

The home of Mrs. Ray Johnson of Iona was a busy place on August 17, 1964, the occasion being an Antique Tea held under the auspices of the Iona United Church Women. Women and children (and a few men) came in numbers which taxed the parking facilities of the grounds of this and neighboring homes and streets. Mr. Clare Kestle proved very efficient at placing the cars so that space was not wasted.

This very old home with its beautiful antique furnishings, the spacious surrounding lawns, shrubbery and flowers where the guests were able to spend their time as desired, provided a setting for a pleasant afternoon. Refreshments were served by the young ladies of the community on the verandahs - front and back. Some of the ladies were in old-fashioned dress.

Roy Orchard of Shedden who came with his pony and buggy, entertained those children who came with their mothers and those from the village.

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, Sr., father of the incumbant minister, were welcome guests in their son's absence on vacation.



Some of the young ladies who assisted were Heather Keith, Kathy Willson, Linda Healy, Elsie Willson, Lorie Keith, Linda and Marilyn Dawdy and Margaret Healy.



Mrs. Percy Whalls, President of the Iona United Church Women, seated with Roy Orchard. Riding behind are Robert and Tom Keith and Glenda McArthur.



Front: Miss Elsie and Nancy Willson and hostess Mrs. R. Johnson. Behind the buggy are Lori Keith, Margaret Healy, Kathy Willson, Heather Keith, Marilyn Dawdy, Roy Orchard and "Prince."

Mrs. L. Healy, 1968.



Mrs. A. Dingman, Mrs. N. Shoemaker, Nancy Willson and Mrs. Herbert Fletcher.

The first church of this faith and order in these parts was built at Brock's Creek in Aldborough about 1820. This was the time when many came from Scotland and settled in that township, and being of this faith, one of their first moves after building their homes, was to erect the log church. This was replaced by a frame building which was later closed and the building sold. Nearby in Brock's Creek Cemetery, near Eagle, a lovely spot in the woods, sometimes called McColl's, nearly all the folks of this name and their descendants are buried here to this day.

A number of these settlers moved to Dunwich Township after a few years and they erected a log church on the spot where the present church now stands on Number 3 Highway, a mile east of Wallacetown.

The first preacher was Elder Thomas Campbell, a native of Scotland. He came out in 1818. He received his call to preach while plowing with his oxen among the stumps on his farm in Aldborough. He would probably be ordained by a minister from Dundas, Ontario, or from the United States. He was the chief organizer of this and other churches, as at Duart, Ekfrid and Lobo, where the church services are carried on to this day. Elder, or Thomas Campbell, as he was then, took Thomas McColl with him and they blazed the trail through the woods to Lobo, a distance of forty miles. They had heard that a settlement of folks of like faith from Scotland had come there to establish homes, and a church was set up there.

Later Thomas McColl was ordained. He had settled on the farm now occupied by Douglas Lyons, and the present Dunwich Church is off this property. The land was given by Elder McColl. His descendants, the family of Malcolm C. McColl, live on the adjoining farm which was taken up by the family around 1820.

Later a frame church was built, which was replaced by the present brick one.

Succeeding Elder McColl, who, with or like Elder Campbell, probably travelled by foot to the four charges, was Elder William Pollard. He was of English birth. His parents settled at or around Dundas, Ontario. He received his call to preach after reaching his manhood, then with his family he went to Michigan, where they lived for four years. At this time he received a call from the now established churches in these parts. He served them for thirty-three years. Travel by this time was easier and this was with a horse and buggy, part time with a team. He was their pastor at the four charges besides Dunwich, where he lived on what is now Number 3 Highway. His grandson W.R. Pollard, now lives on the farm. He died in 1901. His successor was Elder William Cornell of Ohio, assisted by Elder Currie.

They were in time succeeded by Elder J.B. Slauson of New York State. After his death in the late twenties, the churches were for a time without a regular pastor until Elder George Ruston was called in 1929. He came from New York State, but is English by birth. He has served most faithfully, in all the four charges, holding the monthly services in each place, as well as London, also in Toronto occasionally. Now in 1960, he and his wife reside in Dutton. His family are scattered, a son John was killed in the Air Force in World War II.

He is the moving spirit behind the present well-kept condition of the Church and grounds. The Cemetery adjoining, does not belong to the church property. This plot is from the land taken up in 1919 by Duncan McKillop, and the cemetery bears his name. The farm is still occupied by one of the same name.

This church still maintains its original order of service, as from the Scottish Church, standing in prayer and singing the Psalms and Paraphrases unaccompanied by music. The same truth and doctrine is preached as in the early days. Quarterly meetings have always been held at the four charges, Dunwich being on the second Sunday in May and is known by the now traditional name of "May Meeting". At one time these services began on Friday, but for many years it has begun on Saturday morning and is finished Monday noon. Two services are held on Saturday and Sunday. The meals are served in the well equipped basement. The folks from the other charges attend these meetings as well as from the quite distant cities. A visiting preacher also is present.

Communion Service is held then and the form of baptism in open water is still observed. The original members and those of the second and third generations have passed on, but their descendants still attend. Some families are all gone with no one of the same name left.

Issac Watts, the riter of many hymns, seems to have fittingly described this spirit:

"Christ hath a garden walled around,
A paradise of fruitful ground
Chosen by love, and fenced by grace,
From out the world's wide wilderness."

Mary J. McIntyre,
Shedden, Ontario.
February, 13, 1960.

Organists were Mrs. Moses Lumley, Mrs. John Rodgers and Miss Jerusha Hamilton.

To mention some of the first Free Will Baptist families we have the Lumleys, Williams, Waters, Keillors, Griffins, Milligans, McIntyres, Lodges, Decows and Shipleys. Most of these people were buried in the Lumley graveyard on the farm of Mr. Sam Pearce (now the United Church Christian Centre). Only a few of the markers remain.

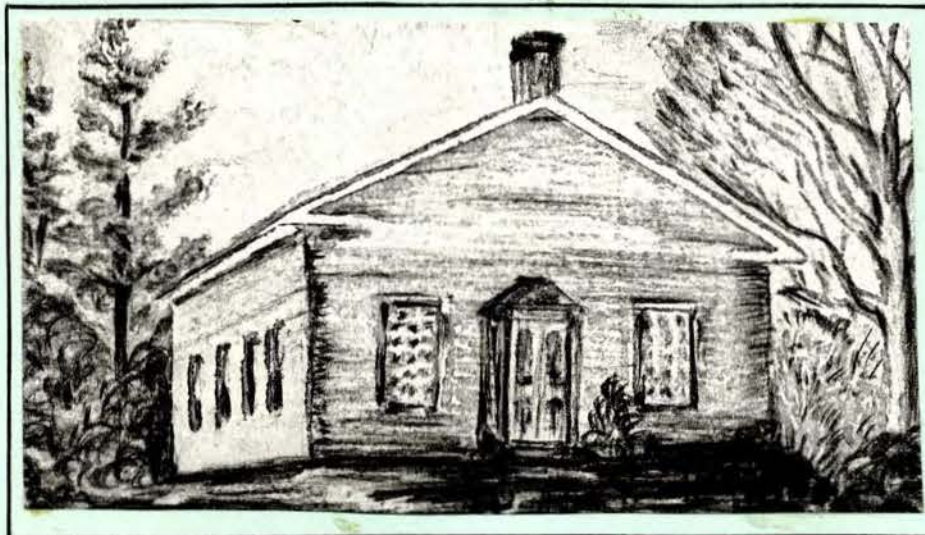
Connected with the church affairs were: Messers James Lodge, Elijah Gilbert, Jeremiah Hamilton, Samuel Williams, John Lumley, Jonah Clark, Henry Lumley and "Tren" Keillor. (Trenholm).

The elders were: Kettle, Stephen Griffin, Jacob Griffin, Ingram, Moon and Moore. Stephen and Jacob Griffin were brothers living in Iona. Both preached in this church, and it was said of them that on one occasion both were present on the same Sunday and between them dragged the sermon out for two and one half hours! The closing hymn was "How Tedious and Tasteless the Past".

Elder A.J. Ingram caught cold while going to a meeting, developed pneumonia and died in a house formerly occupied by Herman Clark, later by the Simpson family, and now 1966, by Mr. Bates, and his family. He was followed by Elders Crossart, Moon, Trueman, Moore and Cunningham.

Finding themselves unable to keep up their church, at an unknown date, they joined with the Disciple Baptists, who occupied the church until shortly before it began its use as Iona Community Hall.

(Curator: 1966, Much of this information is from the notes of Miss Victoria Munroe).



This building was built in 1862 by the Free Will Baptists and numbered many of the pioneer families among its congregation - the Jeremiah Hamiltons, the Moses Lumleys, Pearces, Keillors and many others.

Following the migration of many of these families to Michigan and as the others grew older, the building was taken over by the Disciples. The time came when they too no longer had the membership to continue and the building was used by the Community by the Farmer's Club, Literary Society and finally under the leadership of the Iona Women's Institute, the Iona Community Hall.

Picture - The work of Mrs. Bessie Malcolm, Dutton.

Picture - Courtesy of the Curator. The charcoal etching courtesy Mrs. H. Jackson, Fingal.

When Iona Was Fired With Religious Zeal That Even Zero Weather Couldn't Chill

Dr. Lumley Tells of the Days When Hallelujah Bands Visited the Place and Had Such Good Results That There Were No More Sinners Left to Work On

Revival meetings or evangelical gatherings have long been a source of keen entertainment and spiritual uplift (sometimes of a rather ephemeral character) to many people, as witness the popularity of Aimee Semple MacPherson's Angelus Temple in Los Angeles. There is no doubt that Aimee put evangelism on a new, if not a higher plane, but it is doubtful if her Angelus Temple revivals had anything on those of half a century or more ago for religious fervor and rather startling, at times, testimonies of repentance and faith.

Dr. Charles C. Lumley, a native of old Iona, tells of some of the revival meetings that were held there in his boyhood. He recalls one, in particular, that started during the last week of November when he was a boy of nine years. A very cold November it was that year, but arrangements for the meetings went on just the same. Finally the day came for bringing in the evangelists.

"The preacher at the Free Will Baptist church, Rev. George Moore, came to our house for breakfast that day and asked my older brother to drive a team twelve miles to Melbourne to meet the train," Dr. Lumley related. "A group of young people from Alvinston, called the Hallelujah Band, was coming to put on the evangelistic meetings. The weather was decidedly cold that day, without snow, and my brother returned with the evangelists about noon—all nearly frozen. They soon thawed out, however, and then proceeded to thaw out Iona. They brought a new kind of evangelism to us.

"From the pulpit platform, one of the young people would offer testimony of personal experience while another would pray," Dr. Lumley continued. "All would sing. Perhaps there would be several doing these three co-related parts of the service at once. Sinners were invited to come to the front and when they responded, were given seats on the platform.

"I was only a child, but I felt that I should stimulate my elders," Dr. Lumley went on. "Once after a testimony on my part, I heard a stuttering neighbor remark, sotto voce: 'J-J-J-Jesus doesn't k-k-know that k-k-k-kid is here in this w-w-w-world.'"

Came for Miles

It was a great revival, Dr. Lumley assured. People came for miles to attend. They packed the Regular Baptist church and the Methodist church, which were used in turn for the meetings.

"After a month, no sinners were left to work on," Dr. Lumley explained. "So a local band of about 150 members was formed with Henry McSherry as president and J. C. Lowther as vice-president. Groups were then organized to go out and carry on similar evangelical work. One group went to Middlemiss, another to Blooms-

burg, and that ended their activities as a band."

One had to be a hardy individual and brave the dangers of pleuropneumonia, rheumatism and kindred ailments in order to be thoroughly converted and be washed of his sins in those days. Dr. Lumley recalls seeing a number of converts baptized in the creek at Iona during the winter period, with the ice thick enough to hold the weight of the spectators.

"A few years later a census of the members of the three churches at Iona would show that nearly all were converts at that meeting," Dr. Lumley added.

An Innocent Victim

Dr. Lumley adds to his reminiscences of Christmas concerts that he attended as a boy. He remembers one in which he was the innocent victim of an assault brought on by a practical joker.

"Duncan Brown was about three rows behind me and to the left of him sat Dick Kerr," Dr. Lumley stated. "Dick was in a prankish mood that night. He would lean back and stealthily throw a chunk of hard candy at Duncan Brown. It was enough to arouse any man's ire and after about the third clip on the head, Duncan was aroused. He made a sudden raid on me—the only child near him. I was the guilty one in his eyes and I feared for a moment that I would be demolished."

The music at those old Christmas Eve concerts have left haunting memories with Dr. Lumley.

"No symphony orchestra or choir of seraphims could ever arouse more ecstatic emotions in the heart and soul of a child than some of us experienced when we listened to an orchestra brought by Robert Stevenson from Tyrconnell to the suppers held in the old Temperance Hall on Christmas Eve," he declared.

Among the "great" men of his boyhood whom Dr. Lumley remembers, very clearly, was Dr. John Cascaden, Legislative representative for West Elgin, and a gentleman of rather peppery disposition if all the stories concerning him are true.

"As a young shaver, one winter night, I remember being sent to Duncan Sinclair's store on an errand," Dr. Lumley related. "Inside I found Dr. Cascaden parading up and down in front of the counter like a Scottish piper, beating his breast in histrionic style and administering somebody one of the most fervent castigations that his Irish tongue and eloquence could deliver. Edging back to the stove, that was surrounded by boxes, I found Archie Brown taking the rap for the whole family. It was not until years later that I gathered the true significance of that dramatic scene. It had been a case of disappointment on the good doctor's part that he was not appointed registrar for Elgin county."

From St. Thomas Times Journal

As early as 1818, Herman Jenkins and David Marks, Evangelists from New York State, made frequent visits to Canada West preaching numerous sermons under the influence of which many professed conversion.

Marks' knowledge of literature was, but limited and he fully realized this drawback in his ministerial success, which caused him to engage as a laborer on the Erie Canal that he might obtain such means as would enable him to acquire, what would necessarily be, a limited education. He was at this time about seventeen years of age and his fellow laborers recognizing in him "the boy preacher" made up a purse to assist him in purchasing books.

By night and by day, on the way from one appointment to another, and in his room after retiring for rest, he gave himself to the perusal of his English grammar until its rules were fairly mastered.

Herman Jenkins in November, 1822, on an evangelistic tour arrived at the house of Andrew Banghart in Westminster, whose heart had already been opened to the spirit of God, and founded a church of twenty zealous Christians.

In the same year Banghart founded the Iona church. Meetings were sometimes held in the school house on the Axford farm, but more frequently at the house of William Brooks, already referred to.

At this Iona church four years later a mighty revival was held, which added many to this new organization.

In 1828 Freeborn W. Straight became the pastor of the Freewill Baptist Churches in Canada West. Elder Straight many years after, went to New York State, remained for some time and then returned to Canada and became pastor of a church of the same faith and order in Woodstock, Ontario, where he died about 1883.

Other ministers have been Elders Kettle, Griffin, Ingram, Moon, Moore and Lintz, the latter of whom being rather Calvinistic, afterwards joined the regular Baptists.

At present the Freewill Baptists have no stationed minister in the village, but yearly meetings are still kept up, attended by Canadian preachers from a distance and often by American professors of note. These meetings are uniformly recognized by the suspension of services in the other churches of the village.

This body is noted for its freewill doctrines, free or open communion, and freedom with which their church is thrown open to ministers of all denominations. Amongst men of note who have regularly preached in the church were the late Elder Sheppard and Elder Best, of St. Thomas Disciple church.

(From the writings of James W. Brown, 1896)

In 1861 David and Rufus Lumley contracted to build a Free Will Baptist Church on property in Iona, west side of Townline at the south part of the village between an old unnamed street and the home then occupied by Mr. Moses Lumley and now occupied by Mrs. Loucks. They were assisted by John Lumley, Coates Keillor and other early settlers. The contract price was \$800, and the contractors are reported to have said that this sum merely paid for the timber which Mr. Keillor is reported to have hauled from "the Hollow" at the intersection of concession 9 and the Mill road, with oxen. This was the last job David and Rufus Lumley, (brothers of Moses), did before moving to Michigan in 1862. Another note from the period states this date as 1868.

Prior to the building of this church, meetings were held in the log school house at the top of Jonah Clark's Hill leading to "the Hollow."

Lyman Lewis was the overseer of this denomination in Elgin. He acted as mediator in any disputes which might arise.

The first choir in the new church as remembered by Miss Gilbert, music teacher, of Shedden, one of the early members, was as follows: Mr. and Mrs. Moses Lumley, Joseph Canfield, Sarah Gilbert, Archie and Duncan Brown and Sarah Jane Corbett.

Curator

REGULAR BAPTIST

As far back as the first settlements date can be traced, some form of Christian worship, although no churches were built till a later date, yet houses, barns and school houses were used. Sunday school was held in the "Cottage school house," as well as in the house of Daniel McIntyre. Church was held in these two places, also in the "Seminary" and at James VanVelsor's. The services were not by regular pastors, but were conducted by ministers who made preaching circuits throughout Western Ontario. A story is told that while holding service in the house of Daniel McIntyre the floor gave way and all were precipitated into the cellar. An old barn which still stands on Lot 2, north side, could repeat many sermons of early days if it but had the power. But this section can record more church history than that recorded here. Many persons are, perhaps, not aware that this little section of Regular Baptists is one of the oldest religious institutions in the west. It is the parent of many churches, including that of South Yarmouth, Caradoc, Chatham, as well as St. Thomas.

In 1821 a religious body of eleven men and nine women met at the residence of the late John Philpott, and by resolution, there and then they became a regularly appointed and duly constituted church, with Elder Crandall as their first pastor. The names of those who took so important a step are as follows: John Philpott, Daniel McIntyre, Aaron Gregory, Robert McDermot, Thomas Richards, Wm. Decow, Jesse Crandall, Richard Hendershott, Oliver Warner, Zachariah Warner, James McIntyre, Nancy McIntyre, Matty Drury, Betsy McIntyre, Esther Philpot, Mary McDermont, Katie Decow, Abigail Warner, Mary McIntyre, and Jane Richards. Elder Crandall remained as pastor for four years.

During this time a young Baptist farmer named McDermont, living just west of Townline, was noticed by the church as possessing native parts of great promise, and was licensed by it to preach as elder. Elder Finch, of Bay of Quinte, preached the ordination on June 30th, 1826. Elder Merrill offered the ordination prayer. Elder Sloat of London, the right hand of fellowship, Elder French closing the meeting, which was held in the barn to which reference has been made heretofore. At the close of the service the newly-ordained elder preached to the church and the people, and then baptised Ruth Mills, aunt of Hon. David Mills, as the first fruits of his ministry. He afterwards united with the Congregational church, under Rev. Joseph Silcox, of Frome.

In 1836 the first meeting house was built on the southeast corner of Lot 2, north side. Elder McDermont remained pastor for one year, and was succeeded by Elder Mills. Elder Duncan now followed, and during his time an old school preacher named Campbell, from across the ocean, made many proselytes among the regular Baptists, which led eventually to the establishment of a Scotch Baptist church, under the late Elder Thomas McColl.

A new church was built in 1860 in Iona, and in 1867, under Rev. Mr. Mulcahy, a converted Roman Catholic, the church had 104 members. This may be considered the zenith of its prosperity. Since this time many have emigrated, very many lie in the neighboring graveyard, others have reasons, or fancied reasons, for becoming careless or indifferent till at present it has actually fewer members than at its inception, that April morning seventy-five years ago. During the whole period spoken of, about 1,100 new members were added by baptism, besides a great number received by letter. The cause of its decadence may be asked, but need not be answered. During the last ten years the church has not been without its model pastors. Elders Richmond, Reese, Finkham, Mann and Wilson were men of good ability and unexceptional behavior. None of the children of the founders now remain. They all have passed to their long rest. The church has for its pastor Rev. Mr. Pollock.

A number of years ago Judge Hughes, E. Roche, Rev. St. George, Canfield and Archibald Brown stirred up a sufficient number to establish the Bible Society, one of the few things which still retains vitality.

(From the writings of Mary Hamilton, 1896)

From Mrs. Fred House of Iona, we have the members of probably the last choir in this church, (as she remembers) before it was moved to Iona Station in 1903.

The choir leader and organist was Miss Jerusha Hamilton, who seems to have been the leader in most matters, musical in those days. Some of those were in the choir included: Miss Minnie and Miss Mabel Silcox, Miss Sarah Waite, Miss Loretta Canfield, Miss Mary Huff, Walter Currie, Joseph Canfield. Mrs. Luke H. (Nancy Silcox) Brown sang in this choir for many years.

In 1952, while renovations were being made in the home of Mrs. Brown, an old minute book of the church was found in an unfinished room upstairs. Its contents plainly showed that in the early days of this church members were required to live up to their obligations or face the officials of their church to give an account of themselves. Card playing, dancing, objectionable language, etc., were not tolerated.

Henry Silcox, one of the committee in charge of building the church in Iona was the father of Mrs. Brown, mentioned above. John and Esther Phillpot, Oliver, Abigail and Zechariah Warner, the Decows and the McIntyres are well known pioneer names in this village, and appeared in the old Minute Book.

(The Curator).



1



3



2

1. Elder and Mrs. Mills
1844-1846, 1859-1861
2. Elder and Mrs. Paintes
1863-1865
3. Baptist Church - 1903
after its removal to Iona Station.

Pictures courtesy Mrs. L.H. Brown.

ELDER MC DERMOND

In 1819, a Nova Scotian named McDermond, settled on the farm joining Canutes' on the west. (His given name was Robert).

McDermond's son William afterwards became the celebrated pioneer preacher.

Elder McDermond soon after his conversion joined the Frome Congregational Church, the Rev. Joseph Silcox being at that time its pastor, who relaxed his usual custom so far as to baptise him by immersion. After remaining with this church a year he united with the Regular Baptist church, Iona, and later on became its pastor. With characteristic scruple, after joining the Baptist church he demanded a second performance of the baptismal rite by an elder of the same faith.

He has been described to the writer as a man of striking physical appearance, with peculiar and unfashionable garments, and of generally unkempt condition. Add to this a total ignorance of literature, inasmuch as his wife had to read the hymns and scripture lesson, and we have a picture of this early standard bearer of Christian faith. Nevertheless he soon learned to read, was an effective speaker, a most convincing orator, a beautiful and strong singer.

In 1836 he became pastor of the Houghton and Walsingham churches, and after a few years went to Nova Scotia and thence to Illinois. He returned to Ontario in 1870, and was licensed as a missionary by the Home Mission Board. He afterwards returned to Illinois, where he died.

He held two revivals in Iona, and by reason of his loud and sweet singing, many heretofore careless regarding church attendance, made frequent visits to his services, until over one hundred professed conversion.

His early home was a few rods directly south of the schoolhouse, where there today stands a lofty sycamore tree some five feet in circumference, which the elder carelessly stuck in the ground when a mere switch, and which during its life will form a striking memorial of Elder McDermond.

(From the writings of James W. Brown, 1896)



Elder and Mrs. McDermond

The following information shows he must have been active in farm lands; a deed for April 1, 1824, to Robert McDermond, fifty acres, north-west quarter Lot B, 8th Concession; April 24, 1824, from Honorable Colonel Talbot to William McDermond, north-east quarter Lot B, 8th Concession; May 22, 1832, Robert McDermond apparently traded farms with William McDermond, three days apart; August 25, 1837, Robert McDermond deed to George Elliot; May 9, 1841, William McDermond to Mary Montross, deal made May 9, 1841, registered September 20, 1841.

After being active in the Baptist Church, Iona, for many years, he went to Houghton and Walsingham in Norfolk County. Licence H.M.B. 1870.



The Memorial Stone for Elder McDermond
at Buda, Illinois.

He went to Illinois where he was pastor of Annawan Church. At Buda, while pastor, he died in 1879, and is buried there. His lovely monument above testifies to the esteem given in his later years.

Courtesy Mrs. Haggan, Port Burwell, Ontario.