

CENTRE CHURCH

The rapidly increasing population of Ameliasburg Township during the latter half of the 19th century was mainly responsible for the erection of a Wesleyan Methodist Church at Centre, on the north-east corner of the highway from Rednersville to Ameliasburg at a point where the second concession line intersects. Twenty years earlier the church at Rednersville had been completed but now the need for additional religious accomodation had become very evident.

For many years Sunday School Services for the area had been conducted in the local stone school house at Centre. It was eventually decided to proceed with the church building programme. Canvassers solicited funds, and pledges for free labor and materials were obtained from many of the interested residents. The original panel of Trustees were probably some of the contributors named in the list of Missi- onary Society members at the end of this article.

The site chosen for the church was donated by Mr. John Roblin and in 1869 construction was begun. The building was of solid brick which was obtained from a local brick yard at the foot of "Fingerboard" hill. It had a seating capacity of 100 persons with three windows on each side and two at the front. A small closed porch covered the front door, and a gallery was built across the back of the church. A large centre aisle and two narrow aisles along the side walls permitted easy access to the pews. A tall pointed tower gave the church a very pleasing appearance.

A large frame drive shed on the north and east sides of the church provided shelter for the many horses required to convey the families who lived beyond easy walking distance; wood for fuel was stored in this shed also.

Congregational Prayer Meetings were held regularly each Wednesday evening in the Church except in the winter when they were held in private homes. The Epworth League was an early Methodist organization and these meetings were held on Thursday evenings in the Church with the Minister in attendance. In addition to the usual Sunday School classes for the children, Centre Church boasted a large Adult Bible Class. This Bible class of 46 members plus the teacher and superintendent was awarded a Certificate by the International Sunday School Association.

Christmas entertainments were always popular with all ages and were held in the Church. Sunday School picnics were held in Redner's grove, and in later years boat excursions were made to Presqu'Isle, 12 O'clock Point, Forester's Island and Glen Island.

In 1925 the Centre Wesleyan Methodist Church elected to join the United Church of Canada and from that date was known as Centre United Church.

For many years the building was heated by two large box stoves which were later replaced by oil burning heaters. Oil burning lamps of the wall bracket type were used for lighting until they were replaced with electricity when it became available. Music was provided by an organ for many years which was later replaced by a piano. Mr. William Lont served as caretaker for many years.

A hall about forty feet long was added to the rear of the church in 1938 and provided much needed accomodation for meetings, suppers and recreation purposes. Sunday School concerts, fowl suppers, box and strawberry socials were held by the ladies of the Ladies Aid and the Missionary Society.

For almost one hundred years Centre Church filled a very useful religious and social need in the community, but the automobile with resulting diminishing congregations eventually forced it to close its doors. The Reverend George Ambury, minister of the church, preached the last sermon on Good Friday, 1966. The church was sold to Alfred Cairns and the following year the building was demolished.