

H I S T O R Y

of the

BRITISH METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ONTARIO CHAPEL

WINDSOR, ONTARIO

1856 - 1962

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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 Bishop 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 29th day of September 1856, the ministers and the delegates of the before mentioned societies in Canada met in convention on their chapel in the town of Chatham Ont. and did constitute and organize an independent Church to be hereafter stlyed 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, meeting in homes.

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

BILL OF SALE

Hiram  
Walker  
Museum

Farm lot 85  
Lot 38

Plan 106

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

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

A small frame church was erected on the site of the now demolished parsonage (north). Reverend A.R. Green was the pastor. Reverend Green did not fall in line with the B.M.E. Church when it was created, and tried unsuccessfully to start and Independent M.E. Church.

After the British Methodist Episcopal Church was formed ~~Sept.29th,1856~~, the Windsor Church dates itself ~~Sept.30,~~ 1856. Bishop Nazrey appointed Reverend Thomas Jefferson as first minister under the B.M.E. Conference.

How church  
built

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 a contractor supervising the brickwork. John Reid a well known coloured carpenter supervised the carpentry. Bricks cost \$ 4.00 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 the Trustee Board were Wiley Reynolds, Washington Flenoy, Isiah Keyes, Ransom Coleman, and Richard Shoecraft.

Other Trustees who served in the early days of the church were Henry Offett, Charles Kelsey, Henry Simpkins, William Jackson, Thomas Jones. An early pastor was Reverend Benjamin Stewart, who served for 2 years and was followed by Reverend Walter Ha Hawkins. Rev. Hawkins remained for about 3 years and was made Bishop in 1866 .

Some of the members of the church before 1900 were:

Annie Barber, Allan Browning, Willian Brien, Amy Clarke, Ransom Coleman, Henry Clay.

Henry Davis, James Davidon, Mrs. Davidson, George Dunn, Caroline Dunn, James L. Dunn, Norah Dunn.

John Evans,

Coleman Freeman, Washington Flenoy,  
William Graham. Isaac Goddins  
Edward Haynes, Eliza Haynes, Harrison,  
Isabel Harrison,  
Mrs. Steven Jones, Bush Johnson, John Jones, William Johnson,  
Zachariah Jackson, Jacob Jones,  
Samuel Keyes,  
Edward Lawson,  
John Moffatt, Pony Mays, Martin Mitchell,  
Simon Page, Granville Parker,  
John Reid, Wiley Reynolds, Archibald Thomas, Allison Thomas,  
Richard Shoecraft  
Edward Walker, Charlotte Walker, William Wells  
Annie York

At the turn of the century, during Reverend R.A. Ball's term of service, 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 Reverend Mosed Newsome in 1916 and came to fruition while Reverend I.H. Edwards was pastor (circa 1917). Miss Ruth Montgomery was the first pipe organist.

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

The pews were purchased through the <sup>united</sup> efforts of the women of the church.

The pulpit chairs were donated by the Willing Workers of years ago (circa 1900)

OTHER DONATIONS were

Old clock in S.S. auditorium in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kindle.

Five chairs by Mrs. Eliza Haynes,

Placque in memory of Annie York.

The table within the altar by Mr. and Mrs. George Smith (Wakker House)

Present pulpit by Mr. Charles Lawson

Auditorium clock in memory of Mrs. Minnie Ball.

Outer doors - gift of Ushers' Board

Inner doors to sanctuary - in memory of Pritchard Chatters

Baptismal font- by Mr. and Mrs. John Richardson

Office desk - in memory of Alfred and Georgiana Millben

Christian flag - Mrs. A.W. Timbers and Mrs. Gladys Shreve

S. School record board by Mrs. A.W. Timbers and Mrs. Gladys Shreve

The stained glass windows were donated by:

Sunday School  
 Official Board  
 Epworth League  
 Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society  
 Rev. and Mrs. T.H. Jackson  
 Stewardess Board  
 Britannia Club  
 Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip  
 Choir  
 James Davidson  
 Lydian Society  
 Mr. and Mrs. George Smith

Lighted cross in memory of Mrs. Jessie Lawson.

The office was a Choir project - they purchased the Gestetner and typewriter. Missionary Society gave chairs, Mrs. Louise Rock the file and Mr. Millben the desk. This was done in 1956.

The kitchen was remodeled once through the efforts of the Church Aid Society headed by Mrs. Jessie Lawson in the '30's. It was done again in 1956.

The church walls were reenforced in the 20's when it was found that vibrations of the organ were weakening the walls, or rather that the building was not made to house such an organ. (1923)



An exciting time in the history of the church occurred when ~~the south wall~~ a portion of the south wall was blown out during a violent storm. Nobody was in the building at the time but it was a sight to see the large gaping hole where the bricks and windows had blown out. The congregation worshipped in Landrum Hall until the wall was fixed. This happened in about 1931 when Rev. Stewart was the Pastor.

From the Sunday School and Church congregations have come business and professional men to make their contribution to the community. e.g.

Edward Lawson - merchant, notary

John and Parter Foster - butchers

Lewis "Bunk" Craven - shoemaker

Lizzie Green - storekeeper

J.L.Dunn- manufacturer, paint and varnish

Burton - confectioner

William Alberts - dry cleaner and laundry

Victor Alberts " " " "

William Jackson - hotel keeper, Jackson House between 1850-1960 original of Walker House

Tom Johnson - barber, employed 3 barbers in early days

Walter Jackson - delivery

Zack Jackson - taxi

John Baisden - tailor John Baisden

Leason Grady - plasterer

Ed Hill - electrician

George Smith - Hotel- Walker House

Walker

Dr.Kenneth Rock, M.D.

Dr.Ralph Stewart, D.D.S.

Morris Harding- electrical contractor

Charles Lawson- electric

Dr.Wm. Lawson. optometrist

Dr.Lloyd Lawson, optometrist

Dr.Gordon Lawson, "

Dr.Donald Lawson, "

Joseph Browning - barber shop

Lyle Browning - industrialist

Joseph Smith - Barber shop

Henry Edwards - teacher

Raymond Roberts - teacher

James Roberts - Lawyer

James E. Watson, lawyer, so

Isabel Nall(Hoskins) Medical technologist

Phyllis Rock (Cheatham) " "

Marian Overton ( ) nurse

Many secretaries

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

The Church has been very fortunate in having the support of friends and well wishers in its program and it has been a great help.

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 oftentimes inexperienced hands, has stood as a monument to those great souls who, with a little, have left us much.

The pastor and congregation of the Windsor Church have participated in community events. Many of our young men willingly gave service in two Great Wars. We have never been indifferent in the matter of voting.

The church assisted greatly in the formation of the Central Citizens' Association, organized about 1929.

The Hour/A-Day Study Club originated in our Sunday School. It was originally called the Mothers' Club, and an executive of the Sunday School was its first president.

One of the highlights in recent years was the 100th Anniversary of our Conference held here in Windsor, when a full week of celebration was enhanced by a luncheon in Scott Hall with Rev. Jesse McNeil speaking on "Earning Our Heritage".

The history of the Windsor church would not be complete without special mention of these names and families :

Lawson family - dedicated to church service

Walker family

Lynden Brooks - long line

Frank Edmonds - earnest

Robert Scott - who would give his last dime, and brought coal from home

Mary Scott - missionary

Haynes family - long line

Jane Washington

Minnie Chickee - her concerts

Rev. Wm. J. Harrison - minister - historian - assistant pastor - retained through his remarkable memory the history of the church.

Mrs. Vivian Nall his daughter - dynamic promoter

Charles Ball - choir director, S.S. Superintendent.

Louise Rock - organist for 25 years

Ivy Edwards - choir service

Maude Boyd - Stewardess Board pres. for years.

Mary Sims - who took care of church without pay

Charles Lawson -

Susan Garrel

James Robbins

Hattie Robbins

Ona Richardson

John Richardson

Elizabeth Washington

Naomi Edmonds

Fred Parker

Anita Travis

While a number of the present congregation can trace a record of family membership back to the early church e.g. the Haynes, the Lswsons, the Harrisons, the Brooks, the Dunns, etc. the church could not do without those who have come from other areas such as Dresden, Buxton etc. to keep it a living congregation from its beginning ~~until~~ until now.

As this is being written the church is without a building, it was razed Jan. 1962, and we are about to reach a climax with the City of Windsor regarding the value. We seek a reasonable settlement, which up to the present we do not feel has been offered. We have been offered \$ 55,000.00 for the entire property and buildings, a later figure was \$ 70,000. which was withdrawn and replaced by an offer of \$ 60,000.00. We have no alternative but to arbitrate.

What the City can never compensate for is the love and dedication and hallowed memories that went into, and sustained the Church, making it what it was and is - a proud yet humble memorial of the aims and ambitions and hopes of stalwart men and women who took thought of the God that brought them out of bondage to a soul satisfying freedom.

The "Official Farewell" was held Sun. Oct. 29, 1961 with a full turn out of members and friends at both the 11.00 a.m. service and the special evening service, arranged by Mr. Ernest Browning. The church was vacated on Dec. 27, 1961, with the Sunday School holding the final service - a Christmas program. It was well attended on Dec. 26th. Instead of the weeping and sadness that would ordinarily mark the closing of such an era - the auditorium rang with the laughter of the children - the church of tomorrow.

The building was razed Jan. 22, 1962. When the cornerstone was opened, it was found that the box had disintegrated, and only a few coins could be salvaged.

The Church received offers from the North Star Lodge, North American Lodge, Tanner A.M.E. Church, and Peter St. Baptist Church, to allow us to hold services in their buildings until a new church is built. The North Star Lodge was accepted, and after decorating the congregation moved in.

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

Reverend:

Thomas Jefferson

J. Thomas  
Walter Hawkins

J.R. Blunt

William Johnson

R.A. Ball

H.D. Wright

R.A. Ball

O.H. McGowan

J. Davis

P. Barnes

Thomas H. Jackson

Moses Mewsome

I.H. Edwards, B.A. 1916 -1923

J.T. Dawson

F.O. Stewart

A.R. Plummer

T.H. Jackson

F.O. Stewart

E.A. Richardson

I.H. Edwards, B.A. 1950 -



SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Windsor Carragie Library - clippings from the Star

Hiram Walker Museum - files of George McDonald

Discipline of 1890 - property of Mrs. James Robbins

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

Conference Journals - property of Mrs. Susan Garrel

Church History - compiled in 1956 for Conference  
Centennial by Reverend Wm. J. Harris-  
on and Mrs. Winifred Shreve

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

TRUSTEE BOARD - 1962

Thomas Millben - chairman

Archibald Ball - secretary

James Steele - treasurer

Wylie Hurst - vice chairman

Fred Caston

Ernest Browning

M.C. Rock

Honourary Trustees :

James Robbins

Charles Ball

*Negotiating Committee.*

*Thomas Millben - chair*

*Archibald Ball*

*James Steele - resigned*

*Charles Lawson*

The Record Committee realizes that there are many omissions, and still appeal for extra true information.

- Mrs. Winifred Shreve, chairman
- Mrs. Ivy Edwards
  
- Mrs. Hattie Hobbins
- Mrs. Susan Garrel
- Mrs. Elizabeth Washington
- Mrs. Flossie Stewart
- Mrs. Vivian Nall

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Compiled and written by Winifred Shreve in 1961 - 1962