

Acton Pentecostal church grew from living room

By ANI FEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer

It was a Fuller Brush man who brought the Pentecostal faith to Acton back in December, 1954.

Arthur Cook, the son of an Anglican minister, organized the first prayer meetings for Pentecostals in his home there.

Starting with eight people, the Pentecostal community grew so that Mr. Cook's living room soon became too small. They began holding services at Crewson's Corners, just west of Acton on Highway 7, at the Orangemen's Hall, for about a year.

The Acton YMCA basement and upstairs were next rented for Sunday services.

"We took turns at cleaning the place," Peter Binnie, a church board member since 1957, said. "Each family would do it for a month. Instead of paying a caretaker, we did the dusting and sweeping to be sure everything was left neat and tidy after our meetings."

In 1957, there was talk of buying land, and a plot of land on Churchill Road was purchased.

With the spiritual and physical aid of Rev. Kenneth Reid, their first pastor, the Pentecostals began building a church of their own in 1958 for services and prayer meetings.

FROM SCRATCH

"Rev. Reid was a good carpenter," Mr. Binnie said. "He did all the electrical work for the building."

With the help of nine pen-

costal men, Rev. Reid raised the church building from scratch.

Joseph Spadafora, an Acton driving instructor who was a church member, laid the



Twenty-fourth in a series

foundation corners for the building. He now lives in Toronto.

When the basement was completed, services were held there until the upstairs interior was completed and the roof installed.

The new building was ready in 1959, thanks to the free labor of these men, and the carpentry skills of their minister.

"I remember when we put the shingles up on the roof. I wasn't too good at climbing, but 70-year old Tom McCutcheon, he was climbing up there like a cat," Mr. Binnie, 68, said. The late Mr. McCutcheon was a farmer.

NO LABOR

Funding for the plot and building was raised through

the Pentecostal Assemblies, with \$2,000 coming from the Burlington district office toward purchase of the land.

Because there were no labor costs, the building only cost \$10,000 in materials to put up.

Now the Evangel Tabernacle is gearing up for a drive to pay off two mortgages on the church totaling \$53,000.

Rev. Cliff Hodgson, 35, has been with the congregation for seven months, and has organized a "wave offering" for Feb. 28. He said the congregation is going to march around the church waving white handkerchiefs to raise the money. Such marches are mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible.

"The first mortgage of \$23,000 comes up in March and the second, \$30,000, comes up in April. When they're paid off, the church will be totally debt free," Rev. Hodgson said.

DEBT MONEY

So far, \$4,200 in pledges have been made and Rev. Hodgson is optimistic the rest of the debt money will be raised in time.

Side and back additions were made to the church in 1967, adding to the original 1959 building. However, they weren't done with free labor. Contractors were hired for the job.

The side addition allowed for another row of pews inside the church, increasing the seating from 200 to 300.

The back addition is used as a prayer room and as a meeting room for the young

people during the week. It saves the church fuel in that they can heat just that room rather than the entire church for their weekday meetings.

The two additions were made after Rev. Reid left in 1963 and was replaced by Rev. Sam Tholman, who stayed with the parish until 1973.

ONETIME

Affiliated with the Halton Gospel Temple on Highway 7 near Georgetown, the Evangel Tabernacle at one time served Pentecostals throughout Halton Hills and had people based in from Georgetown.

Only 22 years old, the church is young compared with other Acton churches, most of which date back into the 1800s. Its membership is young to match it, Rev. Hodgson said.

"The majority of our members are 35 to 40 years old. We haven't many seniors, but we've a good group of youth," he said.

To help organize activities for the youth, the church hired an assistant pastor, Rev. Rob Milligan, 18 months ago. He works with the 13 to 25-year olds in the congregation.

"Not everybody can adjust

to our style of worship," Rev. Reid said. "My emphasis is on prayer and praise. It's not a cut and dried service. We believe in audible praise. 'Hallelujah'. It has to get down into their hearts."

FROM PSALMS

He said he tries to meet the needs of the people in the congregation, offering prayers for the sick in the middle of his service if they request it. Most of the worship is taken from the psalms.

"We'll open a service and give a clap offering to the church. It's very strange for new people coming in. We'll all shout 'hallelujah'. It's like a football game," Rev. Reid said.

The Pentecostal congregation believes in the spontaneity of prayers and doesn't use prayer books. Speaking in tongues is a way of praying for which they have become known. Rev. Reid said it can happen anywhere and isn't restricted to the Pentecostal church.

"Most of the problems are dealt with through the church setting. I feel my ministry is for people's needs. They want

to share their needs. During the service I ask 'Does anyone have a need?' By confessing it, healing takes place," Rev. Reid said. "Even if nothing happens they go away feeling different because they have told it to someone else."

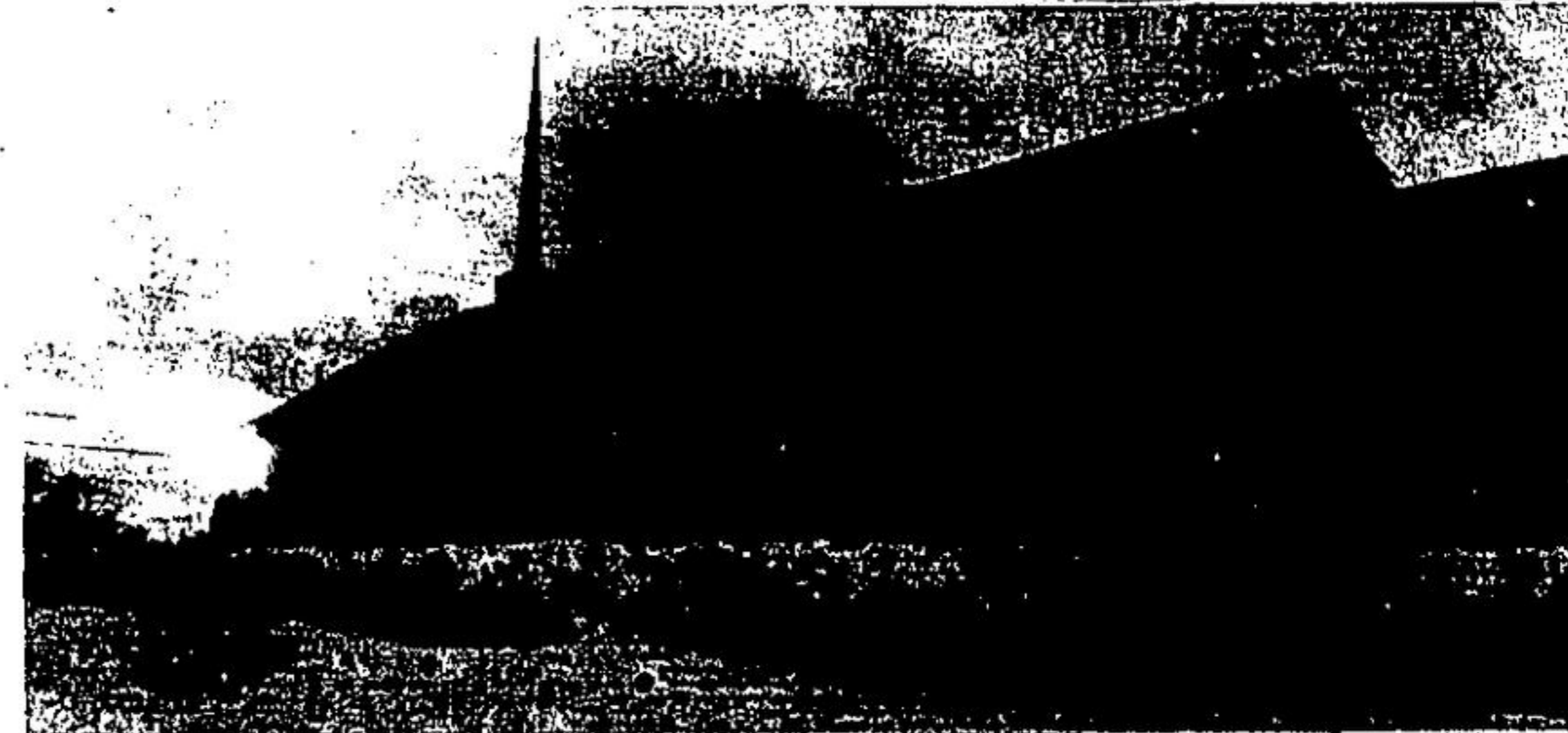
He admitted that at times the loose structure of the Sunday service causes problems with people who try to take over.

"We've had people who'll talk for the sake of talking. I

say 'Thank you, I appreciate what you've said, anybody else?' or else I'll have the congregation sing a song. The

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Built in 1958 by a rugged Pentecostal minister and nine men in his congregation, the Halton Evangel Tabernacle is young compared to other Acton churches. Rev. Kenneth Reid was the first minister for Acton and area Pentecostals and was a white with carpentry and electrical wiring, doing much of the construction for the building that now stands on Churchill Road, just north of Highway 7. (Herald photos by Ani Federian)



READY FOR A 'WHALE' OF A TIME

"...And there's Great Whale River". Anglican Bishop John Sperry points out one community in the Arctic which Georgetown District High School Grade 13 student Doug Isaak will be visiting along with 14 others in March. The bishop talked about life in his Arctic diocese and gave local Anglican ministers insights into missionary work in the north during a visit last week. The Herald will feature Bishop Sperry's story in Friday's Weekend Extra. (Herald photo)

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