

Introduction - Chair - Ministers etc.

I am grateful for the opportunity to tell a bit more of the church history, and will briefly mention our first Bishop Rev. Willis Nazey, who was set apart and released from the A. M. E. Church in the United States in order to serve the new church in Canada. He continued as Bishop until his death Aug 22, 1875, and was succeeded by Bishop Walter Hawkins, who, according to our late historian Rev. Wm Harrison, visited Queen Victoria in England, and preached & sang in Westminster Abbey.

On the local scene, the small frame church built by the members, in ten years became much too small, and a new church was planned. The members of the church worked with tireless zeal to build this new church. The women hauled water from the river, and helped mix

1971
176
115
1856

1856
116
1972

the mortar. The men worked diligently and long, with George Moore, a contractor, supervising the brickwork. John Reid, a black carpenter, supervised the carpentry. Bricks cost 4⁰⁰ per M, and were top quality. (At this time the village of Wicken 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 were Nylie Reynolds, Washington Steacy, Isiah Kuper, Ransom Coleman, and Richard Shoecraft. Other trustees were Henry Offett, Charles Kekey, Mary Simpkins, William Jackson, Thomas Jones, Samuel Whited, William Price, whose names are registered on early deeds.

During Reverend Richard A. Bell's term of service circa 1986 many changes and improvements were made. The Sunday School auditorium was made, and the pews and stained glass windows were installed.

The spirit of the church was great and everyone worked, and some of them were, Miss Annie Barber, Allan Browning, William Brien, Amy Clarke, Ransome Coleman, Henry Clay, John Evans, Coleman Straman, Henry Davis, James Davidson, George and Caroline Deann, Washington Fleury, William Graham, Isaac Godden, James L. Duan, Noah Duan, Edward and Eliza Haynes, Edward and Wilhelmina Lawson, Isabel Nelson, Harrison (Mrs. Nellie Grandparents) Mrs. Steven Jones, Bush Johnson, John Jones, William Johnson, Zachariah Jackson, Jacob Jones, Samuel Keyes, John Moffatt

Pony May, Martin Mitchell, Lemm Page, Grenville Parker, William Price, Edward Walker, Charlotte Walker, William Wells, Samuel Whitehead, Alice York,

These people all made contributions to the very early church, but I do not overlook the fact that there are many more, since that time, who have also made great contributions to the survival of the church, and who at another time I would like the opportunity to honour, so that they and their descendants ^{will} know that their labour ~~isn't~~ ^{didn't} go unnoticed.

The movement to acquire the great pipe organ was initiated by Rev. Moses Newsome in 1916, and came to fruition under Rev. J. H. Edwards during his ministry 1916-1923. Miss Ruth Montgomery was our first pipe organist.

Throughout the years, alterations and repairs were made to the church building - within and without - to the extent that the building - though built with inexperienced hands, stood from 1863 to 1962 as a monument to those great souls, who with a little, have left us much. The ^{McDonnell St} old church property was expropriated by the city and the old church was razed in January²² of 1962. What never could be compensated for was 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 Dec 27, 1961 with the Sunday School holding the final

service - a Christmas program.

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

The church received several offers from the North Star Lodge, North American Lodge, Tanner A. M. S. Church and Peter St. Baptist Church to hold services in their buildings until a new church was built. The North Star Lodge building was accepted and services were held there until the cong. moved into ^{our} the new church. We were grateful and still are, for the kindnesses of so many at that time. First Baptist ^{church} opened its doors to us, ^{for special services} as did others.

With the ground breaking on June 3, 1963 a ~~new~~ the old era closed and a new one began.