

Peachs Church History Centennial Anniversary

The work of the present United Church in Markham Township began in 1833 with the establishment of an appointment at Victoria Square, then known as Four Corners, and spread throughout northern Markham up into Whitechurch and over in King on the west and Pickering on the east. In the beginning Markham was part of the Toronto Station, but in 1810 it was set off as a separate station, composed of the appointments known as Four Corners, Keyworth's, Whiting's, Story's, Hartman's, Cawthra Mills, Robinson's, Thomases, Pugh's and Agars'.

It is believed that our present congregation started from a class of Old Time Primitive Methodists which met regularly in a school-house on the north-west corner of Lot 25, Seventh Concession of Markham Township, as early as 1817 under the leadership of Rev. W. Lyle. The location of the school-house has been verified by checking on a map, dated 1870, now in the Sharon Temple among the collection of historical documents gathered together by the North York Pioneers' Association.

The date of this first class is also confirmed by the following extract from "The Evangelist" (a periodical of the Primitive Methodist Church 1819-1851).

"Peach's, Markham seventh line. We have had a small class here for some years, the members of which have been very consistent, and good supporters of the cause. Hearing what was going on at other places, our friends felt anxious for a revival. Their friends and neighbours were many unconverted and they felt it their duty to make some exertion to secure their salvation. The time of the Travelling Preachers being taken up at other places, Brother Fletcher, one of our Local Preachers, was engaged to go and to assist in holding extra meetings. No sooner did they begin to work than God worked with them and confirmed His word. Brother Edgar and Rev. Phillip rendered what assistance they could before Rev. Phillip left the circuit. The members received great good from this visitation of the Holy Spirit. About twenty precious souls professed to find redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins."

The Primitive Methodist, a branch of Methodism, depended greatly upon Lay or Local Preachers, a few of the exhorters even being women. It is interesting to note that in 1855 the Markham Station had eleven Chapels, three Ministers and twenty-two Local Preachers. It was from one of these Local Preachers that Peach's derived its name. Mrs. Hopper in her Old Time Primitive Methodism in Canada relates:

"Daddy" Peach was the class-leader at Peach's appointment on the seventh concession of Markham. Thomas Hastings, Henry Jennings, Christopher Robinson, Alex Lee, Henry Hopper and John Williamson were all officials and earnest, faithful men.

Peach's is mentioned by that name for the first time in the Missionary Reports of the Primitive Methodist Church in Canada for the year 1853-59 when it appears as part of the Markham Station along with Victoria Square, Bethesda, Birchard Town, Mount Carmel Chapel, Bethel Chapel, Lemonville and Ninth Concession, Markham. In the Missionary Reports names which later appeared under Peach's were listed under Victoria Square. A Miss Jennings, a grandmother of Mrs. George Sale, was one of the missionary collectors first mentioned.

In 1860 Peach's School-House appeared on a Preacher's Plan for that year. Some of the contributors to the missionary funds as listed at that time were: Thos. Peach, Wm. Bricknell, T. Cooper, J. A. Boynton, Wm. Spofford, Jane Lockhead, Daniel Humphreys, Thos. Hastings, Mrs. Peach, Mrs. Chapel, Francis Walker and John Williamson. The missionary givings in 1863 were very low, whereas, in 1864 there were none at all for Peach's. This is explained by the fact that the congregation was unable to make any donations towards the Missionary Fund as they were using all their money for the erection of a new Chapel.

In 1863 Thos. Peach gave the south-east corner of Lot 26, 7th Con. of Markham, for a chapel and cemetery. This land was given on the understanding that all plots in the cemetery would be free.

Rev. J. Nattrass, who was the preacher from 1860 to 1863 has left the following records of interest describing the changes during those years.

"In 1860 there was but one Circuit, whereas, in 1863 upon the same ground we have Markham Circuit and Pickering Branch. In 1860 we had but two Ministers and scarcely able to pay them. In 1863 there were three Ministers and the friends expect to pay them their full salaries for the year. In 1860 there were twenty-two Local Preachers, whereas, in 1863 there were twenty-six or

in 1860 there were eight congregational Chapels; in 1863 there were ten Chapels and preparations are under way for the erection of three more. In 1859 there were two hundred and ninety-three members; in 1863 four hundred and thirty, if not more. In 1860 the Missionary givings amounted to \$270.00. By 1863 this had been raised to \$330.00. The annual income in 1859 was \$561.00, whereas, in 1863 it was expected that the income would be \$500.00. In 1860 the average number of preaching services was sixteen, whereas, in 1863 there were twenty-three services held on each Sabbath."

In a record taken from the Christian Journal (the organ of the Primitive Methodist Church in Canada), dated April 3, 1863, we find the following records:

"Agitation was made for a chapel and after surmounting many great obstacles hoping against hope, and through all hindrances, sticking to it, the friends were at last enabled to take decisive action in the matter. Trustees fully arranged, subscriptions commenced, plans of building drawn, and eventually the contract for a substantial chapel — all complete — to be finished in the fall, was signed, sealed and delivered. And I am thankful to say that the amount subscribed by the kind friends is already nearly, if not equal to, the amount of the contract, and that in all probability fencing and sheds and all will be completed at the same time, which in my judgement is in the best interest of the church — to complete the entire project in the first building effort."

It is understood that the school-house where the previous services had been held was closed down and moved over to the opposite corner on the south-east corner of Lot 26, the sixth Concession of Markham, and remodelled to form the new chapel.

In the Christian Journal of January 22, 1864, we find the following entry:

"Peach's Chapel Opening — Markham Circuit. The Chapel is a very good white clapboard building 36 x 26 feet with a beautiful porch and tower in the front and six semi-circular windows. It is indeed an exceedingly neat, and commodious chapel. The zeal and liberality of the friends in the neighborhood have been very praiseworthy. The opening services took place on Sabbath, January 10th, 1864, when sermons were preached by Revs. J. Garner and J. Crampton to large congregations. The services were powerful and interesting and a good collection was taken up."

"On January 11th, a public Tea Meeting was held when a good gathering of friends assembled. The meeting was addressed by Revs. Reid, Crompton, Markham and Garner. The meetings closed cheerfully with good satisfaction."

Henry Jennings, who lived on the farm adjoining the cemetery, donated the wood for the driving sheds, which originally extended the full length of the lot to the north side of the church.

On Wednesday evening, June 15th, 1870, Rev. Eli Middleton preached at Peach's. After the service Bro. T. Williamson kindly presented him with a purse of \$9.00 as a token of esteem.

In 1871-72 the contributors to the Missionary Fund are listed as Thomas Hastings, Alex Lee, Harvey Hooper, Wm. Spofford, Mrs. John Boynton, John Peach, Chrs. Robinson, Thomas Peach, Mrs. Sanderson, Thomas Williamson, Henry Jennings, Robert Cole and Governor Spofford's pig \$1.00 — the pig presumably being donated and sold. In September, 1872 a camp meeting which doubtless drew support from Peach's was held in the bush of Wm. Lewis (Bethesda) and in November, 1874, a revival at Peach's resulted in "forty-two persons professing to find Jesus Christ."

In 1873, the late Harry Spang was baptized in the chapel at the age of four years. There may have been other baptisms held earlier, but we have not been able to locate any of the records.

From the Christian Journal of June 23, 1876, in the obituary notice of Alexander Lee we learn the following:

"Through the instrumentality of the Wesleyan Methodists he was brought to God in early life, and became a consistent member of their Church. The lapse of years brought changes to the neighbourhood. The Wesleyan Church withdrew from the old appointment, and the Primitive Methodists, being near to his residence, about nineteen years ago, he became a member of our Society. As such he became a very useful man. He soon became the Society's Stewart at Peach's Church, which office he held to the day of his death. We buried him in the graveyard near Peach's Church where he so often worshipped."

Lemonville, Glasgow, Ballantrae and Stouffville.

In 1880 a Unionville Station was formed, but Markham retained Bethesda, Peach's, Victoria Square, Lemonville, Glasgow, Stouffville and Ballantrae.

When the union of all Methodist bodies in Canada to form the Methodist Church occurred in 1884, Peach's became part of the Markham Circuit along with Markham, Box Grove, 9th Line, 10th Line and Whitevale.

In the Christian Guardian of April 23, 1890, Rev. Newton Hill, the minister at that time, reports the following:

"At Peach's the contract has been let for the building of a new church. The work will be completed some time in the fall. Part of the old church will be made use of. The brethren there have taken hold of the work in a business-like manner."

It is understood that the old clapboard church was brick veneered and the steeple removed and the roof of the church was changed to take on its present appearance.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to secure any information regarding the opening services in 1890 after the renovation.

Mrs. Harvey Quantz was the first organist to serve in the remodelled chapel and she played there for some twenty years.

In 1891 Peach's became part of the Unionville Circuit which was composed of Unionville, Bethel, Christie, Peach's, Ebenezer, Hagerman's. Some of the family names mentioned at Peach's in that year were Hastings' Lunbu, Steckley, Haacker, Creswick and in 1898-99 other names such as Rainey, Arthur Wegg were mentioned.

Appendix of William Kellington, from the Christian Guardian, June 9, 1909:

"Kellington — William Kellington was born at Haisthorpe, Yorkshire, England, on February 3rd, 1827. He came with his parents to Canada when thirteen years old. They settled in the Township of Markham where he lived for over forty years. Sometime in 1851 he was converted under the labours of Rev. Matthew Nichols and James Edgar, Primitive Methodist minister at Peach's appointment. Mr. Kellington was the superintendent of the Sunday School for many years, also class leader. On April 12th, 1909, at the age of eighty-two, he quietly passed to his eternal rest. His remains were interred at Goodwood Cemetery."

In 1910 Peach's was transferred to the Lemonville Circuit with Lemonville, Bethesda, and Ballantrae as the other appointments.

In the Missionary Report for 1916-17 (the last year for which statistics are given for individual appointments on the circuit) the names mentioned at Peach's were: Ed Hastings, Mr. & Mrs. G. Williamson, Mr. & Mrs. J. Williamson, Mr. & Mrs. A. Wegg, Thos. Peach & family.

During Reverend E. M. Burgess' term as minister in 1924, an Epworth League was formed in the church and this club was the foundation of our present Young People's Union.

This active group, supporting Mr. and Mrs. H. Miller, and Tom Hastings as their debating team, took part in debates in the surrounding district.

In 1925, at the time of union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Church to form the United Church of Canada, this pastoral charge was re-organized and our past association with Lemonville was severed; we became a new pastoral charge with Melville and Bethesda.

Our church was re-shingled in 1929 and in 1930 it was repainted and fire insurance was placed on the buildings for the first time.

During Rev. A. McNeill's term, the young men's class under the leadership of Jim Lenaghan and Lorne Wideman purchased the present organ which was made possible by having the Seth Parker Group. All the neighbouring churches and district supported this cause and there was barely room to accommodate the crowds.

During Rev. McEwen's ministry our Peach's Quartette, Mr. J. Wideman and his two sons Carson and Lorne and Tom Hastings became very widely publicized and their services were in great demand. Mrs. J. Wideman accompanied this quartette on the piano.

On January 28, 1935, the 1st marriage vows were solemnized when Miss Lucy Kendall was united in marriage with Mr. Ivan Walker, son of our caretaker at that time. After the wedding ceremony, Mr. Henry Miller, an elder of the church, presented the bride and groom with a white bible to commemorate the occasion.

Mr. M. Crisp's efforts in the church will always be remembered as a Sunday School Teacher, Lay Preacher and a great visitor among the people. Mr. Crisp was instrumental in starting the perennial flower-bed with a donation of shrubs, bulbs and perennial flowers.

During Rev. A. J. Orr's ministry, the Young People's Union

first, its numbers grew rapidly and became quite an effective and influential organization.

Rev. Chapin was instrumental in starting the Christmas Pageants in the church. In 1919, through the efforts of Rev. Chapin, hydro was installed and the gas lamps, which had been service for a number of years, were sold.

During Rev. Chapin's term, the Peach's Baseball Team and Hockey Team were formed under the leadership of Jack Warriner. These teams made a name for themselves and our church was certainly "put on the map."

Rev. R. Chapin at his farewell service in June, 1951, dedicated the pulpit bible and hymnary which were presented to the church by the Williamson family.

The fence at the front of the church was removed in June, 1954 and the sheds, which had become well-weathered, were sold.

We were all sorry to lose the faithful service of Rev. G. Robins, an outstanding minister and scholar, who was forced to retire on account of ill-health in June 1954.

However, we were all glad to welcome our present minister, the Rev. H. Moddle, who has been our minister and spiritual leader since July, 1954. During the short time that he has been with us our church has become the centre of our community. Rev. Moddle has been instrumental in re-organizing our choir and in the fall of 1954 we carried out an Every Member Canvass and Visitation. There have been many changes in our order of service to bring us in line with the newer methods, and we look forward to an even greater future.

Today, as we look at our present church with its fresh coat of paint on the inside and the new tool shed at the back and the enlarged cemetery grounds, we realize that plans are being made for an even greater Peach's.

There are many things which have been overlooked, such as the faithful attendance of Mrs. J. Kirk as church organist and then as a member of the congregation; also Gertrude Wegg's service as a Sunday School Teacher for girls and Henry Walker's services as care taker for fifty years.

In a Church there are always many whose labours over the years consecrate the meeting place for those who worship in it after them. Especially in rural places it seems as if many of these fine souls pass to their reward without memorial. Therefore, we close this history with a tribute to them and a thanks to God for the service which they rendered in preserving for us this church and the gospel of our Lord.

We love Thy Church, O God: Her walls before Thee stand, Dear as the apple of Thine eye, And graven on Thy hand. For her our tears shall fall For her our prayers ascend; To her our cares and toils be given, Till toils and cares shall end.

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CEDAR GROVE

(June 16th)

It was a roundabout way of catching up with the activities of one of our Cedar Grove globe-trotters but there was a most interesting pictorial story on Win Bridges in the last issue of the Week End Telegram. If you did not see it,

is well worth the trouble of writing for a back copy.

There is a fine rail fence in the process of construction around the Community Club property which, even in its present state, is successfully keeping the cars off the grass.

Cedar Grove is becoming a mecca for groups interested in our activities. On Monday evening the Archaeological group

who have held several digs in this area, visited the Sim Reesor's. On Sunday 15 writers from the new group, Writers of Canada, had tea and a conference at Blodwen Davies.

Don McClennan appreciated very, very much the many kindnesses extended to him at the time of his father's death. The loss of a parent is always a great loss but thoughtful

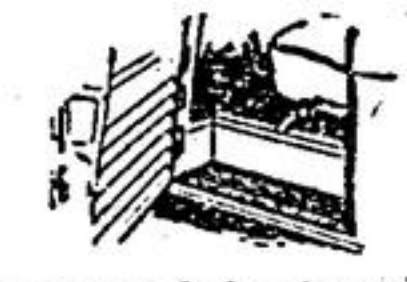
friends made it as easy as it could have been.

NOTICE

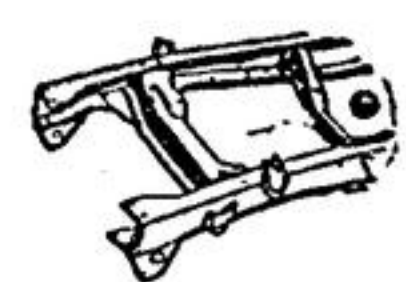
E. A. Grubin, R.O. Optometrist, will be at his office in Stouffville on Monday and Tuesday, June 27th and 28th. Phones 86J2 and 25J1.

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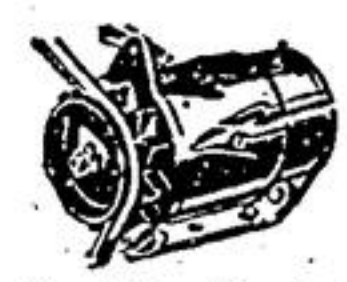
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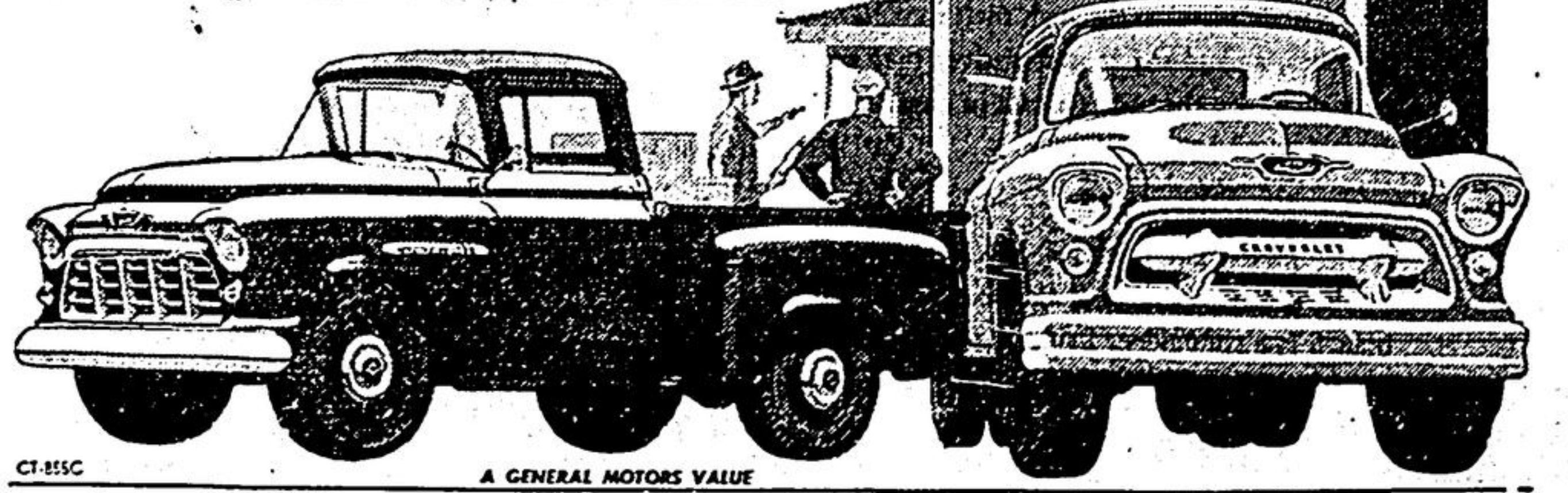
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