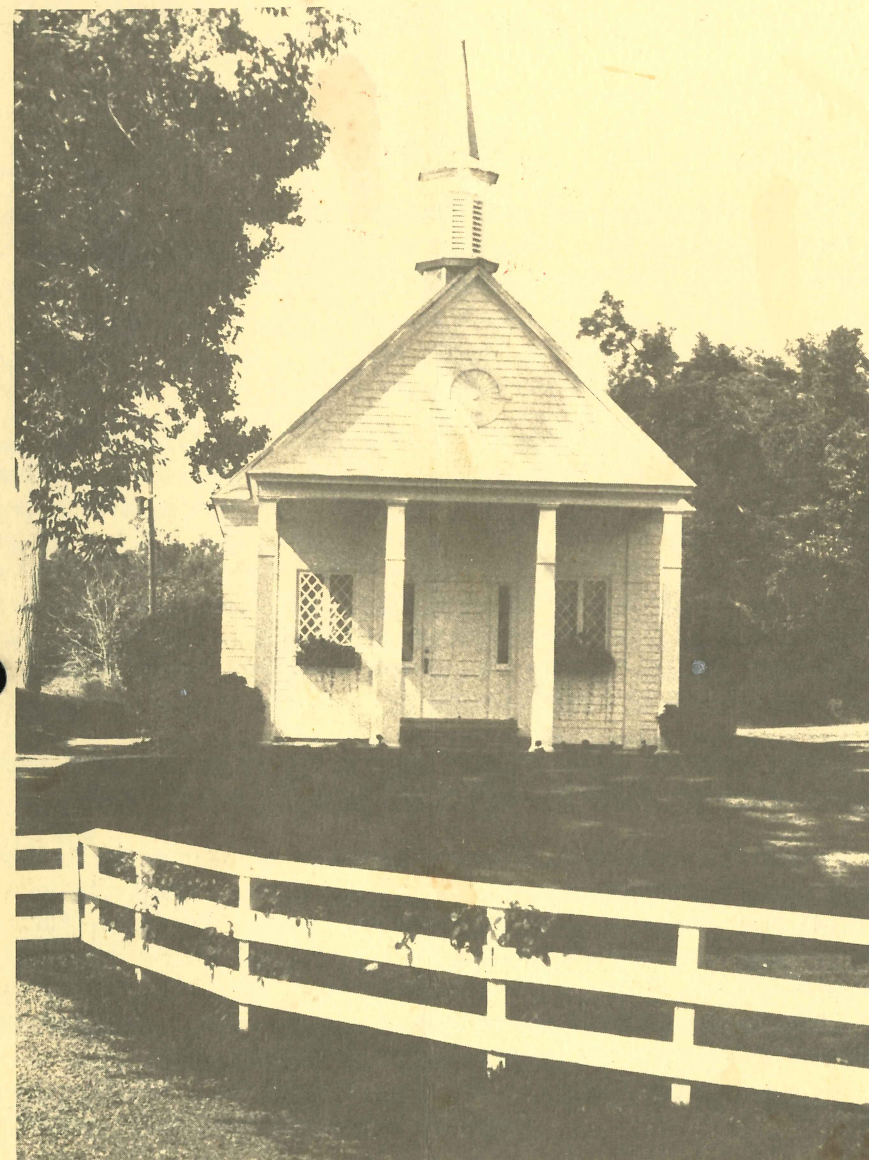


# THE HOLLOWAY MEMORIAL CHAPEL

by

Austin M. Fox



JANE REED COLE

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## Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to all the men and women who have served in the past and present on the Board of Trustees and whose loyalty and affection for the Chapel have assured its continuance.

## Preface

In compiling this new little history of the Holloway Memorial Chapel, I have with some reluctance excluded the names of a number of Point Abino, Abino Hills, and Bay Beach families who have supported and served the Chapel in various capacities in the past. The English historian, Thomas Carlyle, once said that history is the essence of innumerable biographies. In a sense, the history of the Chapel is the essence of many biographies too. Unfortunately, there is not room to include many names in this short history, but they are of course preserved in Chapel records, rolls, and minutes of trustees' meetings.

I have included some material on the history of the Point itself because the story of the Holloway Chapel is really part of that history.

I would like to thank the following Canadians and Americans for their time, their information, and their interest: William C. Baird, Charles K. Bassett, Ruth Ellsworth, Florence Foreman, Elsa Kreiner, Earl N. Plato, Dr. Herman Sass (Librarian of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society), the Rev. Robert S. Sweeney (especially), Jean Tripp, and various descendants of the Holloway and Stafford families, particularly Constance Stafford Constantine and the late Walter F. Stafford.

June 1979

A.M.F.

The Holloway Memorial Chapel was built in 1894 in memory of Isaac Holloway and his wife, Mary Ann. It was given by their daughter, Harriet Holloway Stafford, on land owned by Allan Holloway. The original site was near the gas well, close to the present Point Abino gate.

In the 1930's the Chapel was moved to its present location, and the land deeded to the church by Allan Holloway. With the advent of electricity in the area, William Stafford gave an electric organ in memory of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James B. Stafford. Thus ended the era of the old hand-pumped organ, manned by robust young sons of church families.

In 1951 William C. Baird bought 70 additional feet of frontage for the Chapel to increase the size of the church lot to 120 feet, so that the Chapel could have a more spacious and pleasant setting, with parking in the rear.

At the same time Mr. Baird donated funds for the remodeling of the Chapel. The country vernacular, carpenter Gothic design gave way to a more formal eighteenth century New England village church style. The porch, with its entrance on the south side of the facade, was supplanted by a classical portico with a center entrance, and the barn-style cupola was replaced by a slender Christopher Wren-style steeple. Inside, the chancel was redesigned to include a communion rail, pulpit, "cathedral" chairs, lectern, and new light fixtures. Off the south side of the entrance a "bride's room" was added, and on the opposite side a minister's robing room, with modern lavatory facilities.

In accordance with the original wishes of the donors, the Chapel remains inter-denominational. It invites both Canadian and American religious men of various faiths to conduct Sunday services, traditionally held at 5:00 Sunday afternoon, to accommodate the pastors who often had to hold services in their own churches on Sunday mornings before coming over to the Point. Beginning in the summer of 1978, in deference to a poll of the congregation, the service was shifted to 10:00 Sunday morning.

In the early years of the century, before the Erie Road was built, church-bound families would row or paddle across the bay to the Holloway Chapel. Charles K. Bassett tells of his father, George B. Bassett, rowing the family in a 16-foot rowboat from their summer home on Bay Beach to the shore near the Chapel. And in her children's book *Trudy and the Tree House* (Macmillan, 1955), Elizabeth Coatsworth gives a fictionalized version of her own nautical excursions to Chapel during her girlhood summers in her family cottage at Bay Beach.

On fine Sunday mornings the Davises always paddled to the little church at Point Abino in the war canoe. Mummy took the bow and Daddy the stern and the little girls knelt two by two in the space between wielding light paddles - except for Ann, who paddled by herself just behind Mummy. It was Mummy, of course, as bow paddler who set the rhythm. The Family had practiced enough so that all the paddles, dipping and flashing in the sun, struck the water at once, with a pretty gurgling sound, and the big canoe moved steadily across the mile of bay between their dock and the Point, where the church stood. There were always other boats on their way to service too, with sails white against the water, or with motors chugging, as well as two or three other canoes, smaller, of course, for smaller families.

\* \* \*

They were a little late and went right in. The doors stood open and the sunlight fell across the aisle; and the flies and bees came in and out on their various errands, perhaps deceived by all the bright-colored clothes.

The Holloway Chapel has frequently been the scene of summer weddings of sons and daughters of Canadian shore families and of the christenings of their infants. The lovely setting and charming atmosphere of the Chapel provide a simple but beautiful background for these church ceremonies.

The Chapel is administered by a Board of Trustees, who over the years have sponsored various benefits to raise money for maintaining the Chapel. One of the most successful has been the Strawberry Festival, held every other year on the rear lawn of the lovely home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Rich, a particularly appropriate site, since their home was the original residence of Isaac Holloway, built probably about 1880.

In 1874 Isaac Holloway and his partner, Chandler J. Wells, had bought all of Point Abino. A paving contractor before the days of cement and asphalt, Holloway regarded the Point as a marvelous source of sand, which in those days was used as a base for stone streets and slab sidewalks. Holloway and Chandler built a dock on the east side on the Point, near Bragg's landing, for shipping sand to Buffalo. They also built a horse-drawn railway to haul sand from the west shore to the east shore, the track probably running through the cut on the Baird property. Sometime after Chandler had withdrawn from the partnership, Holloway built a dock and a sand hopper on the west shore, from which he shipped sand.

When Isaac Holloway died in 1884, his son Allan took over the Point Abino Sand Company, which gradually went out of existence. Allan's sister Harriet married James B. Stafford, who with his brother Richard, was to help establish the Point Abino Association, thus altering the history of the Point from commercial to real estate speculative and recreational.

The Point Abino Association was formed August 21, 1892. The *Buffalo News* gives the following account:

A company was formed yesterday for the purpose of booming Point Abino, Canada, as an appropriate spot for families to spend the summer. James B. Stafford and R.H. Stafford of Villa Park and Fulton Market fame are the head of the scheme, which is sufficient guarantee that it will be commercially successful.

James B. Stafford has a house there already. R.H. Stafford is building one and the officers elected yesterday at the rooms of the Security Investment Company in the Stafford Building on Pearl Street are:

President, Charles L. Bullymore; first vice-president, Jacob Stern; second vice-president, W. Bowen Moore; treasurer, John W. Fisher; secretary, Albert T. Brown; attorney, Perry C. Rayburn; trustees, Theodore Wende, John W. Fisher, C.S. Crosser, Harlan J. Swift, James B. Stafford, Jacob Stern, Charles L. Bullymore, Perry C. Rayburn, James H. Smith, F.S. Hubbard, Albert T. Brown, and Frank P. Boechat.

Of these gentlemen several own lots at Idlewood on the American lake shore, Surrogate Stern among the rest. The "Point" is but a short distance from Crystal Beach. Stages will run to connect with all boats.

The story of the Holloway Chapel would not be complete without some reference to the Indians, whose ossary or burial ground was not far from the present site of the Chapel. They were probably Attiwandarons, kinsmen of the Hurons to the north of them and of the Iroquois to the east and south. The French called them the Neutrals because they took no part in the deadly struggle between the Hurons and the Iroquois. In 1640 their forty villages along the north shore of Lake Erie comprised a population of about 12,000. In the Niagara district the Neutrals had numerous small villages and two large ones, one at Point Abino and the other at Niagara. Part of the trail connecting the two large villages went from Point Abino up the Marsh or Point Abino Road to the Ridge Road, along the ridge through what is now Ridgeway to the Bowen Road, thence to Miller's Creek, to what is now the town of Fort Erie, and along the river to Niagara.

But the Iroquois broke the back of the Neutral Indians in the period from 1645-1650, killing large numbers and causing many of the survivors to flee the area and join other tribes. There is no evidence, however, that any of this fighting took place near the site of the Chapel or anywhere else on the Point.

One of the earliest descriptions of the Point comes from Isaac Weld, Jr.'s *Travels through the States of North America and the Province of Upper and Lower Canada during the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London, 1799) (A copy belongs to the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society). The report suggests that in the 1790's there were still both Indians and bears on the Point:

The Indians generally go in large parties to hunt bears, and on coming to the place where they suppose these animals are lurking they form themselves into a large circle, and as they advance endeavor to rouse them . . . . We proceeded in this manner at Point Abineau, where three or four men are amply sufficient to hem in a bear between the water and the main land. The point was a very favorable place for hunting this year, for the bears, intent, as I before mentioned, upon emigrating to the south, used on coming down from the upper country, to advance to the extreme end of the point, as if desirous of getting as near as possible by land to the opposite side of the lake, and scarcely a morning came but what one or two of them were found upon it . . . .

Weld also tells of two white farming families on the Point in the 1790's

The ground on the eastern side of the point is neither so much broken nor so sandy as that on the opposite one, and there we found two farm houses adjoining to each of which were about thirty acres of cleared land. At one of these we procured a couple of sheep, some fowls, and a quantity of potatoes, to add to our store of provisions, as there was reason to apprehend that our voyage would not be speedily terminated; whilst the men were digging for the latter, the old woman of the house spread her little table, and prepared for us the best viands which her habitation afforded, namely, coarse cake bread, roasted potatoes, and bear's flesh salted, which last we found by no means unpalatable.

One of these farmers may have been the Timothy Skinner recorded in a search done on Lot No. 51 in the present Point Abino Association. A patent dated 10th of February 1797 was issued to Timothy Skinner for part of Lot No. 32, Broken Front Concession. Unfortunately, nothing is known of Timothy Skinner.

Any historical record of the Holloway Chapel would be unfinished without some reference to the Pere Aveneau Legend. According to tradition, a Jesuit priest, Claude Aveneau, came to the Point in 1690, built a cabin, and lived there for several years, converting the Indian inhabitants to Christianity and communing with God. Part of the legend is that the name *Abino* is an Anglicizing of *Aveneau*.

Historical sources, such as Jesuit archives and the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, show that such a person existed and did indeed travel to the Mid-West and back from Quebec City. But there is no documented evidence that he ever stopped at the Point or that *Abino* is a corruption of *Aveneau*. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that legend is based largely upon oral tradition, which is difficult to prove right or wrong.

Surrounded by legend, tradition, and history, the Holloway Chapel stands today as a serene symbol of a spiritual peace, an unpretentious House of God, that will outlast the plans and struggles of the various peoples who have set foot upon the beautiful stretch of land and water known as Point Abino.



Holloway Memorial Chapel built 1894