

Address of Rev. Wm.J. Harrison (age 90) given at the Centennial Conference June 28th, 1956 - 8 P.M. - at Ontario Chapel - 363 McDougall Street, Windsor. "Origin of B.M.E. Church in Canada.

I am thankful to Almighty God for the privilege of standing before you tonight to talk to you. I may not be with you to celebrate the next centennial so I shall do all I can now.

Among the unsung heroes of our times is the name of Wm. Wilberforce, English Philanthropist and statesman, born August 14th. - 1759 and elected to the British Parliament in 1789. He asked for the abolition of slavery by Parliament in 1797 - 98 but gained no success at that time. Later on, his friend Wm. Pitt became Prime Minister of England and sent Wilberforce to Jamaica in company with two others to gain first hand information on the slave traffic. He found conditions deplorable and said if God should spare him to get back to England he would do all in his power to wipe out slavery. In 1798 Lord Woodsley declared that if any man put his foot on English shores he would be free and introduced the second Bill in 1812 - 14. By 1832 Pitt had a majority in the House of Lords, presented the Bill for the third time and it passed in 1833. Wilberforce died, killed by accident with a horse on July 28th., 1833, four days before the passing of the Bill. It was regrettable he didn't live to see the fruits of forty-four years labour. The Bill signed by King Wm. IV freed 800,000 slaves throughout the British Empire. In the United States four million slaves heard - how - nobody knows - the old folks used to say somehow or t'other. Remembering the words of Woodsley - migration to Canada began. They came from Mississippi, Alabama, N & S Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri and Virginia. In 1860 the highest number of Coloured peoples in the Dominion of Canada between Nova Scotia and Ontario was from 45 - 60 thousand. 25,000 crossed the Detroit river among them my Mother and Father. They were coming to get my sister Liza in the morning so my Father and Mother left in the night. Their migration was greater than that of the Children of Israel from bondage for, it is written God led them by pillar of fire by night and our forefathers had only a star. In 1848 Mother and Father Cooper and 38 more crossed the Detroit river on the ice. Some went around the lakes following the Indian Trails and every place there was a settlement they built a House of God. Many crossed at Amherstburg and were received by friends named Rankin on these shores at the Elliott House. All famous people have a monument built to their memory. Our church is a monument to those slaves who came and built it. Other churches were build in Amherstburg, Sandwich, Gelgal New Canaan, Sackville Puce, Pleasant Valley, Buxton, Simcoe, Chatham, Chatham Township, 7th. Concession Dresden, Owen Sound, Collingwood, Orellia, Perth, London, Lucan, Ingersoll, Stratford, Woodstock, Brantford, Guelph, St. Catherines, Drummondville, Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Toronto. Upper and Lower Canada became a Dominion on July 1st, 1867 - I am older than the Dominion having been born in 1866 and wish somebody would celebrate my birthday as we do Dominion Day (smile). In 1856 a man appealed to the A.M.E. Conference in the United States to name this Canadian collection of churches the British Methodist Episcopal Church of Canada. This permission was granted on Sept. 30th. 1856 and an American Bishop named Willis Nazrey soon afterwoods became the first bishop of the British Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada. The house now occupied by Mr. Wm. Clay was the first B.M.E. parsonage in Windsor. Soon it was decided to build a brick church, land was purchased under the trusteeship of Reynolds Wylie, Washington and Franoy. In 1883, Disney started a movement to return to the American group but was soon squelshed.

Our own first Bishop or General Superintendent as they came to be afterwards was Walter Hawkins. He visited Queen Victoria in England and preached in Westminster Abbey. He was also a great singer and at the conclusion of the service was asked by one of the Lords in what university he had been educated. He replied the school of adversity and hard knocks was my teacher. I have had the honour to see and know every bishop we have had from Nazrey Hawkins, Charles Washington, Sammy Drake, Herbert Wright, J.T. Dawson, T.H. Jackson to the present one Rev. F. O. Stewart. From 1759 to 1956 many years has rolled into eternity and the church has withstood every storm and criticism. She still stands firm because she is founded on the Rock, Christ Jesus. I have been in the church 83 years of my 90. Mother made us go to church and Sunday School. I have no regrets only wish the modern parents would imitate the old patriarchs. We have had a glorious past because our parents held on to God and gave us this building brick and mortar put together by their own hands with water from the Detroit river where we may sing, Praise God From Whom all Blessings Flow.

From notes of Louis Rock taken at the Meeting.

# British Methodist Episcopal Church

Ontario Chapel  
Windsor, Ont.

Sept. 30, 1856.

Similar in beginning to many of the churches in our conference, the B. M. E. Church in Windsor was begun by ex-slaves who had left or fled from the United States by means of the Underground Railway, or by their own private means, to the freedom of Canadian soil. It is estimated that 35-45000 came to Canada by the 1860's, the peak of the influx. Their great religious convictions, their faith - tested by tribulation - their thanks to God, impelled them to provide a place for worship.

see  
Discipline

Those people of the Methodist faith, worshipped under the ministry of men of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The people were united in classes, and formed societies. By 1838, these societies had increased so rapidly that Bishops Brown and other ministers of the A. M. E. Church came to Canada and organized an Annual Conference under his (Bishop Brown) control known as the Canadian Annual Conference.

In a few years this arrangement was found to be inconvenient, and therefore in 1856, a memorial from the Canadian Annual Conference was sent to the General Conference of the A. M. E. Church, setting forth

the disadvantages under which the Canadian Conference laboured; and praying for the privilege to withdraw therefrom. The prayer was granted, and arrangements made with the General Conference for the organization of a distinct, separate and independent church in Canada.

Accordingly on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of September 1856, the Ministers and delegates of the before mentioned societies in Canada met in Convention in their chapel in the town of Chatham Ontario, and did constitute and organize an independent Church to be hereafter styled and known as the British Methodist Episcopal Church. They elected as their first Bishop, Reverend Willis Nazrey, who had since May 13, 1852 been a Bishop in the A.M.E. Church in the United States, and was set apart and released so as to serve the new church in Canada. He continued as Bishop until his death Aug. 22, 1875.

While the preceding events were taking place, here in Windsor Ontario the people were also organized in a Society, and met in homes to

The first record of a purchase of property by this congregation is dated Mar. 23, 1852 according to the Registry office.

Bill of Sale  
Farm lot 85 Plan 106  
Lot 38

Hiram Walker Museum

August Tregent of Detroit, gentleman,  
and  
Wiley Reynolds, Jacob Jones, and Martin Mitchell  
all of Windsor, gentlemen  
Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

Another deed registered on Apr 13, 1854 for the adjacent parcel from August Tregent to Wiley Reynolds and others, is the date to which we usually refer.

A small frame church was erected on the site of the present parsonage adjacent (north) to the church as it stands today. Reverend A. R. Green was the pastor.

~~At the~~ <sup>the</sup> British Methodist Episcopal Church was formed Sept 29, 1856, the Windsor church dates itself from the following day Sept 30, 1856. Bishop Nazrey appointed Reverend Thomas Jefferson to Windsor. (Rv. G. R. Green tried unsuccessfully to create an Independent M. E. Church, and did not fall in line with the B. M. E. Church.

The members of the church worked with tireless zeal to build the new church. The women hauled water from the Detroit River, and helped mix the mortar. The men worked diligently and long <sup>with</sup> ~~with~~ George Moore a contractor supervising the brickwork. John Reid, a carpenter supervised the carpentry. Bricks cost 4<sup>00</sup> per M. and were top quality.

At this time the village of Windsor

Border  
Cities Star  
Mar 31, 1928

only had a population of 2500-3000 people. In 1863 the cornerstone was laid, and Mrs. Elizabeth East placed the first brick on the cornerstone.

The church was opened for worship in 1868. Members of the Trustee Board: Mylie Reynolds, Washington Flacey, Isiah Keyes, Ransom Coleman and Richard Shoecraft. Other Trustees were Henry Offett, Charles Kelsey, Henry Simpkins, William Jackson, Thomas Jones, who served in the early days of the church.

An early pastor was Rev. Benjamin Stewart who served for 2 years, and was followed by Rev. Walter Hawkins who remained for about 3 years and was made a Bishop in 1866 - & died in 1894.

Some of the members of the early church were

Miss Annie Barber, Allan Browning, William Brien, Amy Clarke, Ransome Coleman, Henry Clay

Henry Davis, James Davidson, Mrs. Davidson, George B. Dunn, Caroline Dunn, James L. Dunn, Noah Dunn

John Evans,

Coleman Greeman, Washington Flacey, William Graham, Isaac Goddard

Edward  
Eliza Haynes, Harrison,

Isabel Nelson  
Mrs. Steven Jones, Bush Johnson, John Jones  
William Johnson, Zachariah Jackson,  
Jacob Jones, ~~William Johnson~~

Samuel Keyes,

Edward Lawson, Wilhelmus

John Moffatt, Pong Mays, Martin Mitchell,

Simon Page, Granville Parker, William Price

John Reid, Mylie Reynolds, Archibald  
Thomas, Allison Thomas, Richard Shoecraft,  
Amanda Wright, Edward Walker, Charlotte Walker,  
William Wells,

Annie York

Samuel Whitehead

Richard

During Reverend R. A. Ball's term of service circa 1900, the floor was raised to its present level to make room for a Sunday School auditorium below. During his term too, the pews and stained glass windows were installed. The spirit of the church was great, and everyone worked.

The movement to acquire the great pipe organ was initiated by Rev. Moses Newsome in 1916 and came to fruition while Rev. J. H. Edwards was pastor (circa 1917). Miss Ruth Montgomery was our first pipe organist.

The present pulpit was obtained through Mr. Charles Lawson. The pulpit chairs were donated by the Widening Worker Society of years ago (1940s).

The pews were purchased through the efforts of the women of the church. (circa 1900)

The old organ that stood in the balcony was donated by a Sunday School group called the Band of Hope.

Other donations were:

Old clock in S.S. auditorium in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Kendle  
 The table within the altar donated by George and Alice Smith

Auditorium clock donated by the Ball family in honor of Minnie Ball

Outer doors - gift of Ushers Board

Inner doors to sanctuary in memory of Pritchard Chatten

Baptismal font - gift from Mr. & Mrs. John Richardson

Office desk - memory of Alfred and Georgiana Melben



Plaque in memory of Miss Annie York

5 Chairs - Mrs. Eliza Haynes

Christian flag - Mrs. W. Tomber, Mrs. Gladys Shreve

S.S. Attendance record board - " "

The stained glass windows were donated by: Sunday School

Mr. + Mrs. Geo. Smith

Official Board,

Rev. + Mrs. T.H. Jackson

Epworth League

Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society

Stewards Board,

Britannia Club

Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip,

Choir,

James Davidson

Lydian Society

The lighted Cross in memory of Mrs. Jessie Lawson

The kitchen was first remodeled through the efforts of the Church Aid Society headed by Mrs. Jessie Lawson.

The church walls were re-inforced during Rev. Edwards' first term in the 30's, because it was found that vibrations of the organ were weakening the walls.

The

The church office was a chow project when purchased the Gestetner and typewriter, Missionary gave chair, Mr. Louie Rook the file, Mr. Melber the desk

Mar. 31, 1928

From the newspaper the Border Cities Star, Mrs. L.H. Edwards has a story of the early church,

W. D. S.

Aug 21, 1948

- A ~~new~~ article in "the Star" tells a bit of the early history -

Aug 8, 1953

- Windsor Daily Star,

Nov. 23, 1954 -

From the Sunday School and church congregations have come business and professional men to help elevate the community e.g.

Edward Lawson - merchant, notary,  
 John + Porter Foster - Butchers,  
 Lewis "Bunk" Crowen - Shoemaker,  
 Lizzie Green - storekeeper.  
 J. P. Dunn - manufacturer - Paint + Varnish Works,  
 Burton - confectioner  
 William Alberts - Dry cleaner + laundry,  
 Victor  
 William Jackson - hotel keeper - Jackson House  
 original owner of Walker House, Pelican  
 1850 - 1860

Tom Johnson - barber - employed 3 barbers.  
 Walter Jackson - delivery service  
 Jack Jackson - taxi  
 John Baisden - tailor  
 Sarah Lawson - beautician  
 Lesson Grady - plasterer  
 Ed. Hill - electrician  
 George Smith - Walker House,  
 Walker.

Dr. Kenneth Rock - M.D.  
 Dr. Ralph Stewart - D.D.S.  
 Morris Harding - Electrical Contractor  
 Dr. Wm. Lawson - optometrist  
 Dr. Lloyd Lawson - "  
 Dr. Gordon Lawson - "  
 Dr. Donald Lawson - "  
 Joseph Browning - barber shop  
 Joseph Smith - barber shop  
 Lyle Browning - industrialist  
 Henry Edwards - teacher  
 James L. Watson - Q.C. lawyer - City Solicitor

Isabel Hall (Hoskins) Medical Technologist  
 Phyllis Rock (Cleathon) " "  
 Marian Overton - nurse

Many secretaries,

The various societies and boards, the Sunday School have played an important part in the development of the church, along with individual members and well wishers.

Throughout the years, alterations and repairs have been made to the church building within and without — to the extent that the building, though built with inexperienced hands, stands as a monument to those great souls who, with a little, have left us much.

The pastor and congregation of the Windsor have participated in community events.

They assisted greatly in the formation of the Central Citizens Association, organized about 1929.

The Hour-a-Day Study Club, which was originally the Mother's Club, originated in our Sunday School in .

One of the highlights in recent years was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Conference, held here in Windsor <sup>1954</sup> when a full week of celebration was climaxed by a luncheon in Scott Hall with Rev. Jesse McNeil speaking on "Learning our Heritage".

The history of the Widen Church would not be complete without special mention of these names.

The Lawson family - dedicated to church service  
 the Walker family

Lynda Brooks,

Frank Edmonds,

Robert Scott - who often gave his last dime

Mary Scott - a great missionary

the Hayes family - long line of service

Minnie Chickee - concerts,

Dunn family - line of service,

Rw. Wm. J. Harrison - minister - historian -

who through his remarkable memory retained the history until written in 1956,

- assistant pastor

Mrs. Vivian Nall <sup>his daughter</sup> who has headed a committee

or co-chaired committees (e.g. 106 &

Anniversary Committee with dynamic force.

Charles Ball - served as choir director for years.

Louise Rock - organist for 25 years.

Loy Edwards - choir

Maudie Boyd - Stewardess Bd. pres. for years.

Charles Lawson - has given his all for the church.

Mary Sims - who took care of church without pay.

Elizabeth Washington - steadfast.

Jane Washington - "Granny" to many

While a number of the present congregation can trace a record of family membership back to the early church here - e.g. Lawson family, Haynes family, Brooks family, <sup>Dixon</sup>, etc., the church could not do without those who came from the Dresden area, Buxton area, + other places

to keep it a living organization, It has taken each one with his personal talent and service to keep the church from its beginning until now.

The City of Windsor had need of our property, and expropriated the church and parsonage in 1961. We pay tribute to the negotiating committee, headed by Mr. Thomas Millben, and the pastor Rev. J. H. Edwards for trying to do their best on behalf of the church.

As this is being written, the church is in the process of ~~having~~ going to arbitration with the city over the value of our properties and land. The price offered as of Mar 1, 1962 was \$50,000 plus \$5,000 for furniture taking = \$55,000. which the congregation felt was far from adequate, as it is utterly impossible to build a church such as we had with a large auditorium, <sup>+ balcony</sup> the best pews, stained glass windows, office, pipe organ, plastered walls, ante room, Sunday School auditorium, kitchen, 2 rest rooms, hot water heating system, the structure of the best chip brick — for such a figure.

What the City can never compensate for is the love and dedication and hallowed memories that went into making the church what it was - a proud yet humble standard of the aims and ambitions and hope of stalwart men and women who took thought of the God that brought them out of bondage to a freedom that satisfied their souls.

The church was vacated in Dec. 27, 1961 with the Sunday School holding the final service - a Christmas program, ~~was~~ so instead of the weeping and sadness that would ordinarily mark the closing of such an era - the auditorium rang with <sup>the</sup> laughter and hope of the children - the church of tomorrow.

The official farewell was held Sun. Oct 29<sup>th</sup> 1961

The building was razed Jan 22, 1962 and so closed an era in Br. Methodist history.

The box in the cornerstone had disintegrated and only a few coins could be salvaged.

The church received offers from the North Star Lodge, North American Lodge and Tasso A. M. E. Church, <sup>select + appoint</sup> to hold services in their buildings until a new church is built. The North Star Lodge was accepted, and after deconsecrating the congregation moved in.



Pastors

Thomas Jefferson 1856  
 J. Thomas  
~~Walter Hawkins~~  
~~William Johnson~~  
 Benjamin Stewart - 2 yrs  
 Walter Hawkins  
 William Johnson  
 R. A. Bell

1893-94	Ball, R.A.	1893-1894	
1894-96	Oliver - T.C.	1894-1896	
1896	Blount - Geo. R.	1896-1897	
1897	Snowden - W.H.	Mar 1897 - June 1897	
1897	Davis Henry	1897-1900	
1900 -	Ball R.A.	1904	1900 1904
1904.	WRIGHT, H.D.	1905 -	1904-1905
1905.	MCGOWAN, O.H.		1905 - Jan 1906
	Rev. J. Davis 1907		
	CHURCH CLOSED - Rev. P. Barnes 1868 (while closed)		
1909	JACKSON - T.H.	1914	1944 Stewart 1948
1914	Newsome	1916	1948 Richardson 1950
1916	Edwards -	1923	1950 Edwards 1963
1923	Dawson	1928	1963 EA Richardson Oct/64
1928	Stewart	1934	1963 G.H. Francis Nov 1, 64
1934	Plummer	1937	unexpired term of Rechar...
1937	Jackson	1943	
43	Moore Ivan	1944	

# Pastors of the B. M. C. Church.

Reverend:

Thomas Jefferson 1856  
 J. Thomas Stewart - 2 yrs  
<sup>Benjamin</sup> Walter Hawkins  
 J. R. Blunt  
 William Johnson  
 R. A. Ball  
 H. D. Wright  
 R. A. Ball  
 O. H. McGowan  
 J. Davis  
 F. P. Barnes  
 Thomas H. Jackson  
 Moses Newsome 1914-16  
 L. H. Edwards, B.A. 1916-23

J. T. Dawson  
 O. O. Stewart 1928  
 A. R. Plummer 1935-  
 T. H. Jackson  
 F. O. Stewart ~~1948~~ - 1948  
 E. A. Richardson 1948 - ~~49~~ 1950  
 L. H. Edwards 1950 - 1963.  
 E. A. Richardson <sup>July</sup> 1963 -  
 Gordon H. Francis Nov. 1964 - Apr. 11, 1965  
<sup>ear</sup> Apr 18 - Conf. No. Murch  
 George Crawford July 1965 - 1967  
 Winston H. H. Clarke 1967 - 73

Officers:

Rev H. Edwards, BIA, past

Trustees:

Mr. Thomas Millben

Archibald Ball sr.

James Steele jr

Mr. Ken Rock

Ernest Browning

Thylio Hurst, Fred Castro.

Honorary trustee - William Washington, Charles  
Ball, James R Robbins.

Negotiating Committee

Thomas Millben

Archibald Ball

James Steele - withdrew in 1964

## Sources of Information

Windsor Carnegie Library - clippings from "Star"

Hiram Walker Museum - files of Geo. McDonald.

Discipline of 1890 - property of Mrs. James Robbins

Article in Border Cities Star Mar 31, 1923 -  
property of Mrs. Jay Edwards

Conference Journals - property of Mrs. Susan Lund

Church History - compiled in 1956 for conference  
centennial by Rev. Wm. J. Harrison and  
Mrs. Winifred Shere

Recollections of Mrs. Minnie Chickee and  
other senior members of the church

The Record Committee is aware that there are many omissions, but ask for leniency in judging the extent, and appeal for any extra explanation.

- Mrs. Winifred Shreve - Chairman
- Mrs. Ivy Edwards
- Mrs. Hattie Robbins
- Mrs. Susan Garret
- Mrs. Elizabeth Washington
- Mrs. Flossie Stewart
- Mrs. Vivian Hall.

---

Written by Winifred Shreve in 1961 - 1962.