

Moments in Our History

(Excerpts from the Dissenting Church of Christ at St. John's 1775 - 1975)

The First Meeting House (Part 4)

This mode of assembling, as Greatheed observes, was impractical in Newfoundland winters. The weather grew colder and no one in the Town dared to rent space to Dissenters. The little society resolved on a bold plan- to build "some little place of their own in order to worship God." A day of fasting, prayer and humiliation was held and the scheme laid before God. Great encouragement was found in the first chapter of the prophet Haggai, which tells of the re-building of the Temple at Jerusalem, particularly the eighth verse ... "Go up in the mountain and bring wood and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified." Accordingly, Wallis Lang, acting as carpenter, with one other, went out and cut down "some slight trees in the woods, with which most of the Island was covered." There remained difficulties. The congregation had no land and it was unlikely that anyone would give or lease land in defiance of the Governor's orders. Also, "they were not able to raise a fourth part of the money requisite between them all." But as they were to do many times in the future, the congregation moved ahead in faith. The Governor left in late October, and "a chamber belonging to one of the society sheltered them during the winter." More important they obtained a lease of land.

Let John Jones tell the rest of the story. "In the Spring of 1777 the Timber etc. being brought out, the frame of the House was raised and made Tenantable by the Labour of the two Elders and some little help from another man in Twenty Eight days to the admiration of friends and enemies; as soon as it was ready, they entered with joyful hearts that God had done so much for them ... "