

Press Release

BOOK LAUNCH

'On the Shoulders of Giants' – A History of the Anglican Church established by New England Planters in Kings County, Nova Scotia

The Anglican Parish of Cornwallis, located in Eastern Kings County, Nova Scotia, celebrates two milestones in 2010:

- the 250th anniversary of the founding of the Parish by New England Planters in 1760; and
- The 200th anniversary of the parish church, St. John's Cornwallis, Church Street in Port Williams.

To mark these events, a comprehensive history has been written about the Parish and its two St. John's Churches (the first built at Fox Hill in 1770; and the present building erected between 1804-1810). The new book will be launched at a special event to which you are invited:

Saturday, 19 June 2010, @1pm, Parish Hall, 1105 Church Street (Corner of Church St and Hwy 358 in Port Williams. Take Exit 11 from Hwy 101 and follow Hwy 358 north through Port Williams to Church St.)

On the Shoulders of Giants tells the little known story of the Parish of Cornwallis established by a small number of New England Planters and their leader, **Major Samuel Starr**, in Cornwallis Township in 1760 — 250 years ago.

It also contains extensive and newly-discovered information which highlight the historical significance of the Cornwallis Anglican Church in Kings County:

- Both St. John's Cornwallis and the Parish of Cornwallis played a pre-eminent role from 1760 on in the establishment of a strong Anglican presence in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia. This occurred when Major Starr and his Planters were joined by a number of ***prominent men from St. Paul's in Halifax*** who took up grants in Cornwallis Township from 1760 onwards. These two groups joined together, and with the help of missionaries from the *Society for the Propagation of the Faith* in England, created the first firm foundation for Anglican worship in Kings County.
- ***Major Samuel Starr***, his brother ***David Starr***, ***Colonel John Burbidge***, ***William Best*** and ***Benjamin Belcher*** were the giants who planted Anglicanism in Cornwallis Township and Kings County. Their stories and the endeavours of those who succeeded them are told in ***On the Shoulders of Giants***.

Volume I covers the years 1760-1900 and recounts the tales of members of the Parish, and their descendants who made their mark in the world beyond Kings County:

- Members of the ***Starr family*** who were active in the life of St. John's Cornwallis until the 1990s;
- ***Abraham Gesner***, whose discovery of Kerosene provided the foundation for today's global petroleum industry;
- ***Dr. Charles Best***, co-discoverer of Insulin, who was a descendent of William Best;
- the ***Hon. Charles Ramage Prescott***, the renowned horticulturist who was the father of the apple industry in the Annapolis Valley, and built Prescott House, now a provincial museum in Starrs Point.
- the ***Allison family*** who arrived in Cornwallis because of a set of sterling silver spoons, built Willowbank Farm, and sired a descendent who founded Mount Allison University;
- ***John Donaldson***, a 'model farmer' whose abilities and acumen led to innovations in the way that agriculture was practiced in Nova Scotia.

Volume II covers the First and Second World Wars, and the years which followed up to 2010.

- It begins with the stories of **Private George Price**, the last Allied soldier to be killed in World War I; and **Mary Clerk Peake**, the first woman in Canada's armed forces to be killed in World War II. Both were active members of St. John's Cornwallis.
- It also recounts the history of **Sir Ronald Storrs**, the first non-Arab governor of Jerusalem, and his sister, **Monica Storrs** an Anglican missionary in the Peace River District of British Columbia, who visited St. John's Cornwallis in 1934 to present a bible in memory of their grandfather, the **Reverend John Storrs**, Rector of Cornwallis 1843-1876; and their father, the **Reverend John Storrs II**, the Dean of Rochester Cathedral, England, who presided and preached at the 100th Anniversary service held at St. John's Cornwallis in September 1910.

The book contains new information which underscores the historical significance of the Parish of Cornwallis and St. John's Cornwallis within Nova Scotia:

- The Parish of Cornwallis was established by Royal Mandate of King George III, prior to the arrival of a Bishop or creation of an Anglican Diocese in Nova Scotia.
- St. John's Cornwallis is one of the oldest, continuously operating Anglican Churches in Nova Scotia. The first St. John's was a small building erected in 1770 at Fox Hill, next to Fox Hill Cemetery in Starrs Point. It was built by Col. Burbidge and William Best at their own expense on land donated by Col. Burbidge. This building is still in use in 2010 as a summer house on the property of Hugh and Pam Nickerson just west of the Parish Hall on Church Street where it was moved in 1814.
- The second (and present) St. John's Church was begun in 1804 (the same year as the Covenanter's Church in Grande Pré) and held its first divine worship on Christmas Day 1810.
- St. John's Cornwallis was the Mother Church of Anglican churches in Canning, Kingsport, Wolfville, Kentville, Hantsport, Berwick, Aylesford, Kingston, Auburn, Wilmot and Middleton. The first SPG missionaries at St. John's also ministered to Anglicans in Colchester and Pictou Counties.

- St. John's is essentially unchanged since its erection 1804-1810, except for an extension to the sanctuary and the addition of choir stalls and a vestry in 1869, and the installation of stained glass windows in the early-to-mid 1900s. The Church has been well maintained for the last 200 years, is in good condition, and has suffered none of the major calamities experienced by some of its contemporaries amongst the old churches of Nova Scotia.
- There is much information on the historic and architectural importance of St. John's Cornwallis in the Provincial Archives and publications of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia.

Today, under the direction of the Rector, the Reverend David C. Garrett, St. John's Cornwallis is thriving, with a large Sunday School and a committed, growing congregation. St. John's has a long and storied tradition of ministry in the community and beyond — an achievement it aspires to continue and build on as it starts its tercentennial era.

Each set of two books is \$25 plus taxes, shipping and handling where applicable. For additional information regarding the launch of the book or to order books please email 2010book@parishofcornwallis.ca.