

In the account of the opening of the newly-renovated church building at Dexter in The Times Journal of Nov. 3, only casual mention was made regarding the original building, erected in 1865. Assuming its early history would be of interest, the following facts are given, gleaned for the most part from the records of the body who erected and for many years held services therein, viz., the Freewill Baptists, a sect at that time quite prosperous in Ontario, having churches in various parts of Elgin, as well as in Norfolk, Oxford, etc. The first preacher was the Rev. William Taylor, a man of magnetic personality and unbounded energy, and it was chiefly due to his enthusiastic interest, that this little church was formed, comprising some of the most cultured and progressive thinkers in southern Elgin county. Years after, Mr. Taylor gave much attention towards perfecting a crude telephone, one of which may be seen at Dr. Clark's office in Aylmer. His son was one of the pastors of the church and another was called "Little Taylor", to designate him from the larger men of the same name. C. Hallman, afterwards a missionary to India, was one of the early pastors, and married while in Dexter, Miss Eliza Leadbeater, a writer on no mean order. The saintly Jacob Griffin who, with his wife to assist, preached in this and other churches of this denomination for many years, and Robert Cameron had the Dexter church as his first charge. He gave even at this early date promise of a notable career, yet no one could have foreseen the brilliant future awaiting this clever student. Brantford still holds his memory as a precious heritage, and

his record as a wonderful preacher and a deep thinker in the New England States was no less than phenomenal. His later years as editor of "The Watchman" published in Boston, but adds laurels to his fame. The records show that it was owing to the heroic efforts of such men as Lyman Lewis, Jehiel Yorke, James Vail, Frank Barrett, and Charles Newland that this early building was erected.

It was always conceded that Lyman Lewis, although by no means a wealthy man, provided one half of the original cost of the building and interior fittings, and during the time the Freewill Baptists denomination held services in Dexter the ministers boarded at his home free of charge, and were supplied by him with a horse and buggy to make their pastoral visits, supplied most of the fuel for the church, and gild the greater share of the current expenses. The story is told of Mr. Lewis that when the building was completed, a sum under \$500, was lacking to pay outstanding bills, and the man in charge of the building fund Mr. Barrett went to the Lewis homestead on the Lake Shore road to find the owner standing sadly by the dead horse, a very valuable brood mare. "I hate to tell you my errand," said Mr. Barrett, but was asked for the paper, and using the body of the horse for a desk, this generous pioneer wrote his name and opposite it the sum of one hundred dollars. It was such men as these that laid the foundations of Elgin's prosperity, and better still, left their imprint as to high standards and noble ideals. The communion table and pulpit were gifts from Walter

Hoyt and Mr. Lewis and his brothers in Aylmer, while the handsome Bible was given by Mrs. Gillett, Mother of the late James Gillett of Aylmer. This little band had many obstacles to overcome and much opposition from the lawless element then rampant in this vicinity, and it meant enormous sacrifices as to time and money and the losses entailed by their loyalty to the principles for which they stood were by no means slight, so it is but fitting that this belated tribute to their memory should be given.

For many years after the Freewill Baptists ceased to exist, the pulpit was supplied by the pastor of the Sparta and Plains Baptist Churches, and among these are found the names of the McEwens, McLaurens and Macdonalds, who were prominent in Baptist history. After they abandoned the appointment, Presbyterians and Methodist alternately held services in this little building up to the founding in 1892 of the present Methodist church, which has now such a commodious and handsome place of worship on the site of the early edifice, made possible by the sacrifice and devotion of these early settlers, now all gone to their reward; and it is curious to note that, of them all, only the late James Vail finished his days on the farm which was his home at the time of the building of the Dexter church. Frank Barrett went to California, Jehiel Yorke and family to the Western States, Charles Newland to Fingal and Lyman Lewis to Aylmer, so it is small wonder their names are almost forgotten and their achievements but a dim memory.

In 1854 a Union-Port Stanley circuit was formed. Other preaching appointments included Dexter, Sparta, Lake Shore and Providence. Ministers were Rev. Francis Chapman, Cochran, Campbell, Walder, Latimer, Sexsmith, Lund, German and A. J. Harris.

In 1871 Sparta withdrew from Port Stanley and became head of a circuit with Union.

In 1865 a church was built at Dexter and included Baptist, Presbyterian denominations.

In 1892 the present Methodist church was founded.

In 1922 the church was modernized under the pastorate of Rev. J. N. Gould. Committee was T. G. Armstrong, Robert Millman, Harley Parker, L. E. Sprague, F. A. Johson, Thomas Jones Sr., and Nelson E. Parker.

Ministers from 1865 were-----

Rev. Wm. Taylor

C. Hallam

Jacob Griffin

Robert Cameron

1875-Rev. A. G. Harris

1878- " James Whiting

1881- " James Gray

1883- " W. J. Ford

1885- " J. W. Freeman

1888- " R. C. Rarsons

1891- " R. D. Hamilton

1892- " ^{L.W.} Reid

*I believe
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will have
some of the
names*

1894 ---- Rev. I. B. Aylesworth Assistants-Rev. C. H. Clark

A. J. Langford

J. E. Millyard

1897 ---- " Arthur Going

1900 ---- " J. G. Fallis

1902 ---- " J. W. Holmes Assistant - R. Hicks

1903 ---- " Ezra Powell Assistants - Beaton and Connolly

1906 ---- " A. E. Lloyd Assistants - Johnson, Talbot,

Keyes and Kitley

1910 ---- " H. W. McTavish Assistant - Heywood

1911 ---- " - M. Stuart

1912 ---- " - Moore

1912 ---- " - Stuart

1913 ---- " - Poulter

1914 ---- " J. J. Durant -- Circuit changed to Sparta

1916 ---- " F. T. Kingham - Killed in war, Jan. 1916

1916 ---- " W. E. James Assistant - Kitley

1917 ---- " J. N. Gould --- Circuit changed to Port Stanley

1921 ---- " J. N. Gould

1922 ---- " A. Brown ----- Circuit changed to Sparta

1922 ---- " Dr. Hussar

1924 ---- " Moss

1925 ---- " Church Union Circuit changed to Port Stanley

1926 ---- " C. A. Malcolm

1929 ---- " A. D. Boa

1936 ---- " J. M. Haith

1939 ---- Rev. G. S. Hammond
1947 ---- " A. J. McKaye
1950 ---- " C. A. Malcolm
1952 ---- " Morley G. Clarke
1956 ---- " W. C. Smith
1960 ---- " A. D. Boa
1962 ---- " W. Smetheram
1968 ---- " E. Gill
1972 ---- " K. Selvert

Signed Mrs. C. D. Parker

S. M. Crossett

c/b

S. M. C.

Dexter Public School, 1898 - 1973.

Teacher-- Edith Helen Knight.

1st, row front - 1- Bill Somerville,
2 - Leslie Parker,
3 - Lloyd Parker,
4 - Skelton Armstrong,
5 - Mary Jones,
6 - Stanley Jones,
7 - Alice Pfeffer,
8 - Irene Jones,
9 - Daisy Vansyckle,
10 - Mae. Vansyckle,
11 - Ethel B. Spitler.

2nd row - 1 - John Armstrong,
2 - Dan Sprague,
3 - Adran Prowse,
4 - John Jones,
5- George Jones,
6 - Roland Parker,
7 - Clarence Parker,
8 - Edith Parker,

3rd row - 1- John Somerville,
2- Bill Bolt,
3 - Gustin Armstrong,
4 - Percy Jones,
5 - Roy Somerville,
6 - Frances Pfeffer,
7 - Eva Armstrong,
8 - Lulu McDowell,
9 - Eva Jones,
10 - Maggie Jones,

Picture & Names by Mrs. C. D. Parker

Typed by Clara Ingram.



Dexter Public School. 1898

Union Public School, # 9. 1907 - 1973.

Teacher - Dave Weir.

- 1st. row front - 1 - Kay Chapman,
2 - Mildred Fewings,
3 - ~~Mora~~ Morae Jewell,
4 - Gert. Steele,
5 - Flossy Donnelly,
6 - Morita Swafield,
7 - Lilly Bell,
8 - Grant Steele,
9 - Ross Mills,
10 - Roy Ingram,
11 - Gord Flintoff,
12 - Russell Gliddon,
13 - Chas. Shelley.

- 2nd. row - 1 - Ada Steele,
2 - Ella Bell,
3 - Win Jennings,
4 - Jenny Johnson,
5 - Ida Pearl Shelley,
6 - Lewella Whaley,
7 - Dora Steele,
8 - Harvey Pettit,
9 - Arthur McCloude,
10 - Chas. Ingram,
11 - Roy Jewell,
12 - Harold Mickleburrow,
13 - Roy Johnson,

- 3rd - row - 1 - Olive Chapman,
2 - May Pearce,
3 - Bertha Hamilton,
4 - Gladys Doolittle,
5 - Cora Doolittle,
6 - Stan Chapman,
7 - Frank Chapman,
8 - Harry Jewell,
9 - Levi Shelley,
10 - Jim Fewings.

Picture - Kay Treadwell, Typed - Clara Ingram.
Picture by - Erie News Port Stanley.

With
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