

# Knox Presbyterians at Ripley Celebrate Centennial Tomorrow

SBVI-8



## Scottish Background

Many former residents are expected to swell the congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church at Ripley tomorrow when the church celebrates its centennial. The church, shown above, has been extensively renovated by volunteer labor in readiness for the event. (Photo by MacLeod)

By J. W. MacLeod

The congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church at Ripley—normally 80 strong—is expected to swell to four times that number tomorrow when the church's centenary is marked. Hamilton MacKinnon, of the invitation committee, has received replies from a score of points with the promise "We'll be there."

Services will be in charge of the minister, Rev. Joseph R. MacDonald, with a former minister, Rev. J. Reynolds Esler, of Brantford, speaking in the morning and a son of the congregation, Rev. A. Ross MacKay, of Montreal, preacher for the evening service. The centenary celebration will terminate with congregational social Monday.

Preparing for the event, members of the 100-year-old congregation have contributed time and labor to building renovations, which included construction of centre aisle, pew rearrangement and church carpeting.

The history of Knox Church is tightly interwoven with that of Huron Presbyterian Church, both of which had congregations in Ripley for a period extending from 1874, when 80 families of Huron Church petitioned for permission to start a congregation because they were dissatisfied with choice of the second minister, Rev. Adam McQueen, to 1922, when Huron and Knox congregations were dissolved to be replaced by a new St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, which continued until church union in 1925. Two years later, Knox congregation, reorganized, bought back its former church home and still worships there.

Most of the ministers who have served the church have been Scots or of Scottish extraction. When payment for a lot was

made in 1856, a catechist, Murdoch MacDonald served the congregation, each person paying five shillings towards his salary, or lacking this, grain at the rate of 2s 6d per bushel.

A hewed log church went up in 1858, west of the settlement and seated 400. It was linked with Ashfield Church, with the Rev. Alexander Grant as first minister in 1865. In 1874, after Mr. McQueen's arrival, the separate congregation built its own church. The Rev. John Fraser, Kincardine, acted as interim moderator until the arrival of the Rev. Adam McKay, who came from Cape Breton, only to die within six months. First elders were John MacKay, Malcolm MacDonald and Donald Murchison.

In 1876 Rev. Alexander Sutherland came from Prince Edward Island to minister to the flock. Relationships between the Knox members and their fellow kirkgoers in Huron Church had become acrimonious and presbytery ordered Mr. McQueen to withdraw offensive remarks he had made relative to Mr. Sutherland and his parishioners. The congregations were told to settle their differences and the ministers to exchange pulpits for services.

Gaelic not only mingled with English in the conduct of worship, but constituted the major portion. Kenneth MacLay was Gaelic precentor from 1893.

In 1898 an organ was installed in Knox Church for use in connection with the service in English. The horrified sexton tried to remove the offending instrument—first taking the precaution of draping it with a cloth so no one would surmise what it was.

In 1893 in Huron Church, Isaac

MacDonald was missionary in charge pending erection of new 500 seat church in Ripley and the induction of Rev. Roderick MacLeod as minister, which took place in 1895, while the session was denying appeals for sanction to hold Sunday school picnics (which did not come to pass till 1913) "because we see much evil arises to the minds and persons of children, by accident to the latter, and a tendency to lead the former away from the solemnities pertaining to the Sabbath school and holy services."

Mr. MacLeod was succeeded in 1909 by Rev. D. A. MacLean, who remained till dissolution of the two congregations in 1922, when Dr. R. Harkness became minister.

In Knox Church the Rev. Colin S. Sinclair from Invernessshire, Scotland, became minister, remaining till 1900 to be succeeded by the Rev. F. J. Maxwell. At this time there was some switch in congregations, since Gaelic was discontinued in worship at Knox Church. English speaking members from Huron Church came to Knox, while some of Knox people, whose mother tongue was Gaelic, moved to Huron Church.

The Rev. W. A. Bremner was minister from 1906 to 1913, when the Rev. George Gilmore was called. His wife was the first woman graduate of the University of Western Ontario.

After union in 1925, Knox congregation was served by the Rev. R. M. Hanna, 1929 to 1935; the Rev. R. A. McConnell to 1938; the Rev. J. Reynolds Esler to 1941; Dr. W. O. Rhoad to 1950, and the present minister, the Rev. J. R. MacDonald, another Nova Scotian, since that time.