

Harmony United Church

Marking 100 years of faithful service to the residents in the Harmony area, the Harmony United Church celebrates its centennial this Sunday with two special services at 11 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Two former ministers of Harmony have been secured as guest preachers. Rev. E. J. Roulston, now retired, will conduct the morning worship and Rev. George W. Birtch, minister of Metropolitan Church, Toronto, will conduct the evening worship.

FOREST AISLES

The history of the Harmony church actually pre-dates the founding of the first frame church in 1864. The first ser-

vices were held as camp meetings in the great cathedral aisles of the forests. In 1862, under the leadership of Mr. Elsworth, the first camp meetings were started, to be followed by services in the old log school house.

The Methodist Church in Harmony, situated on lot 1, con. 7 Downie Township, was founded at an early date by J. H. Dunsmore, John Sibbins, Charles Lupton Sr, and James Dunsmore.

A Methodist missionary named Cleghorn, while on a journey to West Zorra, lost his way in the woods and in the course of his wanderings reached a settler's cabin

where he remained for a time. Services were held and the surrounding backwoodsmen decided to form a congregation to be known as "Harmony."

The little society continued to hold weekly meetings in private homes and afterwards in the school building until 1864 when the first frame church was built. Its first stationed minister was Rev. John S. Fisher.

EARLY ACCOUNT

Following is an account of the "Early Days" given to the Harmony Young People's Society on May 12, 1917 by Mrs. James Dunsmore, who provided an accurate picture of

the times:

"It was in the fall of 1862 that Mr. Elsworth in passing through this neighborhood, found there was no place for worship. With some others, he had the ground prepared to hold a camp meeting. The country then being mostly bush, many difficulties had to be overcome. The place chosen was to the right of the road just before going down the hill on the Town Line, just south of where William Hyslop now lives. The building was just a few shanties made of logs, the seats, planks placed on blocks, the ground covered with straw. There was a raised platform for the min-

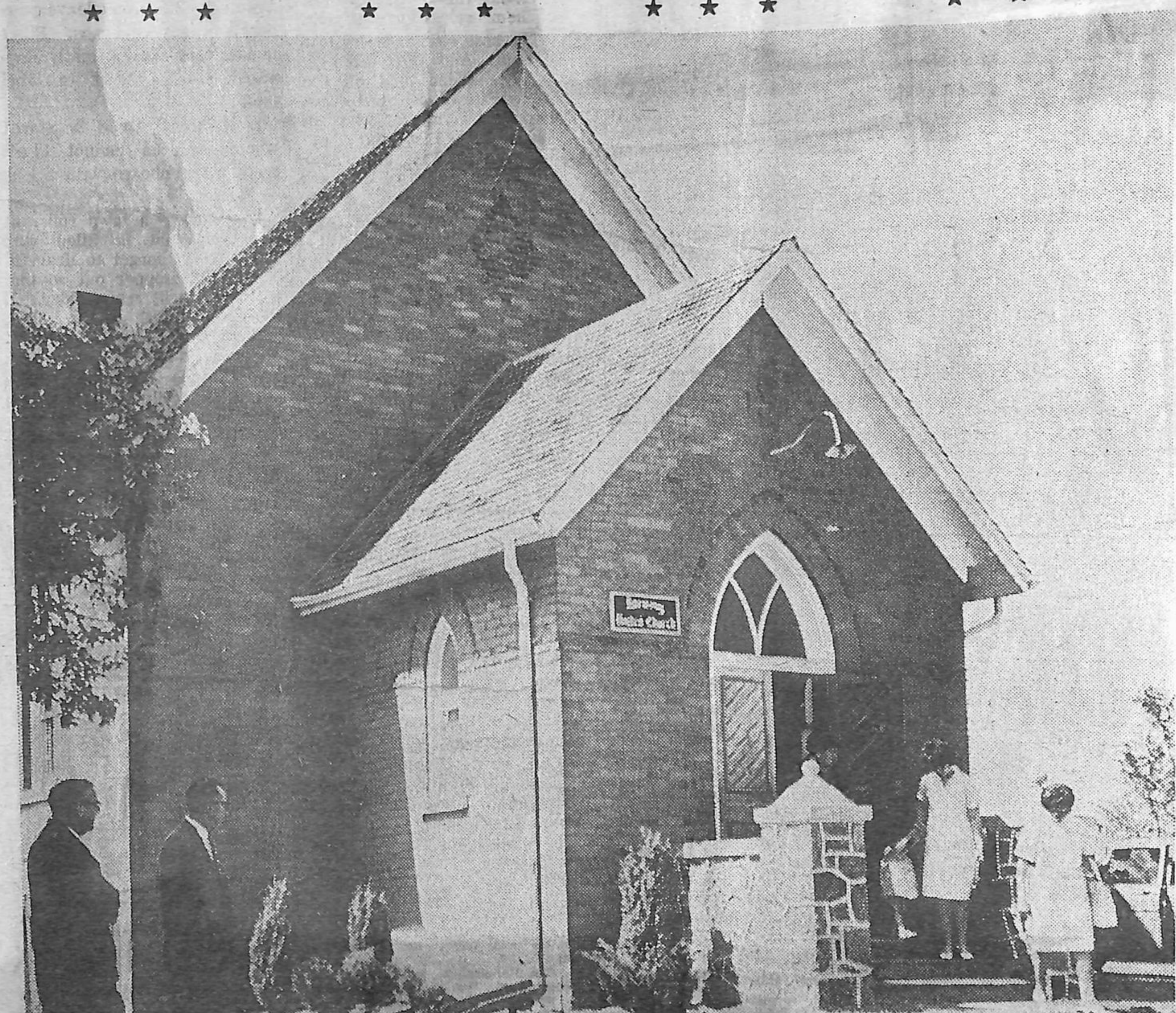
ister but no pulpit. Some good singers made the woods resound with God's praise. From that location, the work was carried on in the log school-house where the South Easthope brick school now stands. Ground was given by grandfather Dunsmore and a small frame church was built. Services dedicating the building to God's service were conducted by ministers from Stratford, in 1863 Rev. H. Christopherson; in 1866 Rev. W. Price; in 1868 Rev. George M. Brown and in 1869 Rev. E. Richardson. The first ordained minister, the Rev. John Fisher came and spent three years, leaving pleasant memories. Many were converted at these early meetings as many have been since that time in the little church. Grandfather Lupton led the singing for a number of years before an organ was in use."

A sketch of the early history of the United Church of Canada in Harmony shows how it is entwined with the history of Perth county and Downie township in particular.

CLERGY RESERVES

Large tracts of land, a wilderness at that time, were set aside by the Parliament in England some hundred and fifty years ago for the support of the Church and became known as "The Clergy Reserves." But little or no attempt was made by the Established Church in England to use these lands or to open them up for settlement. On June 27, 1825, the King gave his royal assent to an Act which incorporated "The Canada Company," to whom later the grant known as "The Clergy Reserves" was formally given. Directors purchased and took upon themselves the responsibility of opening up for settlement the vast section of territory which included the "Clergy Reserves," and which they called the "Huron Tract," but which is known now as the counties of Perth, Huron and Bruce. The price set was one shilling and three pence an acre.

Rev. James Warden is the present minister of the church and Arthur Dunsmore is clerk of the Session. Ed-



HARMONY CHURCH BUILDING