

# The church that Knox built

By ASTRA PAPE  
Herald Staff Writer

When it was built over 100 years ago, it lay on the outer fringe of Georgetown next to the farmer's fields. The congregation had to make a trek to the outskirts of town to worship.

Today, the Knox Presbyterian Church at the corner of Main and Church Streets, has become an integral and historical part of the downtown core.

It has become one of the most familiar landmarks on Georgetown's Main Street. The twin towers that stand on either side of the building are its outstanding features and they complement the beautiful stained glass window that must be seen from the interior to be fully appreciated.

The Knox Presbyterian Church and its congregation have had a turbulent history with the church being destroyed and rebuilt twice in over 100 years.

The history of the church begins well before the Main Street structure itself was ever built. In the early 1850's, the combined population of both Stewarttown and Georgetown numbered approximately 1,000.

The Presbyterians had to worship at either the Norval or Union Presbyterian churches since a congregation had yet to be officially established in Georgetown.

As the number of Presbyterian families in Georgetown increased, the Presbyterian church decided to designate Georgetown as a missionary station and for a few years, students or teachers from Knox College in Toronto provided services for the families in their homes.

In 1860, a congregation of thirty was established in Georgetown. They increased their numbers somewhat three years later when the Limehouse congregation which had been associated with Acton, decided to join them. The congregation now numbered fifty.

They worshipped at first wherever they could find room—in the old town hall, then in the Congregational Church and later in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. It was soon realized that such a large number needed a church of their own and they got their wish when a Presbyterian church was constructed on the corner of Church and Main Streets in 1867 at a cost of \$3,000.

It was a first in two ways: it was the first church for the Georgetown Presbyterians and it was also the first brick-built church in Halton County.

The new Knox congregation worshipped in their church for only twenty years before it became too small.

In 1885, the congregation decided that it was time to build another church spent the next year soliciting funds for its construction. They took apart the little brick church they had worked so hard to get, brick by brick, in 1887 and built a new church on the same corner. The bricks from the old church were saved and used to form the basis of the home of Doctor Hoddinott that still stands on the corner of Charles Street and Park Avenue.

The congregation kept in mind how quickly they had grown in numbers in only twenty years and built their second church with much larger proportions, at a cost of \$15,000. This church could now seat 500 worshippers and the first members of the congregation must have felt dwarfed sitting in a church of such a vast size for so relatively few people.

A new feature of the church was a beautiful stained glass window in the northern wall that commemorated the late Hugh McKay. Mr. McKay had been a former ordained elder of the church and had always been dedicated to the welfare of the church.

The congregation thought they had built a church that would last. It was solid, more than enough to suit their needs and beautifully built. Yet the unforeseen happened in February 1901 when a fire started under the organ of the church

and gutted its interior completely, leaving only the four outer walls and the memorial stained glass window intact.

The congregation rallied and determinedly repaired the interior of their church. It was rebuilt, the stonework cleaned where it had become discoloured from smoke and the walls replastered. The original organ had been destroyed and a new one was bought. The original pews had been rescued during the fire and were sold to the Cheltenham Presbyterian Church for \$35.

In April 1922, the final touch was added to the building with the addition of an eight bell carillon. The worshippers could now be welcomed to their services every Sunday morning with the chiming of the bells. They were a gift from Mabel Lawson, the widow of Henry Lawson, and were dedicated to her husband's memory.

The church has gone through four organs during its century

of service to the Georgetown community. The first type the church used was a reed organ which had to be pumped by foot. When the second church was built, it was far larger and needed an organ that would be able to fill it with music.

The ladies auxiliary got together and bought a new, "one-manual" pipe organ. This organ was unfortunately destroyed during the ill-fated fire of 1901 and a new, two-manual pipe organ was installed with the new interior.

After fifty years of service, this organ was considered too old and the congregation decided to buy the one that currently serves the church. They bought the organ at a fraction of its original cost from Lady Kemp of Oakville.

Prior to 1955, the church had only one small hall where meetings and public functions could be held. Yet, as the Georgetown population grew, so did the congregation and Sunday school class. The

Church desperately needed a larger area for their various Church activities and decided to add an extension to the existing structure.

In 1955 the sod was turned, marking the beginning of construction for a new \$35,000 extension. The extension opened barely a year later in February 1956 and featured a new larger hall, minister's study, remodelled kitchen, choir room and changes in the heating system.

The Church has undergone many changes in its century of existence. It has had fourteen different ministers preaching to a congregation that has grown from 30 in 1860 to 450 today. Today's congregation is served by its fifteenth minister, Reverend Peter Barrow, a native of Scotland.

Reverend Barrow was preaching in Strirlingshire in central Scotland when he decided to move to Canada in 1972. He came directly to Georgetown and has been serving the

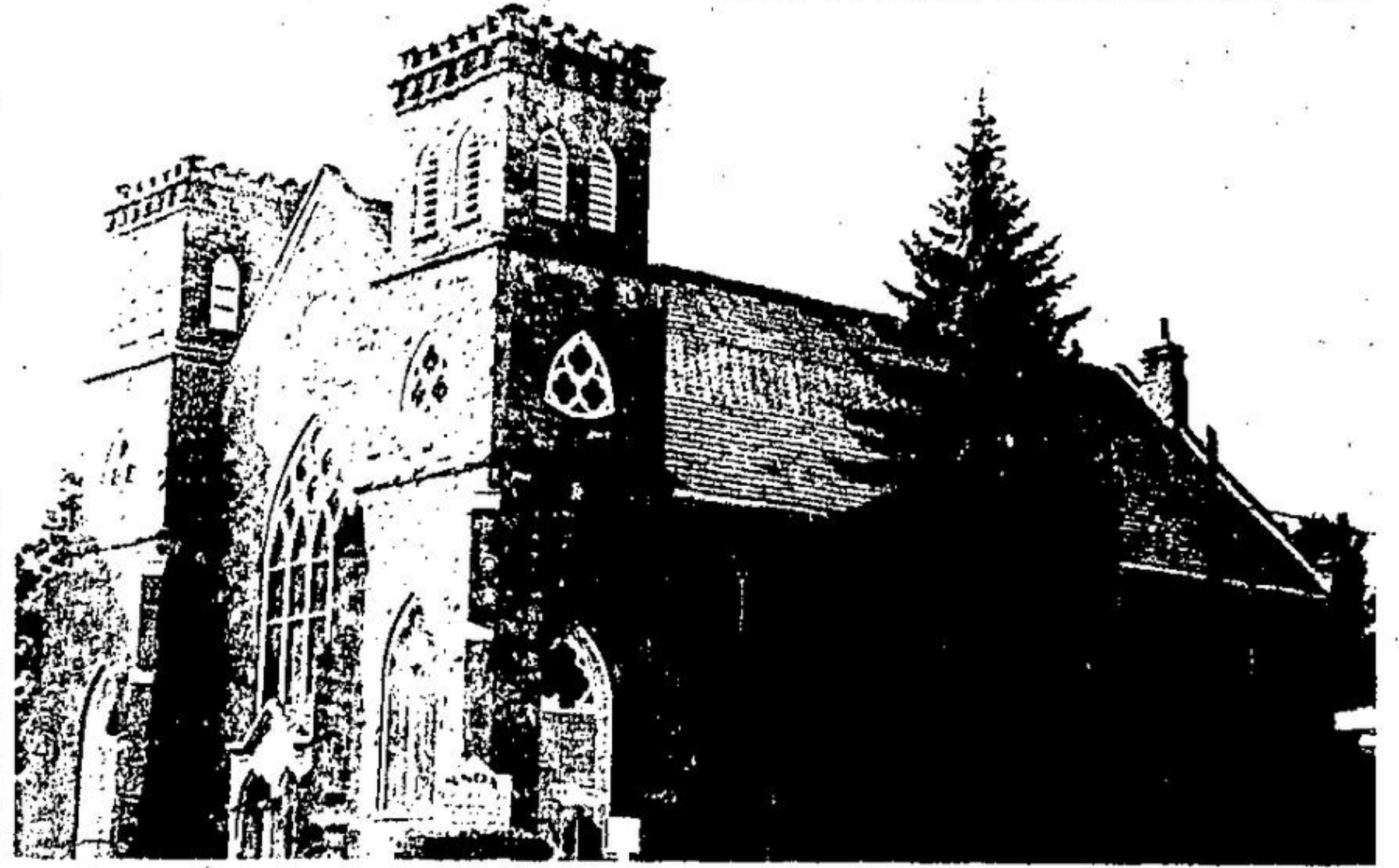
people of Georgetown ever since.

Knox Presbyterian Church and its hall is used by a large sector of Georgetown's population who aren't all necessarily Presbyterian. Various groups and clubs use the church facilities including the local horticultural society, the

Children's Aid Society, the YMCA, the historical society and even by McDonald's Restaurant who has used it to hold training sessions for their employees.

In addition to the various groups that use the church facilities, the various church groups such as the Scouts, guides and women's group also

gather there throughout the week. Reverend Barrow said he likes seeing the church being used since that's what it's there for to serve the community.



Knox Presbyterian Church has been standing on the corner of Main and Church Streets for the past 88 years. The original building was built on the same corner in 1867, was torn down 29 years later to build a larger church which was then destroyed by fire in 1901.

## Partnership tour brings 'Y' members from Peru to Hills



In Georgetown last week to promote the partnership between their YMCA and ours, Y representatives from Lima, Peru secured another agreement for continued support of self help projects in that city's "shantytown" slums. The Georgetown Y, along with affiliates in Guelph, Hamilton, Cambridge, and Owen Sound, as well as the Canadian International Development Agency, has been helping to pay the salaries of sociologists and other social workers assisting shantytown residents to improve their lifestyle. From left to right are, Irene Wood, wife of the local Y's executive director, Jill Blair, chairwoman of the Georgetown Y's international development committee, Manuel Sayan, chief executive officer of the Lima Y, Lima Y volunteer Silvana Bacigalupo, Remo Gulstini, vice-president of the Lima Y's board of directors and local executive director John Wood.

Four Peruvian officials from the Lima YM-YWCA were in Georgetown last week, on the second leg of a visit to "strengthen the partnership" between Ys in southwestern Ontario and their Peruvian affiliate.

Manuel Sayan, chief executive officer of the Lima Y, Remo Gulstini, vice-president of Lima Association's board of directors and Silvana Bacigalupo, a Lima Y volunteer who acted as interpreter on the four-day visit to Ontario, arrived at the Georgetown Y's Mountainview Road offices Monday afternoon after spending a couple of days in Guelph.

Their visit officially endorsed another agreement with Lima Y and five southern Ontario affiliates aimed at improving life for the South American city's "shantytown" residents. Joining the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), YM-YWCAs in Guelph, Cambridge, Hamilton, Owen Sound and Georgetown have been raising money to help pay the salaries of social workers and other professionals working in the slums where almost half of the Lima's population lives.

In turn, the professionals encourage residents to organize "self-help" projects. Ruth Law, a Georgetown Y volunteer who visited Lima a year ago, said that both CIDA and representatives of the Ontario Ys participating in the program were "very impressed" with the results.

During their stay, the Peruvian guests visited Toronto, a model YMCA complex in North York, Niagara Falls and Cambridge, as well as Guelph and Georgetown.

Mrs. Law was the host of a pot luck supper last Monday held in their honor.

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## Issues in farming reveal need for agricultural planner: Biggar

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not to mention a number of regional and nearby gun clubs and hunters' groups, impressed Mr. Biggar and he admitted he was surprised at how well organized that lobby was when it finally convinced regional councillors that the deer population in the region has grown considerably over the last ten years, gradually causing considerable crop damage.

If there was one thing that particularly irked him about the pro and anti-deer hunt debate in May and June was the demand from the anti-hunt lobby to produce dollar figures on the amount of crop damage farmers attributed to deer browsing.

Like other farmers, Mr. Biggar said, it's almost impossible for him to accurately assess the crop losses caused by animals. Who's to say which is doing the most damage when he's chased both deer and racoons from his corn fields?

These issues in farming—the rural stability versus urban development, deer hunts, the need for an agricultural planner within the regional administration, and problems associated with Canada's economic slump—are not necessarily gravely negative, they are simply unpredictable, Mr. Biggar said. In fact, farmers in Halton enjoy benefits other farmers in the province and elsewhere in the country probably envy.

Living close to the "Golden Horseshoe" of two major metropolitan areas and several cities in between farmers benefit from the large amounts of light industry available. It means quick repairs for

machinery and therefore shorter "down time" for a much-needed piece of equipment during the precarious harvest season.

In addition, farmers are close to their own markets, especially important when transportation costs soar with every penny added to the per-litre value of gasoline. A

good chunk of Mr. Biggar's feed-corn crop heads to a mill in nearby Milton. Livestock farmers benefit from the close proximity of beef, dairy, sheep, and hog yards in Hamilton-Westworth.

No, indeed, Halton's agricultural interests are not faring that badly at all. The region is still one of the few which

boasts an advisory committee of its own to act as a watchdog for agriculture and as long as it has community-minded people like Harold Middlebrook and Norm Biggar focusing attention on farmers' concerns then the industry's survival during the "unpredictable" eighties should be guaranteed.

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