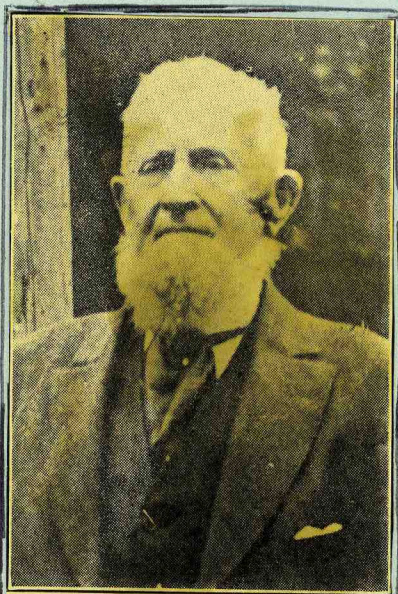




THE PRESENT MINISTER 1928

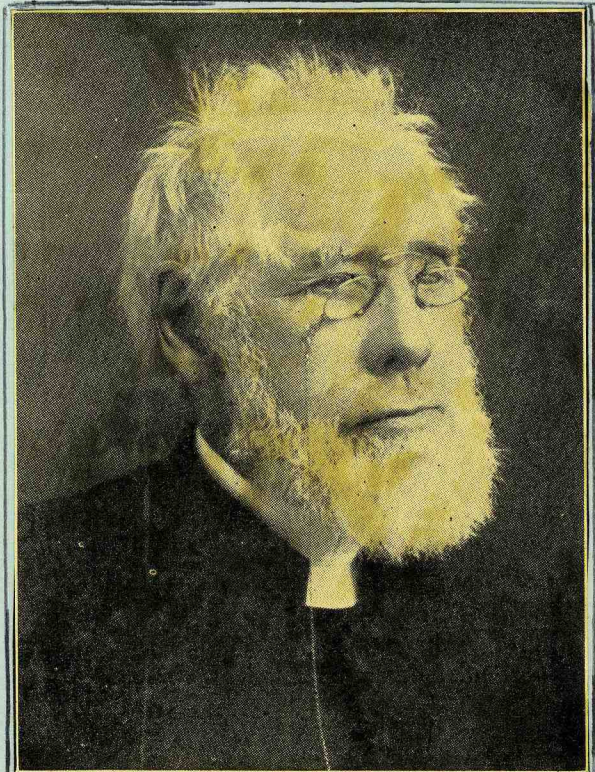
Rev. M. W. Goodrich, B.A., B.D., a former Presbyterian, was called to the circuit in June, 1928, and inducted according to the rules of the United Church of Canada.



ANDREW VENNING

Andrew Venning, 1878-1907, gave thirty years of honoured service to the Church as Recording Steward. During that period he never missed more than one District Meeting or Conference. We leave any further remarks only because his life still lingers as a fragrant memory in the minds of scores who will read these words.

Taken May 17, 1922, Mr. Venning was 90 years old on this date.



REV. WILLIAM SAVAGE 1854

100 YEARS AGO
April 6, 1864 *Mildred B. Barons
April 1964*

It is contemplated to build an Episcopal Church at Belmont, a village about 12 miles from this city. With this object in view, the Rev. Mr. Du Barre is now in this city soliciting subscriptions in aid of the very laudable undertaking.

*Became
Belmont
Anglican
Church*

50 YEARS AGO
February 25, 1913 *Mildred B. Barons
Feb. 1964*

Parishioners of the Methodist Church, Belmont, demonstrated their attachment to their pastor, Rev. A. E. Jones, when he was presented with a superb fur-lined coat valued at \$50, in recognition of valuable services rendered since going there.

BELMONT UNITED CHURCH

1853 - 1959

A regard for the memories of the Past has prompted the compiling of this brief History of Belmont United Church, - for the years as they slip by cover up what has gone and yet succeeding generations want to know what happened in the decades that have passed.

Times and People who formed colorful chapters in our Church's History have been recalled. Gleaned from the Records of the Years we offer this Memorial Account and in Retrospect would bring these things to your Remembrance.

In 1830 there was no Belmont. That year saw the incoming of the Manning Settlers from the Eastern States. They settled a large block in south-east Westminster. This was the Manning Settlement and Plymouth along the Townline, their village (both north of present Belmont).

In the 1840's Joshua Odell, Lot 1, Concession 7, Westminster broke up his farm into building lots and Belmont had been born. By 1850 Belmont was becoming an important community. A wealthy farmer arrived from Eastern Ontario - Thomas Nugent. He bought the farm adjoining Plymouth extending from Concession 6 to 7 in N. Dorchester (McBride's). He too broke up part of his farm into lots and in 1851 Belmont was surveyed.

But to return to the Manning Settlers - these faithful pioneers with their great courage and deep religious convictions, heeding the divine injunction "forget not the assembling of yourselves together" soon began to meet in groups or classes to worship the God of their fathers. In time many preaching points sprang up in and around The Settlement. They were under the care of London ministers, but in 1853 became independent.

The history of the Belmont Circuit began with the meeting of its first Quarterly Conference, Aug. 20, 1853, with Richard Dibb as first Recording Steward 1853-57. The Circuit comprised seven churches - Bratts (one mile south of Victoria), Travers (Victoria), Plymouth, Purdys (N. East of Harrietsville), Mannings (on the Townline opposite fifth of Westminster, Wesley (south of Dorchester Village), Plaxton's (Mossley).

A parsonage was rented in the centre of the circuit, two miles north of Belmont on the Townline, for Rev. E. L. Koyle, first settled minister and Circuit Superintendent. Followed in 1854 by Rev. Wm. Savage the Circuit soon comprised 14 churches ministered to, as was customary in the early Methodist Church by a Circuit Superintendent and one or two assistants. The years brought changes. Some chapels grew strong, the weak ones closed, other circuits were formed.

In 1853 a new chapel was built at Mannings. It was the pride of the Settlement and became the Circuits Mother Church and most important point. The Official Board meeting in this Chapel February 16th, 1856, passed three resolutions, - to build (1) a Chapel at Travers Corners (Victoria), (2) a Chapel in the Tibbits Settlement (Salem), (3) a Chapel and Parsonage House in the Village of Belmont.

Down in the Village religious fervor ran high, as plans were made for three new churches - Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist. Now, Thomas Nugent was a public spirited and generous man and he gave land for all three churches and money as well! The gift of 2/5 of an acre to the Wesleyan Methodist Church was recorded in the Registry for Middlesex, Canada West, on June 16, 1857. Registration was made February 16th, 1858 for "1/5 acre or more" from the Trustees of the Wesleyan Methodist Church to the Belmont Parsonage Trustees.

Soon a fine white frame Church had been erected (on the present site), while a one story red brick parsonage was built on the adjoining corner lot. Rev. J. Hutchinson and Rev. W. W. Clark were the first of a long line of 12 Circuit Superintendents and 25 Junior Ministers who served this growing congregation until 1884. (There were 59 ministers from 1853-1959).

Meanwhile the Manning Chapel served until 1861. How long it had been a preaching point before it appeared in Belmont Circuit Records is not known as earlier days left few records. With Salem a mile north, Belmont two miles south and the Brick Church (Methodist Episcopal) a half mile west - she slowly ebbed away. The Brick Church closed after 1883. From July 1884-87 Belmont and Victoria formed a two-point circuit, Salem having been joined to Nilestown. From 1887 on- the Belmont Circuit was Belmont, Victoria and Salem. Early in 1945 Victoria was closed and Salem in 1947. Belmont stood alone until joined by Nilestown in 1949. Gore was associated briefly, prior to 1957. The Pastoral Charge today is Belmont and Nilestown.

In the late '80s the growing Congregation felt the Frame Church to be inadequate, but to the pioneers who built it, for their faith, courage and determination we owe a debt of gratitude. Plans were made for a new edifice and the old church moved to the property at the north; end of College street. The people worshipped there while building was in progress. The frame church later became a driveshed for Merrit Willsie (McBride's), only to be sold again to Joseph Potts for a Hardware Store and moved to the side where it is occupied today by Clarke's Store.

Removal of the old cleared the ground for the new. An Ingersoll architect, James Night was employed. Much labor and material was gratis and a generous subscription was received. The new white brick church was complete with Auditorium, Choir Loft, Entries and Basement. The Latter had one main room, with a class room and Janitor's room for "wood and lamps" at the east end, a central furnace, and a Vestry under the Choir Loft. In the year 1889 in November (one month later than the new Knox Presbyterian Church) the Belmont Methodist Church was opened for Worship with Rev. E. Scott as its first minister.

On January 14th, 1898 the Parsonage Trustees passed a motion "that we accept the offer of the Trustees of the Brick Church on the 5th line of Westminster, in allowing the taking of said church and moving it to Belmont for a new parsonage". A Committee was then appointed to arrange its sale and all property connected therewith. The Church was razed, sale held and net profit = \$87.89.

Frequent meetings were held and apparent difficulties encountered re the building of the new Parsonage, as the records state "a good deal of talk was made on the matter"! On October 17, 1898, a motion was made to proceed at once. Parsonage accommodation was rented from Miss Helen Finch, and the old house torn down and sold. The beautiful white brick parsonage was built in 1899 for a total cost of \$2,648.09.

Alterations and improvements to the church properties have been made from time to time. Oil lights were replaced by acetylene gas lighting, the gas being manufactured in a little building at the rear. Natural gas was next with gas lights on posts outside. Hydro followed. Extensive renovations to the Auditorium commenced in 1947, the walls and ceiling were modernized, seats and woodwork refinished, new electrical lighting fixtures installed, and the stairs rebuilt. The choir room was refurnished in 1951. 1913-17 saw the basement converted to class rooms by Rev. L. Bartlett. 1959 saw the basement completely excavated, reverted to one room and rebuilt with acoustic ceiling, panelled walls and colored concrete floor. A modern kitchen and wash rooms have been installed. A separate building housing two new heating systems was also built. Village water was available in 1957.

Several milestones have been reached. Following Church Union in 1925 the Belmont Methodist Church assumed its new name- Belmont United Church, having merged into the United Church of Canada. Ministers serving since Union are: Rev. M. W. Goodrich 1928-34, Rev. A. Laing 1934-37, Rev. W. R. Osborne 1937-41, Rev. J. R. Peters 1941-43, Rev. Geo. Oliver 1943-49, Rev. T. C. Wilkinson 1949-53, Rev. G. G. Howse 1953-58 and our present minister Rev. A. L. Harley, who came to us in 1958.

In 1929 (July 21-22) the Diamond Jubilee of the Belmont Circuit was held (1853-1928) under direction of Rev. M. W. Goodrich who prepared an historical booklet. In 1939 on September 17 the Golden Jubilee of the present Church Building was observed. Rev. W. R. Osborne was pastor. Centennial Services of the Methodist Church (1853-1925) and the United Church (1925-1953) were celebrated October 11, 1953 in the pastorate of Rev. G. G. Howse. Guest ministers were Dr. W. E. MacNiven, London, and Rev. C. D. Daniel, Ingersoll, President of London Conference. Prior to the morning service new front doors were dedicated "To the Memory of Benjamin and Eliza Ann Holtby by their daughter and son-in-law, Lenora and Wm. Free". This year 1959, November 24th, marks the seventieth anniversary of the dedication of our present church Home.

With its worshipful surroundings, good accommodation and a succession of capable ministers and leaders, our congregation has grown strong and influential, serving a church community of more than six hundred people and the various departments of work are being carried on effectively. Foundations were well and truly laid for what have become well established organizations.

The Sunday School has a long faithful record, served with a fine program of Christian Education by generations of devoted teachers and officers. Outstanding for years of service have been: Superintendents Eli Smale, Frank Hamlyn, Fred Yorke-36 years (serving 44 years as Church Treasurer also), Lorne Hamlyn and Gordon Smith; Librarian Byron McMurray, and Phineas Drake and Mrs. Byron McMurray, teachers. The Attendance Plan in effect is a great incentive to regular attendance. Present enrolment is 180, average attendance is 120. Superintendents are Ed Bridgeman and Harold Jenkins. The future of our Church rests with our children and young people, the responsibility for their interest rests with us.

Choir history goes back at least to 1889. A five-octave organ was replaced by a six octave parlour organ, the gift of Miss Mary Willsie. John Boyd, early choir leader also used a tuning fork and the young people would attend church to hear the choir. About 1911 a new reed organ with "pipes" and hand pumped, was installed. About 1937 it was relocated in front of the choir, pipes removed, and a motor later added. Organists included Emmeline Watson, Mrs. Wm. Fitzpatrick, Blanche Sinclair (Mrs. John Turner, Inez Barons (Mrs. Gordon Smith). Mrs. Martha Faulds gave almost a life-time of song to the choir. On May 19th 1957, a Baldwin Electronic two manual organ was dedicated by Rev. A. E. Duffield, Conference President. The service was recorded. We are grateful to our organist and choir leader Mrs. Smith for her inspiring and worshipful ministry of music.

The Ladies Aid is recorded as a generous subscriber to the Church Building Fund in 1890- but on February 14, 1901 a new Ladies Aid Society was organized with Mrs. Geo. Willsie as President, (gentlemen accepted by paying dues!) Thus began fifty-eight years of faithful labor in the carrying on of the work of our Church for our Master. Records show endless fund raising projects and donations, - to the parsonage debt 1902, Church, Sunday School, organ funds, redecorating, purchase of furniture, cupboards, stoves, choir gowns, communion set (tables and individual cups), 1908, Bible, etc., etc., Commendable indeed is the motion passed in 1910 "that all the Ladies of the Aid be pleased with whatever the Committees did and no fault found whatever". Since April, 1921 Meeting Day has been the 4th Thursday, January 23, 1931 the Ladies Aid became the Woman's Association. Traditional are the Annual Mothers Day Tea and Autumn Bazaar. January 1958 saw adoption of the group system to include all church women. Three groups with about fifty members each were formed and are doing an excellent work. Group leaders are No. 1, Mrs. Roy Langford, No. 2 - Mrs. Ed. Bridgeman, and No. 3 - Mrs. Harold Craig. Mrs. Wm. Mathews is W. A. President.

There have been many Young People's organizations, from Epworth League on to Young People's Societies, Taxis, Boys Club and Tyro, to Sigma C now led by Bill Wells and Douglas Thompson and Hi-C with Gary Cornish as President and Rev. Allan Harley as Counsellor.

Explorers and C.G.I.T. Groups co-operate with Knox Presbyterian Church who sponsor the former, the United Church the latter.