

EAST PLAINS UNITED CHURCH SHOWS MORE THAN A CENTURY OF GROWTH...

In 1863 a small frame church 26' by 36' was built in Aldershot on what is now the site of East Plains United Church. From this humble beginning has grown a congregation of over 1,000 members. Mrs. Annie Smale, oldest member of the congregation, who attended the informal evening service of reminiscence held Sunday evening, Oct. 20, 1963, recalled this building.

The first structure had a 22' by 24' Sunday School classroom attached. Now the present Sunday School enrolment is 550, and this figure includes a 45% increase from just four years ago. Construction is under way for a new Christian Education Center since the growth rate indicates the present facilities will be inadequate in two years. The first Sunday School superintendent in 1858 was Aaron Emery who carried on the post for 25 years.

In 1892 the original frame building, New Methodist Church in the Freeman Circuit, was moved to make way for a larger brick church with a total membership of 77. Mrs. Smale produced a clipping from the Hamilton Spectator dated May 1892, which described the laying of the cornerstones of this building which cost \$5,000.

Silver trowels were presented to the six who laid the stones; Messrs. H. A. Massey and J. K. Macdonald of Toronto, Mrs. A. D. Emery and Mrs. L. Davis of Burlington, Mrs. J. E. Flatte of Millgrove and Miss Eva Freeman, daughter of J. W. Freeman of Freeman.

As was the fate of so many historical structures, in 1907 fire destroyed this church and necessitated the building of what is now the present chapel.

In 1922 Appleby Church separated and the Plains Pastoral Charge carried on here. In 1954 East Plains and West Plains separated and have each grown independently within the church family.

At the evening service of the anniversary, several former ministers met with members of the congregation and guests in the chapel. Rev. E. Shaw of East Plains spoke of the special showcase on display and the pulpit and font. The pulpit was made by W. E. Peart, father of Ross Peart before 1907, from a huge walnut tree cut from the banks of the Grand River at York and aged for 40 years in his barn. This tree also provided lumber for a pulpit Mr. Peart made for West Plains, for collection plates and for the communion table he made to match the pulpit. The font was given by Mr. and Mrs. A. Emery in memory of Aaron Emery.

For years Mr. and Mrs. Walter Horne kept for the church a silver communion cup and pitcher, matching the silver cup at present still in use, given to the church by Mrs. Gilbert Davis. Miss Lola Horne brought these to the attention of Mr. Shaw and Mrs. George Archibald who suggested a showcase for their display. Accordingly the bottom of the pedestals of the communion table were glassed in for such a purpose. The porcelain "loving cup" used by the first congregation 120 years ago for communion is also to be housed in this case.

Dr. S. B. Stokes recalled his ministry during the depression years 1928 to 1936 when he experienced a "history of kindness". The women of the church made over clothes for the needy here and also sent supplies to the hard-hit West.

Rev. J. Heslop, 1936 to 1940 also attended 96th anniversary services. Rev. E. A. Chester remarked on the pleasure of attending a seldom-held evening service. Rev. H. W. Outerbridge, 1945 to 1947, explained how he was called back to Japan,