions, private parties, municipal community events and the provision of staging facilities for local movie shoots fill out the schedule in the Parish Hall.

Sources

The early history of St. Simon's Church was recorded in "Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto" Fourth Series, 1904, from which information for much of this early history is taken. The text is available on line

[<http://www.archive.org/stream/landmarkstoronto04robeuoft#>](http://www.archive.org/stream/landmarkstoronto04robeuoft#)

Information on the history of the parish up to 1957 has been taken from the parish history pamphlet "Church of St. Simon-the-Apostle 1883 - 1957" compiled by Grace Evans, which in turn was compiled from (a) History of the Church from its beginning to the year 1922 (compiled by W. E. Strickland); (b) Weekly Bulletins 1922 - 1957, and (c) A comprehensive History of St. Simon's for 60 Years (written by Amy Jacob).

The post 1958 information is taken from parish newsletters, information on the internet and conversations with parishioners.