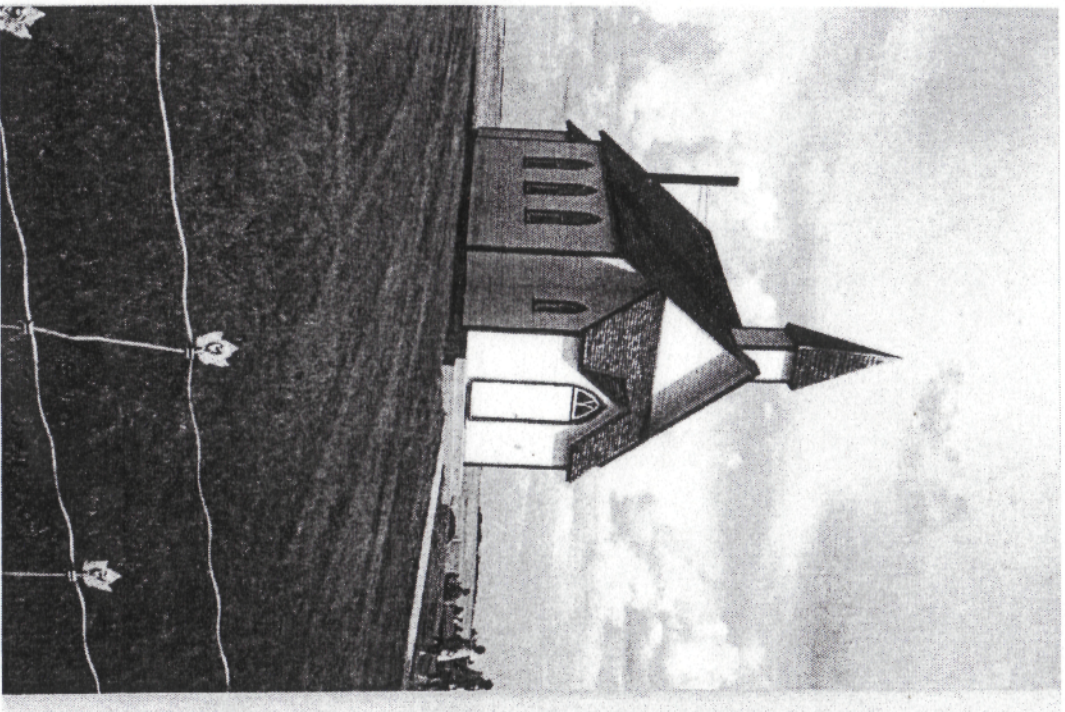


Foxleigh Church

1905 – 1980



The Parish of St. Matthew's Foxleigh

1884 – 1907

Foxleigh's Anglican Church, standing as it does on a cross-road in the district, is a familiar landmark.

The church building itself was put up in the year 1906. But, if we are to give the word "Church" its older scriptural meaning, the story of Foxleigh Church goes back much further – back, indeed, to when Foxleigh's first pioneer, S.A. Clark, pitched his tent and began performing his homesteading duties on Section 22-19-19, one and one-quarter of a mile northwest of what is known as "the Boulding Farm".

Mr. Clark was an Anglican, a Churchman of the "old school", who took his responsibilities as head of the family seriously and, after holding services for his own family each Sunday, as soon as a few more families moved on to neighboring quarter sections, began to arrange that all might meet together on Sunday to worship God.

So it was, that early in the summer of 1884, with the hearty co-operation of three good neighbors, George Boulding, Methodist, James Bole, Presbyterian and George Fleming, Baptist, the first Church began to function in Foxleigh. Mr. Boulding lent his house for these gatherings and each of these men, i.e. Messers. Clark, Boulding, Bole and Fleming, in turn, took the service, each following the customs of his own denomination. Mr. Clark, helped by the Anglican prayer book, took the first service and preached the first sermon. All the members of the four families attended these services, and gradually a few bachelors from a greater distance came also. These services were held for a year or so, then sometimes a Methodist student came out from Regina and filled in, and I think that Rose Plain, where regular services were early held, took Foxleigh under wing for a time. The services were still held at the George Boulding home as there was an organ there, and Mrs. Boulding generously provided a mid-day meal for all who wished to stay for it.

The present narrator (one of Mr. Clark's family) left the district at this time, and so cannot provide first hand information on Church affairs and other developments which occurred there for some years, but believes that the Stirling Schoolhouse was built in 1893 and that Methodist services were held there during the summer months for several years.

Meanwhile, in the Condie District, twelve miles west of Foxleigh, quite a number of Anglican families had established themselves, and as the community grew and thrived, an Anglican Church and a Rectory were built there and a young student from Wycliffe College, Toronto, came to hold services at St. James, Condie (as the new parish was named).

Shortly after his arrival at Condie, he and Mr. William Cullum, one of St. James' church wardens, drove to the home of Mr. W.H. Davies to discuss the possibility of Anglican services being held at Foxleigh also as, at this time, so many of the Foxleigh settlers had come from England and had been brought up in the Anglican Church, that such services were desired. In the little home of the Davis' several of the Church's ceremonies and services had already been held, conducted by clergy from Regina, so that it seemed fitting that the early arrangements should be made from there. Ultimately, the parish of Condie Cum Foxleigh was formed, and the two points worked together amicably for a number of years.

Following this first discussion it was decided that services should be held every Sunday in the schoolhouse with Mr. Savory driving from Condie to take them. These services provided to fill a real need and large congregations were the rule. There was an organ in the schoolhouse and one of the features of these services was the hearty hymn singing, chiefly by male voices as, in addition to the heads of families, Foxleigh was rich in bachelors. W.H. Davis and M.H. Westgate were the first church wardens and Mrs. Davis was the organist. All three filled these positions for many years.

The following year Mr. Masters followed Mr. Savory and, in 1903, a fully ordained man, the Rev. W. Simpson, came to Condie and remained for a number of years, loved and respected by all.

After a time, it became evident that Foxleigh needed a church building of its own and a congregational meeting was held in Stirling School. On April 20th, 1905, it was moved by W. Harford Davis and seconded by E. Day Wilson that an Anglican Church be built in Foxleigh.

Then began a time of intensive effort by all to make a dream come true. Plans for the building were drawn up by W.H. Davis, in consultation with the Vicar, Mr. Simpson, and subsequently approved by a qualified architect. A subscription list was opened toward a building fund and a committee appointed consisting of Messers. Davis, Westgate, Wilson, Moss and the Rev. W. Simpson.

Money was short in those days but finally, with the help of some interested sympathizers in England, enough money was forthcoming to buy materials and the men of the congregation decided to undertake the labour of the erection of the building themselves.

The epic story of the actual building will, in all probability, never be told, for of those who gave freely of their strength and time, many have gone to their well-earned rest, while others have moved away from the Province. Suffice it to say that it was well and truly done and that every Foxleighbite gave of his best during the summer of 1906, in spite of the claims of home and farm. Two names should, perhaps, be signaled out from the builders for special mention, those of W. Young and G. Neison. Both of these men had been skilled carpenters and their advice and help was invaluable. The Reverend W. Simpson, Foxleigh's "Parson" worked beside his parishioners day after day until the "Labour of Love" was done. The name "St. Matthew's" was chosen for the Church by one of the English donors of financial aid.

Services were held in the church as soon as it was completed, but it was not until August, 1907 that the building was consecrated, when Bishop Griswold came from Indian Head for the purpose.

Foxleigh church, as it is usually called, rather than "St. Matthew's", has always been a district church. From the beginning, people of various denominations have helped in its building and maintenance, attended its services and brought their beloved dead to sleep in its churchyard. Though really an Anglican Church, planned and serviced by the people of that denomination, yet it has proven a true church home for those of any creed who cared to attend its services – a true "Church Union" with friendliness and the needs of the people as its base.

Mr. M.H. Westgate was People's Warden for forty-six years and W.H. Davis and E.D. Wilson divided the office of Vicar's Warden pretty evenly between them for the same period. Mrs. E.D. Wilson played the organ for over thirty years.

It is interesting to note that a majority of the members of the present congregation, which is often a large one, are descendents of the original pioneers who laboured so well and truly to have a "Church Home" in Foxleigh, many years ago.

The above account of the early days of Foxleigh Church was written by Mrs. W.H. Davis and published in the Regina Rural News in 195-.

1907 – 1980

The two points, Condie and Foxleigh, co-operated happily for a number of years. In the early days of the parish, Condie boasted a choir and the members drove over to Foxleigh to contribute an Anthem to some of the Foxleigh special services, i.e. Harvest Festivals. Both branches of the parish conducted Sunday Schools when there was a sufficient number of children to warrant it.

Little by little, the Anglican settlers in the Condie area moved away and their places were taken by members of other denominations. Also, a United Church was built a few miles from St. James and many of the newcomers preferred to attend services there. So it was, after twenty-odd years of service to the community, St. James, Condie, was closed. The last resident minister of the two parishes was the Rev. John Gauntlet. He was transferred to, I think, St. Alban's North Regina, and continued to serve Foxleigh from there for a number of years.

Due to the loss of some church registers and minute books, and the fact that the present narrator moved out of the district for a number of years, the history of Foxleigh is somewhat sketchy, as it is based on hearsay evidence. However, it appears that we were served from various Regina Churches for a number of years. In, I believe, 1935, Foxleigh and several other rural parishes, i.e. Pilot Butte, Balgonie, Winnetka and McLean, were formed into one large unit served by a Minister residing in Balgonie. The first incumbent of this group of country parishes was the Rev. M. Robinson, newly ordained and appointed to his first parish.

This group of country parishes worked together under various ministers, including Mr. Rowland, Mr. Parks, Mr. Hilary and Mr. Rainbow, for some fifteen years. At that time, this group of parishes was attached to the then struggling parish of St. Michael's, Regina, under the leadership of the Rev. Norman Sparks. Under his care, the country parishes thrived and Foxleigh, in particular, took on a new lease of life. The congregation increased and Foxleigh once more became a Church Home for all denominations. The Sunday School was reopened under the able leadership of Mrs. P. Turgeon and Mrs. D. Pirret. In 1952 a branch of the Anglican Women's Auxiliary was formed and did good work for a number of years. In 1952, due to ill health, Mr. Sparks was moved to a less exacting parish and I have been unable to find any record of who succeeded him. However, I believe that Foxleigh and some of the other country points remained with St. Michael's and it appears that, in 1959, we were served by Dr. Grant, who was also in charge of St. Michael's and St. Alban's. In 1960 the Rev. John Wilms took over the country parishes, and in the years 1963 and 1964 Dr. Grant once more looked after the needs of these parishes.

In the year 1965 Foxleigh and Winnetka were affiliated with St. James, Regina. In March, 1969, there was a complete amalgamation between Foxleigh and Winnetka and the parish was known as the Parish of St. Matthew's, Foxleigh, and Winnetka", with alternating services being held at the two points and with Rev. V. Thomas of St. James officiating. This connection was maintained until Mr. Thomas retired in 1977. At that time we were reunited with St. Michael's and hoped that this relationship will last for many years. We are now served by the Rev. James Cowan.

The above is merely an account of the various moves made by the Foxleigh Church in the past many years, with a mention of some of the many devoted men who served this parish over the years.

There are other incidents in the history of the Church that may be of interest to those who have followed the story this far. In December of the year 1964 the district hall was sold and the "Hall Committee" voted to donate the proceeds of this sale to the Foxleigh Church for the purpose of starting a fund for the care and maintenance of the Church Cemetery. This fund is administered by the District not the Church, and has, due to donations from members and ex-members of the Districts and Church, now reached a point where the interest on the capital has, for many years, guaranteed care for the graves and the surrounding grounds.

One other project worthy of mention is the restoration of the church building. This undertaking was proceeding well until the summer of 1979 when a tornado and heavy hail storm passed through the area, demolishing not only crops, but also tearing the steeple and shingles off the church. This damage has now been repaired, but much of the projected restoration has been delayed.

On Sunday, July 13, 1980, a special service is planned in the Foxleigh Church, commemorating seventy-five years of service to the community.

N.B. It has recently come to my attention, through the Qu'Appelle Diocesan Archives, that much of the help received from England at the founding of Foxleigh Church came from the Colonial and Continental Church Society. The same source of information provides the fact that the first service held in Foxleigh Church was the Dedication Service on November 25th, 1906. This service was conducted by the Ven. Archdeacon Harding.

The Graves of St. Matthew's, Foxleigh
by Dorothy Pirret

The first grave in Foxleigh Cemetery was that of the first Mrs. Charles BOULDING, who died in 1908. Mr. BOULDING planted an evergreen on the grave which grew to be a landmark for many years and was finally destroyed by wind in the 1960's.

One of the next graves was that of Mrs. YOUNG who died in 1914. As a pupil at Stirling School I well remember looking out of the window and seeing the hearse with its jet black horses, and also feeling rather envious of Marjorie LESLIE whose mother had taken her across to the church for the service.

Mrs. YOUNG'S two sons, Richard and William, are buried beside her. Incidentally, Mrs. YOUNG was Mr. Harford DAVIS's mother-in-law. His first wife was Alexis YOUNG, and she is buried in the old Regina Cemetery.

Under the lilac bushes there are two graves. One is Sarah McCOSH, a Scottish lady who was a friend of Mrs. A. KENNEDY, and she helped mothers in the district. I know she was up at Hill Top one time. By her side is Jack CARRUTHERS who worked for the KENNEDY's and was bit by a stallion that KENNEDY's owned called *Clock Light*. Jack died of blood poison. Sarah and Jack were to be married. Sarah worked for a farm over west. She died quite a young woman and was buried beside Jack.

Beside the BOULDING tombstone is that of Winnifred LOWE. She died in 1917 having come out to Canada in 1909. She was a sister of Mrs. George NEISON and Fred and Harry MOSS. These graves are in the northeast corner of the cemetery. Other graves are those of Mr. and Mrs. LOWE and Mr. and Mrs. Robert LESLIE. Both couples were pioneers of Foxleigh and neighbours for many years.

In this same area are the graves of Mr. and Mrs. George NEISON and that of Caroline NEISON, sister of George. They lived north of Zehner in the Braemar School District. Mr. NEISON made the font that is still used in St. Matthew's Church.

There are also four children's graves in this area. Cyril NEISON aged seven years, second son of Mr. and Mrs. George NEISON. George LOWE, whose grave is marked by a stone, died of polio when two years old. The hymn rack in the church is also in memory of him. His parents lived on a farm west of Winnipeg St., and a sister visited the grave recently. Near by are two babies' graves, Vernon LESLIE, son of Mr. and Mrs. George LESLIE and a grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Robert LESLIE. The other grave is that of

Kenneth PENNOCK. Mr. and Mrs. William PENNOCK lived on the TURGEON farm (W ½ 18-19-18). William PENNOCK had been a bachelor friend and neighbour for many years before he married a girl who taught at Arat School south of Zehner.

In the north east corner of the cemetery is the grave of Annie WARD, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. WARD who lived in the Braemar School District.

In the south west corner of the church yard is the grave of Mrs. H. WESTGATE who died in 1934. She was the wife of Hamilton WESTGATE who died in B.C. in the 1970's and is buried in St. Stephen's Cemetery in Saanich on Vancouver island.

Beside the grave of Mrs. WESTGATE are the graves of Mr. and Mrs. E.D. WILSON, and beside them their son and his wife Jean. Both couples lived most of their lives on the old WILSON farm north of the church.

Other graves nearby are that of Baby ROGERS, infant son of Janet (LOWE) and Douglas ROGERS, and that of William PIRRET, uncle of the ROGER's baby, who was to have been named *William Keith*.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert COWAN are buried near the WILSON grave. Robert COWAN was a native of Scotland, and his wife, Frances, was a sister of George and Caroline NEISON.

In the extreme southeast corner of the cemetery is a little unmarked grave of a baby whose father simply asked if he could bury his baby there. There is no record of any name.

Recently Lonnie KING was buried in this area. He was an old-timer from the Victoria Plains District and husband of Mrs. Joyce KING (nee DAVIS).

There are other graves in the district that are not in the cemetery. Before the church was built or a cemetery laid out, Mr. and Mrs. NEISON Sr., parents of George NEISON, died on the old NEISON farm, NW 16-19-18, and were buried in their garden. The old house has gone now and the graves are in a farmer's field.

There are four infants of Mr. and Mrs. Harford DAVIS buried beside the road allowance on SE 18-19-19 where the old DAVIS farmstead was located.

In the northwest area of the cemetery a cairn has been erected by the people of Foxleigh in memory of the pioneers of the district, many of whom are not buried here, though some helped build the church and support it.

FOXLEIGH CEMETERY GROUP

By Dorothy Pirret

In the fall of 1964 a meeting of the residents of Foxleigh and members of St. Matthew's Church was held. A group was formed to take over the care of the cemetery at the church. It was suggested that the money from the sale of the Foxleigh Hall should be the basis of the project. A business organization was set up with J.A. LESLIE as president, Mr. W. PIRRET as secretary-treasurer, and a committee of three consisting of Barry ANDREW, Arthur TURGEON and Jack LEMON was set up to act as an executive. Further money was collected from interested people in the district and families of the deceased that are buried in the cemetery. Later money from the sale of the Hall piano was also added to the Cemetery Group fund. The money was invested and the interest used to pay for the care of the cemetery grounds.

The Cemetery Group is still active and district has helped with "bees" for the upkeep of the fence. The fence was moved a short distance from the road to make a parking area.

A great deal of credit is due to the residents of the district for their co-operation in this project as it was the people outside the church that came forward with the original idea for the "Foxleigh Cemetery Group"

Taken from "*PIONEERS OF FOXLEIGH*" by Dorothy Pirret (1972)

The church was built in 1906 by the people of Foxleigh; completely a community effort. I believe the lumber was brought from a lumber yard in Condie owned by Heggie and Peggie. Previous to the building of the church, services were held in the school with laymen and visiting ministers conducting the services. At the time St. Matthew's at Foxleigh was built, there was an Anglican Church (St. James) in the Condie District, and the Rev. Simpson drove from Condie each Sunday to conduct services at Foxleigh.

Several skilled carpenters worked on the erection of the church. Such names as MOSS brothers, YOUNG brothers, H. DAVIS, and George NEISON who, along with the less skilled workers, gave time and money to the building, which has stood with little restoration to date (1972). The names of families who were members of the first congregation were WILSON, WESTGATE, BOULDING, COWAN, LOWE, DAVIS, NEISON, LESLIE and MOSS.

Mr. E.D. WILSON bought the MOLLARD farm in 1903 and moved from his previous holding north of Edenwold with his wife and daughter. "Ted" Wilson, as he was called, was born in the south of England of English and Danish parentage, coming to Canada as a young man. He was born in 1869 and married in Regina to Constance DAVIS in 1899. He died in 1947, leaving his farm at Foxleigh to his son Maurice. Mrs. WILSON was born in England in 1870 and came to Canada to keep house for her brother, Harford DAVIS, after he lost his wife in 1894. Constance was born blind but in spite of her handicap she kept house, brought up four children and lent her talents as a gifted musician to the district. Mr. and Mrs. WILSON were faithful workers of the church and district from 1904. Mrs. WILSON insisted on playing the organ for her husband's funeral. She died in 1952. Their family consisted of Phyllis, Maurice, Elaine and Leslie.

Mr. Hamilton WESTGATE homesteaded in Foxleigh about 1900, on the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 6, 19, 18. He later traded this $\frac{1}{4}$ with F. LIEBEL who had the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of 12, 19, 19 and bought the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of 12 from Mr. MALCOLM and lived in the MALCOLM home until 1917. Mr. WESTGATE married a widow with one child, who came from Ontario. He was a most congenial friend and neighbour, and owned one of the first cars in Foxleigh, and Overland bought about 1915. He continued to drive a car until his death in the 1960's in Victoria, B.C. Mr. WESTGATE is buried in the cemetery of St Stephen's Anglican Church near Saanich, Vancouver Island. Their daughter, Marjorie, became Mrs. Charles MOLLARD in 1925. Charles was one of the six MOLLARD children brought up in the early years at Foxleigh.

BOULDINGS were one of the first families at Foxleigh. They owned, through homestead pre-emption and purchase, all of section 14 and a quarter of 23. Mr. BOULDING Sr. came from Ontario, but it was his son, Charles, who lived in the Foxleigh area for many years, having moved here from the family farm almost directly north in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Mrs. Charles BOULDING in 1906, and was the first burial at St. Matthew's.

The YOUNG family, consisting of two brothers, a sister and brother-in-law (Harford DAVIS) and Mrs. YOUNG Sr., came to this part of the North West Territories from Ontario in the late 1880's. They settled on the north ½ of section 22. William and Richard YOUNG were skilled carpenters but were unfortunately affected as they got older by a nervous disease known in those days as St. Vita's Dance. Richard died comparatively young. Mrs. DAVIS passed away in the early 1890's and is buried in Regina, and Mrs. YOUNG Sr. is buried in Foxleigh Cemetery. She died in 1914 and hers was the first funeral that many of the Sterling School children had ever seen and the sight of the hearse drawn by four black horses on a wet May afternoon can be well remembered. Mrs. YOUNG, too, had been of special interest to the children because she was the only really elderly woman they had ever seen -- the west at that time being populated in the main by young vigorous people.

Mr. Robert COWAN was born in Braemar, Scotland and came to Winnipeg about the time the railway came through. He lived on section 17, 18, 19 and also owned a quarter of section 8, 18, 19. He married Frances NEISON. He was a hard working farmer and prospered through the years. They had no family of their own, but were second parents to Mrs. COWAN's niece, also named Frances NEISON.

William C. LOWE bought a quarter of 19, 19, 18 in 1897, after he had been in Canada for three years, living and working for his cousin Harford DAVIS. In 1901 he went back to England and married Henrietta BAINES in April 1902, then they came to Canada to "Hill Top Farm" at Foxleigh. William was born in Worcestershire in a small place called Suckley, and lived in Tenburg until he came to Canada at the age of 21. He took me to England when I was a child and we were in Suckley and saw the church yard where his mother was buried. My mother was born in Lancaster and lived in Morecombe until her marriage. My parents, Mr. and Mrs. LOWE lived on their farm continuously until 1946, when they moved to Regina and left the farming to their older son, Harry. Mrs. LOWE died in 1953 and Mr. LOWE died in 1969 at the age of 96. He was an interested and interesting farmer, keen to the end.

Mr. Harford DAVIS came out to Canada in the early 1880's. He settled in Ontario at first and met the YOUNG family and married their daughter Alexia. They had a son named Walter. Alexia died after they came west about 1890. Mr. DAVIS homesteaded the north ½ of 18, 19, 18. William LOWE was a cousin and came to the DAVIS home in 1894. Harford married Mary E. CLARKE who had moved to the Foxleigh district in 1893 and settled section 22, 19, 19 with her father and mother and younger brother and sisters. Mr. and Mrs. DAVIS had two daughters, Joyce and Elsie. There were other children who died at birth and are buried beside the road allowance near the old DAVIS farm site. Joyce married Lonnie KING in 1922, a grandson of Mr. MALCOLM. Elsie married Ben LEMON in 1926, a veteran of the 1914-18 war. In 1920 Harford DAVIS became the secretary of the Municipality of Edenwold, and they moved to Balgonie, where they lived until his death. Mrs. DAVIS went to live in Regina with her sister-in-law, Mrs. W.E. WILSON. She was a keen local historian and had several articles published on pioneer life.

Mr. and Mrs. NEISON, Sr. came from the State of New York, U.S.A. and homesteaded on section 21, 19, 18. This was earlier than 1890. They had with them two sons and two daughters. The senior NEISON's died in the 1890's and were buried in their garden on the farm near a large tree. There was no church or cemetery nearby at that time. George NEISON took over the land, and his sister Frances married Robert COWAN. Miss Carrie NEISON lived on with her brother who married Florence MOSS about 1907. They had four children: Frances who married A. MARSHALL and lived on the COWAN farm for a few years after the death of Mr. and Mrs. COWAN; George, a veteran of the second war who died in Edmonton; Cyril died as a child and is buried in the Foxleigh Cemetery with the parents; and Caroline NEISON. The youngest child, Blanche, married John SEMPLE in 1940 and lived near the Valley in the Craven district. Mr. NEISON died in 1946 and Mrs. NEISON in 1971 at the age of 93.

The original settlers in the Foxleigh area were not all Anglicans, but the fact that money was likely available from Britain for mission work was the reason that an Anglican church was built rather than a Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian.

ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH, FOXLEIGH

by Dorothy Pirret

St. Matthew's was built in 1906 by local people with money collected from the prospective congregation and help from the Anglican Church in centre Canada where money was often available from funds left by people in England for the express purpose of helping the rural churches in Western Canada.

Previous to the building of the church, services were held in Stirling School with an Anglican minister driving to Foxleigh from Condie where St. James had a resident minister. This is probably the reason that an Anglican church was built in Foxleigh rather than Methodist or almost any other denomination, for it was people of several different churches that gave their time and help to the building of St. Matthew's.

The actual building was done locally for the district boasted several skilled carpenters at that time, some being the YOUNG brothers (William and Dick), MOSS brothers (Harry and Fred), Harford DAVIS and George NEISON who made the font that is still in use in the church.

The original altar in the church was replaced in 1963 by a new one made by J.C. LEMON (a grandson of one of the original builders of the church – Harford DAVIS).

The lumber for the building was hauled from the nearest lumber yard at the time, situated at Condie. A man named Sergeant SMITH did the work taking a load of stones back with him each trip. Mr. WESTGATE donated the land for the site of the church and cemetery.

Rev. W. SIMPSON was the minister at St. James Anglican Church in Condie at the time St. Matthew's was built and he and his family lived in the rectory there. He drove back and forth to Foxleigh.

"Foxleigh Church" is still in use in 1972, though services are usually restricted to the summer. The church was repainted about 1965 and a new chimney installed in 1969. A Cemetery Group was formed by the residents of Foxleigh in 1964 and money donated by residents and ex-residents created a fund from which the grounds are kept in order. The money from the sale of the old foxleigh Hall and the school piano were also donated to the church yard fund by the district.

The parish has been united with several larger ones during the years. Our ministers came from Balgonie in the 1930's and '40's and later we were affiliated with the city churches in Regina. Our present minister is Rev. THOMAS from St. James, Regina.