

Trinity United celebrates its 165th anniversary

By Dr. George Elliott

In 1824 the Adams brothers, Rufus and Reverend Ezra bought lots in future Acton each side of Main Street South. Loyalists, they left America, settled in Quebec for a time and moved with families to the more suitable location – the first settlers. Their brother Zenas came in 1828 to a lot east of Church and Main and built a large house on the corner. Ezra and Zenas were in poor health from preaching as Methodist circuit riders; a few years in Acton cured them. Ezra preached the first sermon in Acton in 1828, and went back to the circuit ministry in western Ontario. Reverend Zenas stayed, conducting services in his home known as the Prophet's House because circuit riders always found a warm, comfortable room set aside for them. A large shed was added and his teacher wife opened a school; eventually the growing congregation of Methodists shared the schoolhouse.

In 1834, Acton became part of a Methodist circuit, with a circuit minister rider every two weeks. A church building was built by volunteers under a supervising carpenter in 1852 on the corner of Church and John streets. In 1872, Acton headed a circuit with a resident minister. Methodist practice moved ministers every two or three years, many served Acton in the first 50 years, some rose to high positions in the church.

The old church was too small for a growing congregation. A new church building on Mill Street was completed in 1876 with a final cost of \$7,000. The official celebrations of opening were reported in

the 1st edition of the new Acton Free Press. A rumour spread that the brickwork was defective which was quickly denied. We now know a problem existed; soft brick was not fired to a high enough temperature to repel water had been used which in the end resulted in demolition. At the dedication service a New York minister preached and inspired subscription of over \$4,000. A great celebration followed

The years 1880 to 1920 are filled with many successes and some failures. The history compiled by Kay Dills is well worth an evenings reading to fill in all the details. Some of the highlights were: 1877 – a new organ from Guelph's Bell Piano and Organ Co. arrived; 1885 – the overheated hot air furnace almost caused a serious fire so in 1886, a new steam boiler was installed to give "constant and comfortable heat"; its operating costs half of the previous ones; 1896 – problems with bricks and foundation had to be repaired; 1897 – an addition at the rear had the steam boiler on the first floor and the floor above an alcove for the choir and organ which moved in from the rear gallery; 1899 – hydro was available in Acton used to light the church; 1906 – the \$1,000 mortgage on the church was finally paid; the old church on Church street moved back along John and converted into apartments; 1914 to 1918 – church members served overseas, four did not return, memorialized on the cenotaph; 1920 – the Trustee Board deeded property to the Town for the cenotaph.

The next 40 years saw many changes. The world

came into Acton through immigration, travel, newspapers and later radio and television. Some of the major events were as follows: 1922 – a new chapel reed organ was purchased; 1923 – Acton's three day celebration of becoming an official village took place including an open air union church service in the park with massed choir and Band; 1925 – union of Methodists, Congregationalists and some Presbyterians formed the United Church after discussions since 1908. Methodists and Presbyterians in Acton had always been on very friendly terms, attending each others special services and exchanging pulpits especially in summer. This continues even though Acton Presbyterians voted

to stay out of union; 1930 – church purchased parsonage on Willow – Bower corner; 1936 – finally a pipe organ in the church; 1939 to 1945 – a second war and many members joined the services; three did not return; 1947 – the new Minister Louis Pickering redesigned the front of the church sanctuary with volunteers to everybody's satisfaction; 1950 – a new oil furnace, rebuilding stairs to the sanctuary and other renovations cost \$5,000 paid for by a mortgage; Olive Lampard was appointed organist and choir leader; 1954 – Olive Lampard retired and George Elliott, a student as U of T agreed to take over her duties; 1958 – basement of proposed new church was completed to give more Sunday School

and office space; 1959 – a large area of plaster fell on the pews at the back of the church after service, no one was injured. Further inspection determined that the building was not safe. The building of the new church above the completed basement was authorized and services moved to the YMCA. The Minister Gordon Adams had overseen all this turmoil and was instrumental in promoting the new (used) organ for the new church. He then moved to a new charge.

In 1960 construction began on the church and Reverend Dwight Engel came to take over services in the YMCA and work with the building committee. The large organ from Berkley Street church in Toronto was moved into

the lower floor of the old church for cleaning and repair under the care of Ed Watson, musician, businessman and piano tuner. The organ went in the new church during construction. The dedication service was on November 13, 1960 and the congregation chose Trinity as the new name of the church. 1970 – Mase is sold; 1975 – Electronic carillon donated by Mr. and Mrs. Dave Lindsay; church mortgage paid off; 1976 – Chuck Beaton arrives as Minister, familiar to church members because as a student minister at Ballinafad under Dwight Engel, supervisor, he had often preached at Trinity church.

The story continues and will be written by another to cover the next forty years.



LET'S EAT: A spaghetti dinner was served at the Eden Mills Community Hall recently. Eighty-five people attended the fund-raiser with proceeds going towards improvements to the village's United Church. Barb Parker (back row) served supper to, from left: Bronwyn Webber, Sam with sister Manon Bourgeois and Gael Vanveen. – Denise Paulsen photo



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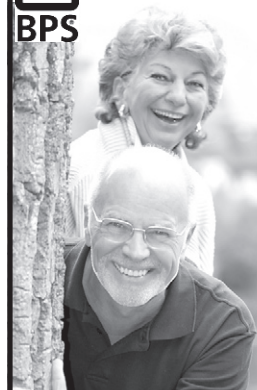
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