

Mount Pleasant

HISTORY OF MOUNT PLEASANT WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH

1857 - 1907 - 1957

(Contributed by Mrs. Jas. Sloane and Miss Irene Brown)

The following are the first recorded minutes of Mount Pleasant Church: "Subscriptions for the erection of the Mount Pleasant Wesleyan Methodist Church." "We, whose names are hereunto annexed, do hereby agree to pay the sums affixed to our respective names to: Philo Belfry, Joseph Bingham, Thomas Evans, James Scanlon, William Johnston—Trustees of the Mount Pleasant Wesleyan Methodist Church to be erected on the site given by Mark Scanlon, Esq. to them on their order for the purpose of erecting said Church. Sums, unless otherwise stated, to be payable on Jan. 1, 1858.

"Mark Scanlon \$100.00 and the site; John Doan \$50.00; Wm. Johnston \$50.00; Alex Clendening \$4.00; Philo Belfry \$50.00; James Evans \$30.00; Joseph Bingham \$10.00; L. E. Ayesworth \$4.00; E. Rogers \$2.00; Mary Ferguson \$2.00; Robert Parker \$2.00; George Beycroft \$2.00; T. Driffill \$4.00.

"Collections at the opening of the church were \$18.00.

"They also had a tea at which they made \$45.00."

Apparently Mr. William Johnston was their first treasurer and the total cost of building the church was \$740.00.

The next minutes recorded in the book were entered in 1875 when more land was bought at the south of the burying ground. Messrs. Wm. Johnston, Wm. Robinson, Wm. Evans, George Evans, Zac. Evans, Wm. McCausland, Wm. Kneeshaw and Thomas Evans were named Trustees of the burying ground with Mr. Zac. Evans as their secretary.

In November of 1879 a meeting of the congregation was called for "the purpose of considering the propriety of making certain improvements on the church and burying ground." It was decided—"To have the burying ground fenced in a substantial manner; and that the church be painted on the outside, the inside woodwork painted and grained oak and varn-

ished." It was also decided to move the pulpit and erect a platform and a reading desk and the seats to be remodelled making three rows of seats. It was thought advisable to have the walls stained and pencilled in blocks and the ceiling whitened and the windows frosted. It was thought best to commence work at once if practicable.

A week later the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent of the Circuit, Rev. Mr. Philp, met to carry out the improvements suggested by the congregation. They formed a committee of Messrs. Wm. Johnston, Wm. Robinson, George M. Evans, Wm. McCausland, and Zac. Evans, with Mr. Z. Evans as chairman to carry out the improvement.

The side seats were to be five feet long and the center ones eight feet. The stove to be placed near the door in the center. Mr. Morley, the painter, offered to do the painting of the above mentioned for the sum of \$80.00. The committee authorized Rev. Mr. Philp to inform Mr. Morley that he could start work as soon as weather permitted.

In February 1880 the committee met and decided to employ a carpenter to make the pews and change the pulpit. Mr. Wm. Baker's offer of making the pews for sixty cents each if the committee would supply the lumber and pay for the planing and scroll-sawing was accepted.

In November, 1900, the trustees were called together by the Superintendent of the Circuit, Rev. J. J. Sparling, to decide about a fence and rebuild the woodshed. The trustees at this time were Messrs. Wm. Johnston, Zac. Evans, Lem. Bowles, Thompson-Manning, and Jos. Brown. They bought a wire fence and purchased 47 posts (wooden) from Mr. George Kneeshaw. Mr. Manning was to try and sell some burying plots to defray the expense of the fence. This is all the recorded minutes of the early days of the church.

Along about 1906 several families moved from the vicinity and the death of Mr. Zac. Evans, who was Superintendent of the Sunday School at the time, occurred; so that at the end of the church year in 1907, Mount Pleasant Wesleyan Methodist Church was closed.

A partial list of the ministers is as follows: Rev. Wm. Hay, Rev. J. E. Betts, Rev. J. A. Ferguson, Rev. S. C. Philp, Rev. Thos. Campbell, Rev. W. S. Wilson, Rev. John Mahan, Rev. Jas. Liddy, Rev. N. A. McDiarmid, Rev. J. W. Jolliffe, Rev. H. S. Matthews, Rev. J. J. Ferguson, Rev. John Locke, Rev. J. J. Sparling, Rev. J. W. Fox, Rev. W. P. Brown and Rev. T. G. Scott.

Rev. Liddy and Rev. Locke were also on this circuit while they were student ministers when there were six appointments in the circuit.

Perhaps here I should try to describe the little church for you. It

was of white clapboard and was situated a little south-east of the present gates with lilacs and shrubs surrounding it. A picket fence separated the church yard from the burying ground on the south and east sides. The shed for the horses and rigs was along the then north fence. Pine trees grew in the yard. The entrance to the church was on the west end—one entered a sort of hallway and went either to the right or left to enter the church proper. The stove was set in this partition so that the wood was put in the stove in the hall, but the body of the stove was in the church.

The choir-loft was in the north-east corner with a red carpet on the floor, the woodshed door was in the east wall near the south side. The pulpit, of the same design as the one in Bradford United Church Sunday School, was in the center of the east end. There were four steps leading up to the pulpit platform, which was later lowered to two steps the same as the choir loft by Mr. Z. Evans. Two bracket oil lamps were behind the pulpit, one on the window, by the organ in the choir loft, and one on either corner of the partition by the stove. There were also two lamps on the organ as well as two chandeliers in the body of the church. The walls and ceiling were covered with wallpaper in later years.

No mention is made of the purchase of an organ, but some of the organists were: Ida Dutcher (Mrs. D. Sutherland), Libbie Dutcher (

), who played everything by ear; Mrs. Lew Bateman and her daughters, Lulu and Olive, Laura Evans (Mrs. Jas. Phimister) and Walter Brown. The Methodist hymn book was used in the church services, the Dominion Hymnal in the Sunday School until they purchased the Canadian Hymnal—brown cover edition. Sunday School organists were: Misses Addie Harper (Mrs. Crocker), Lucy Bowles (Mrs. Ross), and Laura Evans (Mrs. Phimister). The young people of the congregation were the members of the choir and for some time Mr. Henry Belfry and Mr. Alex Dutcher were the only bass and tenor singers in the choir. Before they had an organ Mr. George Evans was the song leader and he used a tuning fork.

Mr. Zac. Evans was the Sunday School Superintendent and some of the teachers were: Mrs. George Evans—the boys class, her daughter, Annie (Mrs. W. Strong)—the girls class, until they moved to town. Bible class teachers were Mr. Jas. Phimister who left in 1899 to become a minister; Mr. Wm. Belfry, and Joseph Brown. Later teachers of the boys and girls were Walter Brown and Mary Evans (Mrs. W. E. Brown).

Mrs. Zac. Evans was the president of the Women's Auxiliary.

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August 7, 1957,

Vol. 92, No 31, Pg 9 & 12

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Mr. Morton Johnston was caretaker of the church.

In Rev. Sparling's time they started the Epworth League, which was held every Tuesday evening and was still active for a time after the church was closed. Mr. Z. Evans and Mr. Jos. Brown were the leaders and Mr. Brown was also treasurer.

In the early days of this church there were six appointments in the Circuit and two ministers, a Superintendent and assistant. The churches were: Bradford, Mount Pleasant, Ebenezer, Gilford, Cherry Creek, and Lefroy. By 1893 there were just three appointments: Bradford, Mount Pleasant, and Ebenezer with services held in the afternoon. About 1900 the stationing committee accepted the change of Circuit from Bradford to Ebenezer and Gilford, and the church services were held in the morning followed by Sunday School.

On Anniversary Sunday there were always three services, morning, afternoon and evening. On Quarterly Meeting Sunday, that is the Communion Service, while part of the Bradford Circuit these services were always held in town, but when the Circuit was changed to Ebenezer and Gilford the Quarterly Meeting was rotated among the three churches.

They had Christmas concerts too. Everyone went beforehand to get the church ready and those who weren't busy rehearsing their parts were decorating the church and filling the stockings. Mr. James Robinson was their Santa Claus.

At one time the Sunday School picnic was an excursion up the Holland River across to the picnic grounds at Jackson's Point. On one occasion it turned so windy that the Captain of the "Enterprise" didn't start the return journey from Jackson's Point until midnight. They arrived back in Bradford during the afternoon of the next day about 2 p.m.

In 1910 the trustees met with the Superintendent of the Bradford Circuit, Rev. W. Buchanan, at the home of Mr. Alex Dutcher. The trustees were: Mr. Alex Dutcher, Mr. Wm. Belfry, Mr. Jos. Brown, Mr. Richard Thorpe, and Mr. T. W. W. Evans. Mrs. Alex Dutcher was the secretary-treasurer. They formed a committee to sell the shed and also to negotiate the purchase of new ground. Later that year Mr. A. Dutcher bought one half of the shed for \$38.00 and Mr. J. Brown the other half. An acre of land north of the present ground was bought from Mr. Chas. Coombs for \$200.00. At a meeting in the fall they instructed the treasurer to have the building property chained and the roof repaired if necessary.

It was in April, 1924, that they decided to sell the church at public auction on Saturday, May 3. It was bought by Mr. Emerson Madill and he built his home with the lumber. The pulpit, the pulpit chairs, and the organ were in the bill of sale.

Miss Eleanor Johnston, daughter of Mr. William Johnston and Scanlon, willed a sum of money on her death to be used in the upkeep of Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Iron gates with stone pillars were erected in 1928 at the main entrance in recognition of her bequest. The mill stones from the grist mill on the tenth line (east) owned by the Scanlon family (the only mill of its kind in the township at the time it was built, around 1830) were placed inside the gates and suitable shrubs were purchased to beautify the grounds.

Mr. E. J. Evans was the treasurer of the Endowment Fund for many years until he retired in 1947 to Newmarket. Mrs. A. Dutcher took over the books for a time, then Mr. B. M. Evans, Q.C., was appointed treasurer and still holds that office.

After the hurricane in October, 1954, a number of graves had to be filled in. An appeal was sent out to families with relatives buried there to raise money for the restoration of the cemetery. They responded so well that an extensive landscaping job has been undertaken, also another half acre of land has been added to the North side to supply the coming need.

The present Cemetery board includes: Messrs. Brock Evans, chairman; Murray Faris, secretary; Frank Kilkenny, Ben Collings, Mel. Wald-ruff, Henry Sawdon, Walter Brown, Emory Belfry, Ken. Sawdon, Clarence Brown, George Verkaik, and Neil Lathangue.

A plan of the cemetery, revised to date, is being drafted by the Walter Brown family with the assistance of Messrs. Emory Belfry, Frank Kilkenny, Neil Lathangue, and Brock Evans.

I would like to finish this report with a poem written by Mr. E. J. Evans, a grandson of one of the founders of Mount Pleasant Church, Mr. James Evans, and son of Mr. Zac. Evans, who took a very active part in the life of the church.

MOUNT PLEASANT

There's a place in my heart for the
little white church
That stood on the top of the hill,
Though it's gone many years its
memory remains
Precious and dear to me still.
There were stately pines that shaded
the walk
That ran from the gate to the
door,
They, too, are gone and the shade
where we sat
So oft' in the sweet days of yore.
It was there that we went on each
Sabbath Day
Never wondering if cloudy or
fair,
We were taught 'twas our duty to go
so we went
Religion, it seemed, filled the air.
It was there that we sang the old
Gospel songs
That the oldest and youngest
could sing.
And we reverently listened in those
happy days
To the message the pastor would
bring.
It was pleasant to sit in that cosy old
church
Mingling with neighbours and
friends,
To join in the worship and offer up
thanks
For the gifts and the blessings
God sends.
One evening each week those devout
Christian folk
Assembled for song and for
prayer,
And if ever God's presence was felt
among men
It was felt by those saints gath-
ered there.
Down on their knees they prayed and
they sang,
Their trust in their God was pro-
found,
There was joy in their hearts when
they sang that refrain:
"Angels are hovering around."
Oh! Where are the people who went
to that church
On those Sundays so long, long
ago!
Ah, many have gone to receive their
reward
The names on the stones tell me
so.
Others are dwelling in lands far
away
Who may see this dear place
never more,
But I hope we may meet when we all
cross the bar
And our dwelling in this world is
o'er.

E. J. Evans.

(Used by permission of his daughter, Mrs. Earl Bowles).

March 1, 1957

Signed Irene Brown.