

SERVE CITIZENS



ST. ALBAN'S ANGLICAN Church is this year making another addition in the form of a Parish Hall. Another chapter in the progress of the parish, now under the incumbency of Rev. W. G. Luxton.

St. Alban's Church Established in 1872

For some years Acton was ministered to by assistant clergy from St. George's Church in Guelph and then by clergy from Rockwood. Services at this time were held in the Old Temperance Hall. The legend is preserved that the roof leaked so that one winter day the clerical fell on the ice on the floor. The mission then included congregations at Acton, Rockwood, Erin, Fergus, Hillsburg, and Garafax. The missionary was the Rev. W. W. Lutes who rode a horse which he called "Hawatha".

In 1872 the mission was divided and Acton was placed in the charge of Rev. W. F. Swallow. In the same year the church was built in Acton and Mr. Swallow named it after St. Alban, the first British martyr. The property on which the church stands was donated to the incorporated Society of Toronto in 1872, by Wm. Sharp and Ester his wife. In 1875 the diocese of Niagara was formed and the next year on July 4th the first Bishop of Niagara, T. R. Fuller, consecrated the church.

In 1881 an enterprising Englishman, the Rev. W. J. Pigott, was ambitious to build two new churches. He succeeded with building a new church in Rockwood but had to be satisfied with the redecoration of the church interior in Acton. Mr. Brooks described in his history of the church, that the colour scheme was "wonderful and wonderful". The walls were cream, the ceiling lavender and the chancel rose pink.

A new organ costing \$500 was also bought and paid in full under the guidance of Mr. Pigott. On January 4th, 1886 the rector dedicated the grounds which are now Fairview Cemetery and made the first interment the burial being that of Geo. Steele.

Rev. George Breda Cooke of Palmerston was appointed to the parish in 1889. Mr. Cooke had a family of ten and lived in a house built by Joseph Fyfe on the property where the Beardmore residence later stood. It was he who laid the corner stone of the Acton Public School in 1892.

In 1898 a vestry meeting was called to consider the proposal made by the Rockwood congregation and presented by Mr. John Lister and Mr. Livingstone that the clergyman should reside in Rockwood. The minutes record that the "offer was refused". It was Mr. Gordon who had the bell installed which has ever since called the people to worship. In 1899 electric lighting was installed in the church.

In 1905 the Rev. Matthew Wilson brought with him an ambition to build a new church to replace the old frame one. In spite of his

ambitious efforts the new church was never built. The old one was renovated and later that year the Bishop DuMoulin reopened the church with the improvements.

1909 was the year Rev. Kelleman was appointed by the Bishop to the charge of Acton and Rockwood. From the history prepared at the church's 74th anniversary we quote, "The parish at the time contained some quarrelsome and officious people with whom he did not seem to have the ability to deal and he did not have a very happy time." He died in October 1911. Two years later the brass communion rail was placed in the church in his memory.

With the incumbency of the Rev. Wilkinson came the building of the Parish Hall in 1912. For this purpose a mortgage of \$900 was placed on the rectory. The dimensions of the hall were to be 20 by 40. For many years the revenue from the hall was considerable, however on the whole finances were a serious problem.

Rev. C. H. E. Smith came in 1915 and it was he who introduced the first ladies choir to St. Alban's services. In Advent 1916 there was a Mission of Repentance and Hope and on one night there were seventy-five in the congregation which was quite an exceptional number.

The incumbency in 1918 of Rev. F. Maunsell brought the long awaited world peace and also an epidemic of influenza. Mr. Maunsell had no means of transportation to Rockwood and usually walked.

Rev. Mr. Baugh was appointed rector in 1921. He was keen to have the rectory sold and a newer house bought but this was never done and repairs continued to be made. In 1925 a bath was installed and the stipend increased to \$1500. Church attendance was high at this time and frequently over one hundred persons attended the evening service.

In 1926 the Reverend P. A. Sawyer, L. Th. succeeded Mr. Baugh, and was rector until 1933.

In 1927 certain improvements were made to the parish hall, the chief improvement being the addition, 18 feet long and 6 feet deep, to the back of the stage. On July 18th, 1929, the beautiful oaken retables in the sanctuary of the church, the last work of Mr. Wm. J. Stuckey was dedicated by Bishop Owen.

For some months in the 1930's the parish was without a resident priest but services were taken by Mr. Randall M. Lewis, a very capable lay reader, with nearby clergy coming in monthly for Holy Communion. For this short time the rectory was rented out at \$10 a month but in May 1934 Rev. E. Brillinger came to Acton.

A mortgage was taken out on the rectory and used to retire outstanding debts and as times improved

the church managed to meet its obligations. Two thousand dollars from the estate of the late A. J. Murray was used to give the church and rectory new and vastly improved exteriors, the old frame being decently covered with a coat of white stucco.

In 1943 during the incumbency of Rev. E. A. Brooks the mortgage on the rectory had been paid off and the stipend increased. One of the greatest improvements in the appearance of the Church took place when the present attractive windows were installed as a result of the persistent efforts of the rector. On December 28th, 1941 the Right Rev. I. W. H. Broughall, Bishop of Niagara, dedicated the new windows which replaced the ordinary sashes and paper covered panes that had done duty since 1872 when the church was built.

1944 saw the order placed for the new pipe organ, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. S. G. Bennett and the delay in receiving it on account of wartime shortages, sorely tried the patience of the congregation, but finally it was installed for the 4th Sunday in Advent of 1946 and in time for the Christmas services. The congregation also benefited in worship by the gifts of a new oak-wood pulpit the door into the vestry and two choir stalls which Mr. and Mrs. S. G. Bennett also added to the church.

Rev. E. A. Brooks followed Rev. Mr. Brillinger as rector in 1938, and was succeeded by Rev. E. A. Dulker. The present rector Rev. W. G. Luxton came to Acton a year or so ago. Just now the congregation are in the midst of a fine task—the building of a new parish hall to replace the old building and give needed space for young people's activities.

REMEMBER WHEN

Back in 1880
June. A by-law was passed at the meeting of the Council on Monday evening last, prohibiting cows from running at large during any hour of the day or night after the first day of August next.

July. From an advertisement inserted on behalf of one of the many famous circuses we find an incentive to attend in that it is the "Only exhibition using the new and wonderful electric light requiring a 50 horse high pressure engine to produce the same."

Back in 1882
April. A comment from one of the exchange papers and included in the Free Press reads, "We would like to see the Acton Free Press man outdone for the concoction of headings. For the old style of heading them, Born, Married, and Died he has substituted The Cradle, The Altar, The Grave, Why not put it Hatched, Matched and Dispatched."

January. A ballot was taken on the by-law for the purchase of a new cemetery on Monday last which resulted in its defeat by a majority of 8. Very little interest had been taken except by the Village Council and the proprietors of the movement until the past week when several parties who were prejudiced on the subject began to put afloat wrong impressions in reference to the site chosen and the time which would expire before possession of the property could be obtained. On the day of the election considerable excitement was manifested and those not in favor of the by-law worked all day against it and eventually succeeded in its overthrow.

March 29, 1877. As an evidence of an improvement in the times it may be stated that a tramp was seen to-day wearing a paper collar.

May 10, 1877. Some local gate-hinges will need repairing if this Sunday night 'swinging on the gate' is continued.

Early Methodists Establish Church

The warmth and zeal of Methodism came with those pioneer souls who settled in the early days of the nineteenth century, in that part of Upper Canada which we know as the Town of Acton. As early as 1829 there was gathered together on the outskirts of the present site of the village a little group who owned allegiance to the Christian way of life and were of the denominational persuasion of the Methodist church.

Romance attaches itself strongly to the founding of Methodism in Acton which led to the building of the present church. One sees it for instance in the old circuit riders carrying their necessary effects in saddle bags, and an enthusiasm for God in their hearts, making their way through the maple forests which then, shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century covered the most of Halton County.



AT ONE TIME the Methodist Church, this building 25 years ago became the United Church at the time of Church Union.

The date 1841 is one of importance in the church's history in Acton since in July of that year it was first created a Methodist appointment for regular Sunday preaching. Rev. Luther O. Rice, Georgetown, was created the head of the new circuit, with Acton as one of its principal outside appointments. For 23 years this relationship continued under the ministry of 27 different men, many of whom were colleagues having the same charge.

After a series of revival services under the pastorate of Rev. William Willoughby the schoolhouse then in use, became inadequate and plans were made for a church—the first Methodist church building in Acton.

One can imagine the comradeship and real labour put into that building which was opened on the last Sunday in February, in 1852, a neat frame structure, standing at the corner where Miss Fern Brown now resides, and rather strikingly, it was the means of giving the name to Church Street. The timber, as well as the material for the lumber and shingles, was donated and the work of getting this out was done almost wholly by bees. Apparently financial difficulties were in evidence in those days, since it was a year subsequent to the church opening before the congregation felt they could provide plaster and pews. In the meantime, planks provided the seating. By a peculiar bit of forgetfulness or oversight, the minister then in charge of the circuit, Rev. Joseph Messmore, was not present at the opening service.

Apparently finances prospered in the new church for in 1853 it was plastered and the pews were built and installed.

In 1872 Acton finally obtained the status of the head of a circuit, and gave evidence of the growth, not only in importance, but also in the membership of the local church. It meant also, that the minister of the

circuit would be a resident of the village and hence immediately available for reference and pastoral help.

In 1874 Rev. John C. Stephenson was assigned to the circuit and the membership was doubled. As a result the church building, then a quarter of a century old, became entirely inadequate. The first sod for a new building was turned in August and the cornerstone was laid on September 29th, 1875. The new church, notably beautiful in its day was opened on July 1st, 1876. The cost of the church-site, building, furnishings, etc. was approximately \$2,000.

The unusual type of architecture reveals an interesting story. It had been felt for some time in the Mother Church in England that something should be done to influence or guide the architectural type of the churches to be erected in Canada and in consequence the Rev. Morley Puncheon crossed the Atlantic with plans following the Gothic type of architecture of the churches of the Motherland, which were recommended for new structures in this country. These plans provided for an economical and spacious type of church which could be adapted for various purposes to fill the needs of Canadian conditions. From an architectural viewpoint these edifices cannot be said to be beautiful but their acoustics are unsurpassed.

In May 1896 a resolution asked that Acton church become an independent station. So from 1896 the Acton church was on its own supporting its own Minister and raising its allotment of funds.

There were few changes of organization until Church Union took effect 25 years ago, but various improvements were made. In 1898 when a new foundation became necessary for the church structure, and when a stone base was inserted a new brick boiler-room was added at the rear and the walls of this extended upward to form the choir gallery used continuously since.

Methodism, as such, ceased to be in the creation of something which was believed to be greater. The official action of the Church Union was taken in 1910 when the congregation voted unanimously in favour of it. Hence, on June 10th, 1925, in a service of great dignity and beauty, the church and its membership, with a number who had seen fit to join their religious interests, were erected into the United Church of Canada.

Six ministers have been in charge of the church since that time and the seventh, Rev. A. E. Currey began his charge in July.

Under the leadership of the late Rev. Pickering, last minister to the church, the front of the auditorium was renovated and greatly beautified by lowering the platform, installing a new lectern, baptismal font and fine carpet. The stairway from the Sunday School was also improved. It is additions like this that have kept the United Church of Acton progressing with the town.

Baseball Rule Revisions in 1879

April 10, 1879.—The new rules do away with all catches which are not made from fly balls. No foul ball can now be caught on the rebound and neither can a ball taken from a third strike. For the first time in the history of the game the strict fly catch rule goes into operation this year. What effect this will have on the game is yet to be seen but if it works favourably as the rule abolishing the old bound catch of fair balls, it will do good.

Feb. 22, 1877.—A \$400 organ has just been introduced into the new Methodist Church from the factory of W. Bell and Co. Guelph.