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Creator:

Subject: Beeton, Beeton Methodist Church, Wallace Hoover Garage, Clarksville, D.A. Jones, Richard Dunham, James Lowry, William Barton, Joseph Bateman, James Early, William Cavenagh, William Mitchell, Mr. and Mrs. Stephenson, Mrs. William Barton, Paull and Son, New Church Building Fund, Dan W. Watson, John McDonald.

Description: A history of the Beeton Methodist Church covering methodist history in Beeton, Church contruction, Beeton history, cornerstone ceremony, childrens' essays, official opening of church, and financial records.

Publisher:

Contributor:

Date:

Type: Document

Format: JPEG / PDF

Identifier: 0150

Source: Local History Vertical File - New Tecumseth Public Library: Alliston Memorial Branch.

Language: En

Relation:

Coverage:

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THE BEETON METHODIST CHURCH

The first church in Beeton was a Methodist Church and it probably replaced an earlier log structure (we have no record of the location). This board and batten building stood for several years at 100 Main Street but was eventually moved to 42 Main Street where it became well-known for many years, as the Wallace Hoover Garage. When Mr. Hoover retired from business in 1974, the property was purchased by the village of Beeton and the old structure was demolished to make way for the present Beeton Municipal Office.

Clarksville (Beeton) grew rapidly in the 1850's, 60's and 70's. By the mid 1870's, a move was made to incorporate Clarksville into a town and this took place in June, 1874, with Beeton being the official name accepted to honour D.A. Jones and his bee-keeping enterprise. At about this time, members of the Beeton Methodist Church decided that the frame building was not adequate to serve the needs of a growing congregation. A larger structure was needed to accommodate more people and events such as two Sunday services, Sunday School, Church Meetings mid-week, band meetings (revival) and socials. Plans were soon being made for the construction of a fine new church.

It was decided that a larger piece of property was needed for the church and the trustees picked a location just north of the business section of the village. This area later became known as Centre Street and was then largely owned by David Allison Jones. Many of the low spots and bogs had been filled in, and lots were being sold for house construction. In early October of 1877, Mr. Jones agreed to the sale of a piece of property approximately 60' x 415' in the northwest part of Block A, on Centre Street. The bill of sale is dated October, 1877, with the price paid being \$500.00. This was then a considerable amount of money and the trustees signed a mortgage for the sale price. At the time of this land transaction, the trustees were Richard Dunham, James Lowry, William Barton, Joseph Bateman, James Early, William Cavenagh, and William Mitchell.

With the problem of a site settled, plans moved ahead rapidly with regard to the building itself. The trustees decided to form a committee to study some churches already in use. A committee consisting of three, Mr. and Mrs. Stephenson and Mrs. William Barton, were instructed to travel to Toronto to study church architecture. They were most impressed with the structure of a Methodist Church located on Parliament Street, and soon permission was granted to build the same type of church in Beeton. Thus plans for this replica were drawn up by the Toronto

architects, Paul and Son. With the site and the church plans ready, the congregation went to work to raise money.

The women made a beautiful quilt and many of the church families paid to have their name embroidered on it. It was sold for \$25.00 and was later given to the minister. Christmas cakes were made and sold and a door-to-door collection was organized, which extended into the rural areas of the township. People travelled in pairs by horse and buggy to make these collections. Numerous dinners were organized and this money was turned over to the New Church Building Fund. Throughout the later part of 1877 and the early part of 1878 the congregation worked very hard, with the result that in the late spring of 1878 the Building Fund had \$3,000.00 on hand to begin construction.

Very little is known about the actual building programme. As there are no surviving newspapers of the period, it is almost impossible to discuss the construction project. Dan W. Watson, who resided in Beeton for nine decades, assisted in the roofing of the large building. One can safely say that the total congregation took part in the construction. The lumber, no doubt, was milled locally in one of the numerous saw mills and the bricks themselves were made locally in the Bemrose brick yard. The magnificent building took shape over the spring of 1878, and in early May the topic of a corner-stone was being discussed. It was decided that May 24th, the Queen's birthday, would be an appropriate day to hold a corner-stone ceremony. Plans were prepared to make that day a memorial one in the life of the village.

Then, the Queen's Birthday was always a day of great excitement throughout the British Empire. Queen Victoria was in her 41st year on the throne of England and a sense of patriotism was an inbred part of any Canadian's upbringing. Everyone used her birthday to play, party, march and have a good time. In 1878 the day would have an added feature for the citizens of Beeton, in that the Methodist Church cornerstone would be put into place. A member of the government would have to be present to represent the Premier of Ontario and the Federal Government. Letters were mailed and John McDonald agreed to take part in the day's celebration. Mr. Macdonald was then a member of the Federal Government, representing the constituency of Centre Toronto (5).

May 24th, 1878 began as a very dull, overcast day. However, the events had been carefully arranged and they proceeded as planned. We are fortunate in keeping some photographs of this day.

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because of an assignment given to the children following their return to school. They were asked to prepare an essay on the holiday, with the topic being "How you spent the Queen's Birthday in 1878 in Beeton". The following is some unknown boy's description of that day.

The morning of the 24th looked dismal as there had been a shower of rain the night before, but before 9 o'clock it broke up and proved to be a very fine day. From that time till about 1 or 2 o'clock the people flocked into Beeton in expectations of having a good day. The village was decorated for the occasion, for John MacDonald, Esq. M.P., was to lay the corner-stone of the new church. Jake Owens was to perform on the rope and amusements of all sorts were expected.

Dinner was served at 12 o'clock and was followed immediately after by John MacDonald, Rev. Mr. Clark Totten, and several others, who delighted the audience for an hour or two with their wit. Immediately after followed the laying of the corner-stone of the church. The amusements followed, viz; Jake Owen's feat on the rope, which was surprising indeed; foot racing, jumping and dancing followed, which wound up with many sore limbs, but several carried off prizes. Music was provided by the Nobleton Brass Band, which greatly enlivened the day. But the day began to be drawing to a close and the people began to disperse, but all agreed that they had spent the Queen's Birthday in a very agreeable manner.

Another view of the church activities that day is provided by the Christian Guardian.

The corner-stone of our new church in Beeton was laid on the Queen's Birthday by Mr. John MacDonald, M.P.. The financial results of the day's entertainment was above \$500.00; this, with the amount secured before, will give us a building fund about \$3,500.00.

The contract for the church has been let; the work is now progressing; and we hope in a few months to see it completed.(5)

The minister officially took part in the laying of the

corner-stone. The Methodist Church had published a booklet in 1875 which listed the doctrines and disciplines which the church and minister had to follow.

DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

Then shall the Minister, standing by the stone, recite to the congregation a creed to be placed as an inscription of the stone. (It may contain a copy of the Bible, the hymn book, the Hymnster, Church periodicals of recent date, the names of the Pastor, Trustees, and Building Committee of the Church, with such other documents and articles as may be desired. A list of these may be read.) After which the person chosen to perform shall deposit the stone in the stone and mortar; and shall say the words, dictated by the builder, saying:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I lay this corner-stone for the foundation of a house to be builded and consecrated to the service of Almighty God, according to the order and usages of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. AMEN.

The service may conclude with appropriate prayer, the Lord's prayer, and the benediction.

The building program continued all that summer and fall and by November of 1878 it was completed. The new church was officially opened on Christmas Day. The Minister, J.W. Totten, arranged for a special guest to preach the first sermon.

The New Methodist Church in Beeton, on the Bond Head circuit will be opened on Christmas Day by Rev. D. Ives of Auburn, New York, who will preach at 10:30 a.m.. After the sermon, dinner will be served in the base of the church. After dinner there will be addresses by Dr. Ives and others. Tickets 35c. In the evening of the same day, tea will be served in the same place, to be followed by an interesting programme. Tickets 25c. The committee have provided an abundance of room and the ladies are making ample provision for all. It is expected that special rates will be arranged for on the H. and N.W.R.R. (Hamilton and North Western Railroad). (7)

With this ceremony completed the new Methodist Church was officially opened. This marked the end of two very busy years for the congregation.