

## St. Stephen's Church Burwell Park

St. Stephen's Church at Burwell Park was formally opened on Jan. 28, 1872. Built on 10 acres of land in Lot C, Concession 10, Township of Dunwich. About one acre was used as the site of St. Stephen's Church and burying ground. The remaining nine acres was known as the "Glebe." This ten acres was donated by the Burwell Family, who played an important part in the history of the Church of England in this area.

Colonel Mahlon Burwell was born in New Jersey and came to Canada with his family as a United Empire Loyalist. In 1809 the Burwell family moved to the Talbot Settlement. Mr. Burwell was educated as a surveyor, and on the recommendation of Colonel Talbot, he was appointed government surveyor. In 1825 he set up his office on the Dunwich side of Burwell's Corners, which is now marked by a Cairn, erected by the Elgin Historical Society in 1924.

Colonel Mahlon Burwell had set aside 200 acres in the Township of Dunwich for church purposes. In 1861 this land was sold and the proceeds placed in a capital fund known as the "Dunwich Trust", from which Edward Burwell's accounts show that \$1,008.76 was taken in 1871 and applied to the cost of the construction of St. Stephen's Church, Burwell Park. By 1873, the total cost of the construction and initial equipment of that church including the churchyard and fence, amounted to \$1,469.97, of which \$288.50 had been raised by subscription and \$94.00 by Sunday collections, including the offeratory taken at the opening service on January 28, 1872.

The members of the building committee were: Hannibal Burwell, Thomas Pearce, Rev. W.B. Rally, and Edward Burwell. The building contractors were Samuel Hawkrige and James Cole of St. Thomas. The church was finished late in 1871 and formally opened in January, 1872.

At the first recorded vestry meeting in April 1872, the members present were: Rev. A.E. Miller, Mr. Edward Burwell, Mr. Robt. Brown, Mr. John Brown Sr., Mr. Thomas Meek, Mr. Fred Saunders, Mr. Thos. Pearce, and Mr. George Nott. The consecration of the church took place on June 15, 1873.

In 1911, a new organ (probably the one still in use) was purchased. Bishop Williams was the guest speaker, at a special service marking the Fiftieth Anniversary of St. Stephen's Church in 1922.

The bell of the church was donated by W.G. Nott and dedicated at Easter, 1925.

It is believed that the Communion Service and Alms plates, still in use in St. Stephen's Church, are those which were presented to the Fingal Church in 1864 by Mrs. D.W. Hart of Paris C.W.

In 1952 the repairing of the church was discussed. The church was raised, an eight foot basement dug, and a new coal and wood furnace was installed. The entire outside of the church was refinished. The interior of the church was remodelled and carpet was laid on the chancel floor and down the centre aisle. Beautification of the church was also carried out.

The official reopening of the remodelled church was held on September 13, 1954. The rector, Rev. H.F. Cross conducted the service.

In 1956 an unusual service was introduced to the church by Rev. H.F. Cross. In rural England, Plow Sunday is a custom generally observed on Rogation Sunday. The plow, symbolic of agriculture, was brought to the church door by John Brown and Owen Cross and was escorted to the chancel by the rector and choir. The service had a special significance in this rural area in the heart of the Talbot Settlement.

In the same year a baptismal font was purchased by the congregation in memory of Edric (Nott) Whitelock. In 1960 Mrs. Wm. Bradt donated a communion cup in memory of her husband.

Until 1966 St. Stephen's had been closely connected with St. Peter's Church, Tyrconnell. The same rector served both churches. In 1966, at the suggestion of Bishop Luxton, it was decided that St. Stephen's should instead be served by the rector of Christ's Church, Port Stanley.

To mark the Centennial year of Canada, a new Altar Prayer Book and Pulpit Bible were dedicated by Rev. Harold Kay, the rector.

Church records show that the descendants of John Brown Sr., another or the original founders, have been, and still are, active members of St. Stephen's.

So St. Stephen's stands on a site saturated with historical significance. Here, spiritual roots were sent down in pioneer days which ought never to be allowed to perish. The strength of the congregation lies not in its numbers but in its zeal and steady persistence in well doing. Our power is to be measured by the extent to which we have appropriated the might which can come from God alone and not by our own unaided strength and aptitudes.

St Stevens

Names of the Clergy who have been in charge of St. Stephen's are:

- 1871-1879 - Rev. A.E. Miller.
- 1879-1893 - Rev. Canon James Chance.
- 1893-1900 - Rev. M.G. Freeman.
- 1900-1912 - Rev. George Elliot.
- 1912-1917 - Rev. S.A. McDonnell.
- 1917-1922 - Rev. H.C.P. Owen.
- 1922-1925 - Rev. J.H. Innes LTH.
- 1926-1941 - Rev. Wm. Crarey.
- 1943-1949 - Rev. C.O. Pherrill, B.A. B.D.
- 1949-1958 - Rev. H.F. Cross M.A.
- 1960-1963 - Rev. John Graham.
- 1963-1966 - Rev. A. Guest Mitchell.
- 1966-1968 - Rev. Harold Kay\*
- 1968-1973 - Rev. E.C. Ward.\*

Minister's Warden:

- Edward Burwell - 1872-1876
- John Brown Sr. - 1877-1903
- Harry Bobier - 1904-1916
- John Bradt - 1914-1916
- John W. Brown Sr- 1917-1937
- George W. Brown - 1938-1965
- William Price - 1965-1966
- George Brown - 1967 -

*St. Stevens*

Treasurers known to have served:

- 1873-1878 - Edward Burwell
- 1879-1883 - Dr. Cascadden
- 1884-1929 - Harry Nott
- 1929- - Cecil Brown

Names of Organists Who Have Served:

- Miss Sanders
- Miss Lavilla Waters
- Miss Annie Bobier
- Miss Cassie Bobier
- Miss Annie Sutherland
- Miss Alice Mott
- Miss Mary Bale
- Miss Elizabeth Bardt
- Miss Annie Piper
- Miss Edrie Nott
- Mrs. George W. Brown
- Miss Jessie Whitelock
- Mrs. George Jones
- Mrs. John Graham

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THIS FILE NUMBER



ONTARIO

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND FORESTS

O P E N I N G C E R E M O N I E S

JOHN E. PEARCE PROVINCIAL PARK

Monday, August 17th, 1959 - 3:00 P.M.

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P R O G R A M M E

MR. P. ADDISON, Chairman  
Regional Forester  
Southwestern Region  
Department of Lands and Forests

MR. JOHN SPENCE, M. L. A.  
Kent East

HONOURABLE J. W. SPOONER  
Minister of Lands and Forests

MR. JOHN E. PEARCE  
Tyrconnel

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Tour of the Park  
conducted by  
Department of Lands and Forests Staff

## John E. Pearce Park

The beautiful circular plaque, designed by Donald Inman, Department of Lands and Forests Artist, depicts a pioneer clearing the land with primitive implements and is inscribed with the following words. "John E. Pearce Provincial Park." "This forested land represents a most generous gift from John Edward Pearce to the people of the Province of Ontario for their inspiration and enjoyment. It is dedicated to the memory of his ancestors who settled in this area in 1809 and who were mainly responsible for the founding in 1827 of St. Peter's Anglican Church."

John E. Pearce Park opened by the Lands and Forests Minister Hon. J. W. Spooner on August 17, 1959.

More Park Land

January 1961.

The Lands and Forests Department here have taken up the option on part of lot 11 Con. 10 Dunwich which I gave them last October consisting of 30 acres more or less.

In 1808 Leslie Patterson and John Pearce came over from Pennsylvania and chose part of lots 10, 11, and 12, Con. 10 and on July 14th. 1809 then came by small open boat from Erie Pennsylvania some 13 persons, Leslie Patterson, his wife Lydia Backus Patterson and two children, John Pearce, his wife Francis Patterson Pearce, and three children, Mary Patterson Storey and three children. Leslie Patterson settled where Mrs. D. M. Littlejohn now lives. John Pearce's settled where John S. Pearce now lives and Mrs. Storey on the south side of the road opposite where Morley Page now lives. Mrs. Storey took up 70 acres from Col. Talbot paying 2 barley corns for it. Being a widow she was given special consideration. About the year 1820 Mrs. Storey gave 10 acres of her farm as a piece of land to be set aside for a cemetery, a church, a rectory and garden lawn and fields for use of the rector. This gift was registered in 1828 but the present St. Peter's cemetery was being used in the early 1820's if not earlier as there was no earlier cemetery in this district. In the year 1810, Stephen Backus came from Pennsylvania and married Mrs. Storey's daughter Anne and took up Lot 13 where Mrs. George Lidster now lives. On January 1, 1812 their first son Andrew, grandfather of John E. Pearce, was born who later became owner of the Storey property consisting of Lot 11 on both sides of the travelled road between Port Talbot and Tyrconnell. Upon his death in 1885 this land was bequeathed to his son Andrew Storey Backus who sold the north side now Morley Page's to Robert Kennedy of Leskinfere, Gorey, Co. Wexford, Ireland who only owned it between two and three years when he returned to Ireland and who died quite suddenly of a heart attack this October.

June 1963





20-Acre Tyrconnell Site  
OPEN NEW ELGIN PROVINCIAL PARK 1959

TYRCONNELL, Aug 17 -

Bearing the name of the man who donated it, the John E. Pearce provincial park, West Elgin's lushly-wooded 20-acre playground two miles east of here, was officially opened today.

One hundred and fifty persons attending the ceremony expressed their gratitude in a standing ovation to the descendant of the family which settled the area in 1809.

Hon. J. W. Spooner, minister of lands and forests, said the people of Ontario will be everlastingly grateful.

With the donor assisting, he then unveiled a marble memorial depicting a pioneer settler, muscles bulging, straining with a roughly hewn lever to clear a stump from the soil.

Designed by Donald Inman, Department of Lands and Forests artist, the circular monument reads:

"John E. Pearce park: This forested land represents a most gracious gift from John Edward Pearde to the people of the province of Ontario for their inspiration and enjoyment. It is dedicated to the memory of his ancestors who settled in this area in 1809 and who were mainly responsible for the founding, in 1827, of St. Peter's Anglican church."

Following the unveiling Mr. Pearce reviewed the history of his family, said he was "proud to have had a part in this opening,"

"In my capacity as minister of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests," said Mr. Spooner, "I want to express to Mr. Pearce, on behalf of the people of Ontario and the government I represent, our sincere thanks and gratitude for his generous gift.

"I know it has been his long held dream to preserve this beautiful property as a sanctuary for birds and other wildlife and I assure him that we in the department will do everything within our power to see that his dream is fulfilled.

The John E. Pearce park," he continued, "perhaps more so than any other provincial park in Ontario, is imbedded in the early struggles that marked the settlement of this part of Upper Canada. I would say that a visit to this park is a must for every sightseer."

He noted that the park which overlooks Lake Erie lies in the heart of an area settled through the efforts of Col. Thomas Talbot and that the cemetery which adjoins it contains the grave of Col. Talbot.

The minister also noted that during the war of 1812 General Brock, en route to the capture of Detroit, had camped near the park.

"The John E. Pearce park, established as a public trust," he concluded, "stands today in its natural beauty

OPEN NEW ELGIN PROVINCIAL PARK 1959 (cont'd)

as an excellent tribute to a public spirited citizen, the man whose name it bears, a man of vision, a lover of nature and one who sees the need of maintaining our forests for the sake of beauty and conservation."

After the ceremony, conducted tours were held to the park's picnic, swimming and camping facilities.

Among those at the unveiling were East Kent MLA Jack Spence, Elgin MLA Ronald K. McNeil, and Elgin MP James A. McBain.