

Origin of the British Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada

P 345
Excerpt of
African Methodist

There were traces of societies as early as 1826. In 1828 a petition was sent to the Philadelphia Conference from the N.Y. Conference and Canada asking for a preacher. It was referred to the N.Y. Conference as Canada was under its jurisdiction. In 1832 the N.Y. Conference sent Jeremiah Miller, as missionary to Canada. In 1837 Rev. Richard Williams, who had been sent to Canada by the previous conference, made his report. He received sanction of authorities in Canada to plant churches. He planned one at Niagara Falls with 22 members, one at St. David, with 29 members, and one at St. Catharines with 40 members and here licensed two local preachers. On

On June 15, 1839 it was reported to the N.Y. Conference that churches during the past year had been planted at Toronto, Malden, Hamilton and Brantford.

In 1840 Rev. Willis Wadley was received on probation at the N.Y. Conference. By order of the General Conference of 1840, Bishop Morris Brown was given authority to organize an A.M.E. Church Conference, and this was done July 21, 1840 in Toronto Ont. There were 12 members of this 1st Conference.

During the following years the church grew as the people of Canada had thrown open their arms to the slaves from the South and a movement began to separate from the A.M.E. Church as there was not good liason between the U.S. Church and the Canadian Conference due to the difficulty met + possible seizure if a negro went to the U.S.

At the 12th session of the Canadian Conference in 1851, the Conf. was in great difficulty, as every member was impeached for rebelling against the A.M.E. Church by electing Sam. H. Brown to

superintend the A.M.E. Church in Canada until the next General Conference. After being rebuked, they were all forgiven.

At the 15th session held in Chatham Ont, July 21, 1854, Bishops Luinn, Payne and Nazrey presided alternately. At this conference, Rev. Benjamin Stewart was ordained elder, and started the movement to have the A.M.E. Church of Canada set apart as the B.M.E. Church, by presenting a short resolution to that effect, which was presented to the General Conference in Cincinnati Ohio through a special committee. The General Conference, after hearing the request of the Canadians, allowed them to send fraternal delegates to the General Conference in the U.S. The General Conference also appointed a special committee to meet the Canadian Conference, which was to meet in Chatham Ont, on Mon, Sept 29, 1856.

On Monday morning of the said date at 10 a.m. the conference met in Chatham, at the home of Mrs. Taylor to terminate the existance^{now} of the A.M.E. Church in Canada. Bishop Luinn rose, and gave out the hymn "Come let us join our cheerful songs," and after singing he called on Rev. Samuel Brown to pronounce the benediction. Bishop Payne announced the fact that the A.M.E. Church was extinct in Canada, and said that a Convention would open at 12 o'clock noon to effect in the new organization, afterwards known as the British Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Convention opened at 12 o'clock, according to appointment, and after a long and tedious session with many debates as to what portions of the A.M.E. Discipline they would adopt, and what would be the relation of the new church to the "Mother Church", the convention came to a close, deciding to retain friendly relationship

with the Mother Church in the U.S. They elected Reverend Willis Nagrey as their first Bishop. He had been a Bishop in the A.M.E. Church in the U.S. 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 at Shelbourne N.S.

After Rev. Nagrey died, the General Conference of the B.M.E. Church sitting in Hamilton Ont in 1875 "deemed it necessary to appoint a Bishop to attend to the business of the Connexion. The Reverend R. R. Disney, being a regularly ordained elder for many years, was duly elected to fill that office, and on Sun. Nov. 21, 1875, Richard Randolph Disney was solemnly set apart by prayer.

Bishop Disney presided for "Organic Union" with the A.M.E. Church, Gen. Conf in the U.S. and in 1880 a joint commission was created and some of the Canadian Churches became part of the A.M.E. Church with Bishop Disney becoming Bishop. This re-union was done in 1885 at Hamilton Ont.

Because of the negotiations and agitators grew to such gigantic proportions it finally resulted in the dropping of Bishop Disney's name, and the severance of all his relations with the B.M.E. Church. Committee's report was unanimously adopted by the Gen. Conf. of the B.M.E. Church, sitting in the town of Windsor, A.D. 1886, July.

The Gen. Conf. on Tues July 6th 1886 ^{elected} & Rev. Walter Hawkins to be Bishop.

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

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

Bill of Sale
Farm lot 85 Plan 106
lot 38
August Tregent of Detroit, gentleman
and
Wiley Reynolds, Jacob Jones and Martin Mitchell
all of Windsor, yeomen
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 parsonage adjacent (north) of the church on the west side of McDougall Street, between Assumption and Monerity Avenues (about mid block) Reverend A. R. Green was the pastor.

After the British Methodist Episcopal Church was formed Sept 29, 1856, the Windsor Church dated itself from the following day, Sept. 30, 1856, Bishop Nazrey appointed Reverend Thomas Jefferson to Windsor. (Rev. A. R. Green tried unsuccessfully to create an Independent M. E. Church, and did not fall in line with the B. M. E. Church.

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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 under George Moore (white) a contractor supervising the brickwork. John Reid a coloured carpenter supervised the carpentry. Bricks cost \$4⁰⁰ per M, and were top quality.

At this time the village of Windsor 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 Trustee Board -

Myrie Reynolds, Washington Flenny, Isaac 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

Some of the members of the early church were:

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

Henry Davis, James Davidson, Mrs. Davidson
George B. Dunn, Carlisle Dunn, James L. Dunn,
Nash Carter Dunn,

John Evans,

Coleman Freeman, Washington Flenny,

William Graham, Isaac Goddard

Edward Haynes, Eliza Haynes, Harwin,
 Isabel Nelson, Mrs. Steven Jones, Bush Johnson,
 John Jones, William Johnson, Jacharick Jackson,
 Jacob Jones.

Samuel Keyes

Edward Lawson, Wilhelmina Lawson,
 John Moffatt, Pony Maye, Martin Mclellan

Simon Page, Granville Parker,
 John Reid, Mylie Reynolds, Archibald Thomas,
 Allison Thomas, Richard Shoecraft, Amanda
 Wright, Edward Walker, Charlotte Walker,
 William Wells,
 Annie York.

During Rev. Richard A. Ball's term of service (circa 1900) the floor of the church was raised to make room for a Sunday School auditorium below. During his term too, the pews and stained glass windows were installed and the three pulpit chairs donated by the Welling Workers Society. The pews were purchased through the efforts of the women of the church.

An old organ (pedal) that stood in the balcony was donated by a Sunday School group called the Band of Hope.

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

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Other donations to the Church on McDougall St were:
Old clock in the S.S. auditorium - in memory of
Mr. + Mrs. Charles Kindle
Altar table - donated by George and Alice Smith
Auditorium clock - donated by the Ball family in
honour of Minnie Ball
Outer doors - gift of Usher's Board
Inner doors - in memory of Pritchard Challers
Baptismal font - gift from Mr + Mrs. John Reckstein
Office desk - memory of Alfred and Georgiana Mullin
Plaque - in memory of Miss Annie York
5 Chairs - Mrs. Eliza Haynes
Christmas flag - Mrs. A.W. Timken, Mrs. Gladys Shree
S.S. Attendance Record Board " " " " " "

Stained-glass windows donated by:

Sunday School

Mr. + Mrs. Geo. Smith

Official Board

Rev. + Mrs. T.H. Jackson

Epworth League

Women's Home + Foreign Missionary Society

Stewardess Board

Britannia Club

Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip

Choir

James Davidson

Legdian Society

The lighted cross - in memory of Mrs. Jessie Lawson
The church office was a choir project - they purchased
the Gestetner and typewriter; Missionary
Society gave chairs, Mrs. Louise Rock the file,
Mr. Milliken the desk.

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

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The church walls were re-inforced and buttresses built during her first term in the 20's because it was found that vibrations of the organ were weakening the walls.

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

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, stood for over 100 years as a monument to those great souls, who with so little, left so much.

The pastor and congregation 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, originally called the Mothers' Club originated out of a S.S. convention held in Windsor. Mrs. Logan told of how they had organized a Mothers' Club in Hamilton to better handle the problem of youth. The report was made to the S.S. Board by Delma Browning, the delegate and was acted upon by the board. A committee composed of Veroin Hall & Elizabeth Washington waited on Mrs. Ardella Jacobs to become president because of her experience with the Sarah Simons Study group.

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One of the highlights in recent years was the 100th Anniversary of our Conference held in Windsor in 1956. A full week of celebration was climaxed by a luncheon in Scott Hall, attended by civic + church dignitaries with Rev. Jesse McNeil speaking on "Earning Our Heritage".

The church property was expropriated, ^{June 1, 1959} by the City of Windsor to make way for a County Building. A negotiating Committee dealt with the city

Officers - Rev. I.H. Edwards, BA. Pastor
Trustees - Mr. Thomas Millen, chair
Archibald Ball, sec.
James Steele, treas
McKeon Rock
Ernest Browning
Wylie Hurst
Fred Caston

Honorary Trustees: William Washington, Charles Ball,
James R. Robb

Negotiating Committee:

Thomas Millen
Archibald Ball
James Steele - (withdrew in 1961
because city employee)

The "official Farewell Worship Service" was held Sun. October 29, 1961, with full capacity (see program)

The church was vacated Dec 27, 1961 with the Sunday School holding the final service -

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a Christmas program. So insistent of the weeping and sadness expressed on Oct 29 at the Farewell Service, that ordinarily marks the closing of such an era - The auditorium rang with the laughter and hope of children - the church of tomorrow.

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
Tanner A. G. L. Church,
Peter St. Baptist Church

to hold services in their buildings until a new church was built. The North Star Lodge, McDougall St was accepted, and after decorating, the congregation moved in. The arrangement was that the church pay heating bills.

The Church members and the City of Windsor did not agree on the value placed on our properties and land. The final price offered as of Mar 1, 1962 \$50,000 plus 5,000 for fixture taking = \$55,000. And so they decided to go to arbitration.

On Tues June 5, 1962 at 10am the Municipal Board sat in Council Chamber at Windsor City Hall, to hear the claimant, the B.M.E. Church formerly of 363 McDougall St appeal for sufficient funds to build a new church and parsonage and buy lands on which to build them.

The Church was represented by Mr. Levinter, a lawyer from Toronto and Ross Riddell, Q.C. of Windsor. The amounts for the organ, \$3500, and the parsonage \$5000 were previously agreed upon.

Several contractors were called on behalf of the church who had inspected the former church with a view to estimate the cost to construct another one similar to the one we had. The estimates were as follows.

- Lombardo Constructors - \$89,000
- Gosselin Constructors \$102,000
- Masotti 87,000
- Collavino Bros. between \$60 - 70,000
- Damen 103,680

It was shown that these companies were small companies, with little experience in church building

Rev. Edwards, Mr. Louis Millburn, Mr. Albert Wells, Reverend Mack Brown, & Mr. Roach (appraiser) gave evidence.

The Bd. adjourned until Wed June 6, 1962
Our lawyers met with counsel for city from 9 am. (suspending arbitration hearing) until 11:30 am, when Mr. Riddell called Rev. Edwards, Thomas Millburn, Chas Lawson, Archie Ball & McKean Roach into conference.

Shortly afterward those of our church in attendance were ^{also} called in to hear the offer.

Offer

After paying all the legal costs (\$10,000) the net to the church would be 58,000.

City said A. Soda of Ascon Const would produce a letter to build a church with all conveniences for \$55,000 and pointed out Ascon was experienced in building churches.

After expressing disappointment at 1:12 pm, on motion of Mr. Charles Ball supported by Mrs. Velma Venable that we accept the terms of settlement, \$58,000 + 5% interest from time of surrender without any additional cost to us.

Motion carried unanimously by standing vote

Voting:

- Rev. L. H. Edwards
- Charles Ball
- Ivy Edwards
- Larry Johnson
- Marie Martin
- Ired Caston
- Bertha Chicka
- Jone Sleete
- Charles Lawson

Archie Ball
 Winifred Shrese
 Elizabeth Washington
 Louella Johnson
 Madeline Parker
 Anita Travis
 Velma Vincent
 McKee Rock
 Lawrence Melbin
 Frank McCauley
 Charles Hall
 Ernest Browning
 Mildred Talbot
 Thomas Melbin
 May Castro
 Everett Ball

Mrs. O. Richardson was at the hearing but left before
 vote was taken
 Elzora Chase arrived too late to vote

Geo Property at Louis + University Area purchased
 from the Windsor Board of Education

Ground breaking ceremony was held Sun. June 2, 1963
 at the site with a service later at Scott Hall
 (see program) ~~and~~ Foundation was begun
 week later.