

TO SELL LANDMARK WHICH RECALLS DAYS OF OLD "MUDDY YORK"

Offer to Purchase Zion Church, Built by City's First Congregational Body, Formed Here in Year of Incorporation, Likely to be Accepted—Money Will be Used for Extension

Zion Church, upon which the history of the development of Congregational churches in Toronto is founded, will shortly pass from the hands of the Canada Congregational Mission Board. An offer to purchase the building and site at the corner of College and Elizabeth streets for \$100,000 has been made to the board by its present tenants, the **Christian Unity Mission**, and a committee, appointed by the Congregational Union at Guelph last June, will meet this week to consider the offer. While nothing definite has yet been done, Rev. E. D. Silcox told *The Globe* last night that it is probable the sale will be executed and the money used in accordance with the expressed wish of the congregation of the church at the time it was disbanded just before the war.

The sale will be the closing chapter of the history of one of the city's oldest churches. In the same year that "Muddy" York became the city of Toronto thirty-seven Congregationalists banded themselves together, and, under the leadership of Rev. William Merrifield, formerly of Brampton, Cumberland, Eng., commenced to hold public services in the Masonic Hall, situated at that time on Colborne street.

First Church Building.

Three years later, in 1837, they had developed the church to such an extent that funds were available for extension, and a building on George street was purchased and used as a church. Until January, 1840, the little congregation worshipped at the George street structure. Then they purchased a site at the northwest corner of Bay and Adelaide streets and erected a frame church, which then was considered an imposing edifice. But here ill-luck overtook them, for on February 26, 1855, fire totally destroyed their chapel. Homeless for a time, they were temporarily accommodated in St. Lawrence Hall, through the generosity of the City Council, and there they worshipped until a new and still larger church had been erected on the ruins of the old one.

On September 26, 1856, the first service was conducted in the new edifice. For thirty years or more Bay and Adelaide streets continued to be their home, but finally, because of the rapid growth of the city, another move had to be made. Accordingly, about forty years ago, the College street site was obtained, and the present brick building, which is still among the large churches of the city, was erected.

Left Building in Trust.

Established in its final home, the congregation grew for many years, but in the years immediately before the war the encroachment of the business district began to have its effect. Finally, shortly after Rev. Mr. Silcox, who was its last pastor, had relinquished the ministry, the congregation disbanded, and the building, by their will, was given in trust to the Canada Congregational Missions Board.

Shortly after the church's first move from the Masonic Hall to George street, Rev. John Roaf, formerly of Wolverhampton, Eng., became its pastor. Seventeen years later he was followed by Rev. Thomas Scales Ellerby, who came from the British and American Congregational Church, St. Petersburg, Russia, and he in turn was succeeded, in May, 1866, by Rev. J. G. Manly of Dublin, Ireland. In June, 1871, Dr. Samuel N. Jackson of Montreal became pastor, and throughout its subsequent years the church was in charge of, first, Rev. George Henry Sandwell, and, finally, Rev. E. D. Silcox.

Founded New Churches.

The old congregation was during its existence the origin of four out of the present five city Congregational Churches. In April, 1849, 25 members withdrew to form the nucleus of Bond Street Church; in 1868 28 members were dismissed to organize the Northern Congregational Church; in 1875 30 members began the Western Church, and the following year Yorkville (the present Olivet) Church was commenced by several members of Zion.

With its disbandment the congregation helped to swell those churches which were its offshoots. Most of the members transferred to Olivet Church; others went to the Western, and still others to the Northern. The development of the Church had always been the tradition of Zion, and so it was that when the church was assigned to the Mission Board it was done with the understanding

that whenever it was sold the proceeds should be used to establish other congregations as the city grew. Recently a Congregational Church was established at Birchcliffe, and a proportion of the proceeds, Rev. Mr. Silcox stated, will probably go to the assistance of the new congregation.

Not For Older Churches.

The older churches, he said, could not benefit by the sale, since the terms of the assignment expressly stated that the money should be used for the establishment of further Congregational Churches in the city. It provided for three new edifices: one in the east, one north, and another west, but this policy, in view of altered conditions, may not be adhered to.

The committee which has charge of the property at present, and which will consider the sale this week, is composed of the following members: W. H. Barker, George Alexander, W. E. Booth, Rev. Ronald McLeod, Rev. W. J. D. Gibson, Rev. Albert Margrett and Rev. E. D. Silcox. They have received a request from the members of the Western Congregational Church for a lease of the building for a five-year period, but as the present tenants have another year to run on their lease and as the offer of purchase was made first it is probable that the sale will be transacted.

A Previous Offer.

This is the second time since the congregation disbanded that an offer of purchase has been made. Just before the war a syndicate made an offer of \$80,000; an agreement was drawn and plans for an interdenominational church-office building were prepared, but with the declaration of war the proposal was abandoned. The agreement had not been signed, and the property remained in the possession of the Mission Board.

The terms of the present sale, Rev. Mr. Silcox said, are one-third cash and the remainder security held by the **Christian Unity Mission**. The committee has already conferred with the management of the **Christian Unity Mission**, and the final meeting will be held this week. The property has frontages on College street, Elizabeth street and Grenville street, and is 210 feet deep by 90 feet wide.