

# FIVE CHURCHES

## Baptist Followers Gather At Homes

It was on the 28th of January, 1842, that ten men and women met at the home of Mr. Samuel Worden in the Township of Esquaring for the purpose as the record states "of submitting to the judgment of sister churches the propriety" of organizing a regular Baptist church. On the 31st of December the same year, Rev. John Oakley became the first pastor of the church.

For some time meetings were held in the homes of members and at the meeting held on March 25th, 1843, at the house of John Atkinson, an auxiliary society of the "Upper Canada Baptist Missionary Society" was formed.

After Mr. Oakley ceased to be pastor, the church extended a call to Elder Fitch asking him to preach to them once in two months and he accepted.

The first intimation of an effort to build a place of worship was given at a business meeting on July the 29th, 1843, when it was resolved that "a general committee be appointed to investigate the matter relative to building a place of worship."

For a length of time the meetings were held, sometimes in Erin, the houses of members, Haver's school house, and occasionally in the Methodist Church on the Base Line.

Elder Fitch was succeeded by Elder Mino as pastor of the church and it is stated that his salary for six months was to be 12 pounds, 10 shillings, supplemented by an equal amount from the Missionary Board.

At a meeting held on April 4, 1857, a council was called for the purpose of ordaining the late Rev. R. B. Cook who had decided to enter the gospel ministry. Rev. Cook then became pastor of the church.

Rev. Mr. Cook was followed in the pastorate by Rev. W. R. Hazelton, who remained about two years. After this the pulpit was supplied for some months by Rev. R. Stephens and Rev. J. Pickard until Rev. Alexander Warren was called to take charge in 1875. After he resigned on account of ailing health, he was succeeded by Rev. Henry Cox, of Georgetown, and he by Rev. John H. Lowe, who resigned in 1881. He was followed by Rev. James Coult, and he in 1885 by Rev. A. T. Sowerby who was succeeded in 1888 by Rev. S. J. Cummings. Rev. D. B. Gordon succeeded him the same year. In 1890 Rev. W. E. Norton became pastor.

The proposal to erect the present building was first made about the year 1890, and the first money offered for the purpose was the proceeds of an autograph quilt made for the purpose by the late Miss Jessie Warren who in this way, presented the church with \$40 as a nucleus of a building fund. Later a magnanimous offer came from Miss Steele, who deeded the valuable lot, corner of Mill and Willow Streets, to the trustees of the church. This made it possible to arrange definitely for the erection of a new building. The membership of the church was canvassed and contributed liberally. On July 13, 1896, at a special business meeting, it was moved by J. L. Warren, seconded by Jas. McIntosh, and

carried unanimously that work commence on a new place of worship.

But just here there arose a difficulty as to location that caused some delay. It was agreed by almost all concerned that while the lot so generously presented to the church by Miss Steele was perhaps the most valuable lot in Acton for business purposes, it would not be quite as suitable for a church as the one on which the edifice now stands and so the church asked Miss Steele if she would consent to an exchange of properties. This she very kindly agreed to do and now there is perfect unanimity as to the wisdom of the change.

This year the congregation marked the fiftieth anniversary of the building of the present church. The present pastor is Rev. Chas. R. Gower who ministers to the congregations of Acton and Georgetown.

Steady improvements have been made in the maintenance of the church property. A few years ago a fine electric organ was installed and has added to the service of praise. Many of the old families coming to Acton help make up the congregation.

Many will recall the ministries of beloved pastors when we recall Revs. McAlpine, Burrell, Jones, Howard, Johnston, Ralph Easter, George Baxter, Wallace and others.

## Society of Jesus Pioneer S. Joseph's

On a hill at Dublin, 2 miles south of Acton, a cross surmounting a cairn marks a site sacred to the Catholic congregation of Acton. It was there the first church was built on land given to the Roman Catholic Corporation of the Diocese of Hamilton by Matthew McCann and John Mulholland. Work was commenced on March 18, 1857, the eve of the feast of St. Joseph, from whence the church derived its name.

Before that time the Jesuit Fathers of Guelph covered a wide territory that embraced Acton in their ministrations, and mass was said at homes in the community. It is impossible to describe the privations suffered as the "black robes" travelled long distances by horse and often by foot to the flock scattered in all directions. However, as Catholics became more numerous in the district parishes gradually sprang up.

Encouraged by the efforts of Rev. Father Dumortier of the Society of Jesus to found a church in this section, the good Catholic laymen contributed pounds, shillings and pence to provide for a commodious edifice on the hill overlooking the Dublin district. By 1860, the church and all its furnishings were completely paid for.

Right Rev. John Farrell, Bishop of Hamilton, administered the Sacrament of Confirmation on Aug. 31, 1858 for the first time in the history of the church. Among the early pastors were Fathers Francis Marshall, John McQuaid, Wm. Cocklen, C. Petite, Thos. Willet, Jos. Delabays, R. Chartier, J. B. Nolin, P. Homel, J. A. MacDonald, D. Plante, J. Ktely, Louis Cote, J. S. O'Loane, John Finnegan, O. B. Devlin, Henry Kavanagh. These priests were mainly Jesuits from the mission station at Guelph.



ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH is shown prior to the removing of the steeple.

As the years went by and the congregation grew accordingly, the Catholic population shifted into the village of Acton attracted by the growing industries and labour needs. To accommodate the nucleus of the parish, which now resided in Acton, a walk of two miles - the congregation of St. Joseph's began to look for a more convenient place in which to worship. Consequently, when the Congregationalists decided they could no longer keep up the church they had erected in Acton, the congregation of St. Joseph's availed themselves of this opportunity and purchased the building in the year 1887.

Although the move to Acton was final, the old church at Dublin was still sacred. Here the cemetery was located and is to-day the church at Dublin was torn down but the location can still be traced by the old stone foundation which lingers on to testify to the work of the early pioneers.

In the burying grounds many of these early pioneers were laid to rest. The entrance is enhanced by an artistic gate to-day and a fence encloses the spot.

The first resident parish priest was Rev. Father Haley, who was appointed pastor in 1863. Father Haley lived on Church St., about three blocks from the church. In 1898 Rev. Father Feeney succeeded to the pastorate and during his stay the present Rectory was purchased.

Rev. Father Arnold came in 1908 and stayed until 1909 when Father Walsh was appointed to succeed him for a year. Father Arnold returned for a six months period until Rev. Father Traynor, now pastor at Arthur Ont., arrived. He was in Acton until 1914.

For a brief period of two months Rev. Father Flahaven was pastor. Then Rev. Father Doble assumed the pastorate until 1919 when Rev. Father Goodrow succeeded to the post. He remained until 1922 to be followed by Rev. Father McReavy. Father McReavy endeared himself to the hearts of Catholics and non-Catholics alike in his stay of seven years duration.

In the year 1929, Rev. Father J. L. McBride was appointed pastor. Father McBride had a special interest in the young people of the parish and the mission church in Georgetown and organized a strong Catholic Youth Organization group. Soon his flair for organization was given higher impetus when in 1941 the Bishop appointed him diocesan C.Y.O. director. He left the parish amid general regret. Among the many improvements Father McBride made while he was in Acton were stained glass windows and the basement was made into a fine room for the young people of the parish.

Rev. Father Vincent J. Morgan, the present pastor, was appointed in 1941. The parish has made splendid progress during his stay and just recently the church was enlarged to accommodate the increased congregation. The edifice has undergone a complete renovation, inside and out in the last few years as well as the Rectory in keeping with the rapid growth of Catholicism in Acton.

## Early Scots Build First Knox Church

Knox Church, Acton, was founded in February, 1845 by Scottish settlers from Iverness, Aberdeen and Perthshire, whose greatest attribute was zeal for the faith of their fathers. Two years previously a Sunday School had been organized by Mr. John Burns at his home and these workers composed the original congregation.

In 1847 the first church, a large frame building was completed and its founders claimed an award of forty pounds offered by a devout man, Mr. Buchanan, of Hamilton, to each of the first ten churches erected and opened by a set date. This sum was equal to approximately \$200.

The first sermon was preached in the incomplete building by Rev. W. C. Burns and for three following years before the induction of a regular minister, the pulpit was occupied by three other ministers. On the recommendation of Rev. Keady, Rev. John McLachlan, was asked to preach, was chosen, and inducted as the first minister of the church.

The first church was erected several lots to the right of the site of the present building. It was frame, large and long, and after fifty years when it was vacated the structure was turned sideways on the lot and converted into a triple dwelling.

The covered pulpit approached by steps, was "high and lifted up" above the heads of the congregation, only the head of the minister being visible through a small opening. In front of this in later years sat the choir led by a piper with a tuning fork. To the right and left of the choir were several seats placed diagonally. A long three-foot centre aisle divided the rest of the closed pews, high straight-backed benches, each entered by a door. The building was lighted by lamps which hung from the ceiling and heated by a stove at the back from which a long pipe ran frontwards.

Sometime after 1892, an organ was purchased for use in the Sabbath School, and this was later installed in the church. This action was met with much and bitter hostility on the part of some of the older members. Some left the church and did not return. It was declared by one that with the advent of the Kist O'whistles the grace of God went out.

Rev. D. B. Cameron's sensitive, aesthetic soul had also a passion for music which he very successfully inspired in a young and promising recruit, Alexander T. Mann, who on March 13, 1880, formed the first choir.

Under the ministry of Rev. J. Rae a modern pulpit was introduced, an organ was installed, the rental

of pews was abolished, preaching in Gaelic was abolished, a fine manse was built and the present Kirk was erected. Mr. Rae had been called to the Old Kirk in 1867.

The corner stones for the new church were laid on September 17, 1894. It was a happy event for the congregation and a program marked the afternoon session.

After the foundation was finished the work of completing the new church progressed with speed and without accident. Enthusiasm ran high and under the inspiration of Mr. Rae most of the labour was donated without thought of recompense.

Sunday, February 24, 1895, was the occasion of the re-opening and dedication of the Kirk. At the morning service a very large congregation assembled and again in the afternoon, by 6:45 the evening service commenced since no more could find standing room. Fully a thousand people crowded the Kirk.

Rev. A. MacPherson followed Rev. Rae. As the historical review of the Kirk prepared at the centennial says: "Hughie was the darling of Knox congregation and a very popular man in the town."

In September 1903, Rev. J. C. Wilson accepted a call and with his family came to Acton to live in the manse. Mr. Wilson was a cultured Christian gentleman of fine appearance and outstanding ability. After sixteen years Mr. Wilson accepted a call to Saskatchewan. On his death, however, the remains were brought to Acton and a service was conducted in the church. He had loved and served so long. He was interred in Fairview Cemetery, the beauty of which he had always admired. To mark his resting place a fine monument was erected by the congregation of the Kirk.

Rev. Alexander Stewart was inducted as the eighth minister of the Kirk in 1921. During his ministry the choir room was added, a kitchen was equipped in the basement, gowns were purchased for the minister and choir, and a fine pipe organ was installed and dedicated on December 13, 1925.

In May 1930, Rev. H. E. Bennie was called and inducted as minister of the Kirk. Mr. Bennie, a native of Scotland, was minister to the Kirk for over ten years. When a serious illness greatly handicapped him in the complete accomplishment of his duties and finally necessitated his resignation.

Rev. R. Forbes Thomson followed Mr. Bennie in the ministry of the Acton Kirk. During his service in Acton the church progressed and he established himself in the memory of the young people of the church and the community by taking an active interest in their activities.

Rev. John Anderson followed Mr. Thomson and gave two years service to the congregation prior to the present minister, Rev. R. H. Armstrong who came to Knox Church about a year ago from Bracebridge.



EARLY SCOTS erected the local Knox Presbyterian Church when they found the old church did not satisfy their increasing needs.



THE BAPTIST CHURCH is one of five that minister the gospel to an Acton congregation.