

Source : M. Welch's book : "A Century of Service"

..... The books of history and day by day thoughts written by its clergy (quite a few of which are in the reference list here) form thrilling chapters in Canada's story. They went into a great many homes, so Methodism never ceased to be a literary church.



Tyrconnell
Methodist
Church

During the early years around Tyrconnell there were three faithful Methodist pioneers who opened their homes to the circuit riders: Peter Crane, Job Curtis and Jonas Page. In 1854 St. Thomas circuit was divided and Fingal made a separate circuit. Tyrconnell was then joined with Fingal, which also included Watson's and Sharon. At this time Meredith Conn, a successful businessman, was one of the faithful Methodists, where circuit riders also stopped. He donated land on which a church building was begun in the summer of 1855. (history of S.S. 2 by Walter Pearce.)

Mr. A. Conn erected the frame and Mr. R. Barr enclosed it and finished off the inside. Later it was opened for service. (One history says 1856, another says 1858.) But it was a credit to those who built, and the ever-faithful worshippers moved into their new church. The hymns of Wesley and others rang out, led by Jonas Page with his tuning fork.

The Methodists

The Church Union movement has done more than anything that has happened within the last century to put Canada on the religious map of the world.

(The New Outlook, June 10, 1925)

In 1925, three Churches shared their gifts with one another as they became The United Church of Canada. The Methodists offered a celebration of the ministry of the laity, a belief in the value of personal testimony to the saving grace of God, and a record of missionary zeal and progress.

Methodists respected sound learning and brought education within the reach of all their members. They were devoted to an educated ministry and to the cultivation of the love of learning. The first preachers carried their libraries with them in their saddle bags. These men and women often pursued their studies and composed the sermons preached to their little congregations as they rode through the forest or as they sat by a camp fire.

Methodists were concerned about social righteousness and committed to the renewing of the social order. They led the forces of change, often standing by unpopular reforms and befriending great causes which had as their goal the betterment of humankind. A part of this legacy was to ensure churches were free of state control and schools were open to all, rich and poor alike, without religious or sectarian tests to bar the door of entrance.

O God, who to an expectant and united church didst grant at Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit, and has wonderfully brought into one fold those who now worship thee here: grant us the help of the same Spirit in all our life and worship, that we may expect great things from thee, and attempt great things for thee, and being one in thee may show to the world that thou didst send Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

(From the Service of Inauguration, 1925)

Text: Elizabeth Muir and Vincent Alfano

Illustration: Michelle Nidenoff

The United Church of Canada

HISTORY of WALLACETOWN UNITED CHURCH

This information is from a handwritten account of the church and its' beginnings by Mrs. Grace (Morley) Page .

The United Church in Wallacetown and district had its' beginnings in Methodism. Many years before any churches were built in that area, for that denomination the Wesleyan Missionary Society was active and services were held by the saddleback circuit riders in the schoolhouse on the Andrew Backus farm, Tyrconnell (the Morley Page farm). At this time it was a mission with London.

In 1821, the first missionary was Rev. Ferguson, followed by Dr. Ephriam Evans, Rev. Beidan and Rev. Andrews. It continued to be a mission until 1836 when it became a part of St. Thomas circuit.

In the fall of 1850, the first Methodist Church in the district was built in Tyrconnell by the men of the parish. The land was donated by Meredith Conn. The first church service was in February 1851 with Rev. S. Maudely as the minister and Jonas Page as the presenter. (A presenter led the singing with a tuning fork). When an organ was purchased, Mrs Elizabeth Backus (Mrs. Bam Sifton) was the first organist.

In 1851, Meredith Conn donated the land for the Tyrconnell cemetery. The first trustees were Meredith Conn, Peter Crane and Jonas Page Sr. Secretaries for the cemetery were Jonas Page Sr., Jonas Page Jr., Herman Page and Morley Page who kept that office for 27 years.

In 1881, Dora Green (Mrs. Jonas Page Jr.) became the organist at the age of 12 years and continued to be the organist for forty years, assisted at times by Mrs. Lottie (Alfred) Keohler.

In 1854, Tyrconnell was set off as a circuit with Bismark (now called West Lorne) but very soon became an independent church.

During those years, Wallacetown Methodists held services in the Town Hall until 1875 when they built their church on land donated by Colin Henry, who tho' not a religious man was public spirited enough to realize the church would be an asset to the community. There were 109 memberships in 1876 - 1877 and a debt of \$2000.00 plus.

In 1885, according to the Archives, Dutton and Wallacetown were joined with Tyrconnell as a circuit, the parsonage being in Tyrconnell as the head of the circuit because Tyrconnell was a flourishing town at that time (no railroad in Dutton yet). During the parsonage of Rev. J.G. Falls the parsonage was moved to Wallacetown and later to Dutton. The first minister to live in Dutton was Rev. Earle.

After church union in 1925 with Dr. MacDonald the minister, the church in Tyrconnell was closed and members joined the Wallacetown United Church and Wallacetown became an independent circuit with its own manse. It was agreed upon to move, raise and finish the church at Wallacetown. Mr. Stuart Littlejohn was the

building fund treasurer. The amount borrowed was \$4550.00 and at the close of 1938 the debt was paid in full. In January 1939, Mr. Littlejohn being ill, Mr. Morley Page was appointed building treasurer and continued as such for thirty years as well as treasurer for 22 years.

In 1959, more changes were needed and a ladies parlour, 4 Sunday School rooms, wash rooms and a modern kitchen was added at the cost of \$24000.00. Money was borrowed and there was a mortgage of \$11,300.00. This mortgage was paid in full by 1966 and there was a **mortgage burning** during the ministry of Rev. Wm. Shaver. Rev. Clarence Beacom was called back for this occasion as he was the minister at the time of the rebuilding.

The above are the exact written words of Mrs. Grace (Morley) Page and reproduced in this form by her daughter Iris Page.

*History of
Lycornell
and
Wallacetown
Churches
Written
Grace Page*

Inaugural Meeting
Wallacetown Congregation
United Church of Canada.

In June 10th, 1925, when union of the former Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches was consummated, a very enthusiastic meeting of the newly formed congregation of the United Church of Canada in Wallacetown, was held in the former Methodist now United, Church there.

Rev. J. R. Douglas, former minister of the Presbyterian church in Wallacetown was asked by the London conference to assume the work in the newly formed United church at Wallacetown; therefore he acted as chairman, assisted by Rev. Mr. Rutherford, minister of the former Methodist church, Dutton, Wallacetown and Tyrconnell circuit.

At the consummation of union, by order of the conference Dutton was separated from Wallacetown and Tyrconnell, the newly formed congregation consisting of the Wallacetown & Tyrconnell Methodists and those from the former Presbyterian church

NEW NAME *** NEW CHALLENGE

Now dawns a great new day. The Methodist people already had the largest communicant membership of any Protestant church in Canada. Among their assets were many educational institutions, Canada's largest printing and publishing concern — the Ryerson Press, and some of Canada's largest church buildings, among them Metropolitan and Eaton Memorial churches in Toronto. The Methodists, who were already an intensely Canadian church, were willing to surrender their beloved Methodism for a national church if this would benefit Canada. Through the years, politicians had respect for the voice of the Methodist church because they knew that when the General Superintendents spoke, it was the voice of the people. But there was a close sense of brotherhood among ministers and laymen, all united in a "Mission".

The vote on church union was taken in Presbyterian churches earlier in 1925, and in Wallacetown they voted to stay out of the union when it became effective June 10th. But there were quite a few dedicated Presbyterians who saw the United Church of Canada as a step forward into the future of Christianity; so they planned to go over with the Methodists. We have already the names of J.C. Campbell, Harvey Ripley and John Robb attending the Methodist Official Board meeting. These came into Union with their families. There were Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Farr and family, Mr. and Mrs. Jas D. Campbell and family, J.C. Bain and Miss Allie Bain, Mr. and Mrs. D.M. Littlejohn and family, Mr. and Mrs. S.V. Jones, Edward Clarke and family, Mr. and Mrs. Dougald McFarlane and family, Mrs. Nancy Campbell, Mr. and Mrs. Inglis Ripley and family, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Ripley and Thomas Vick.

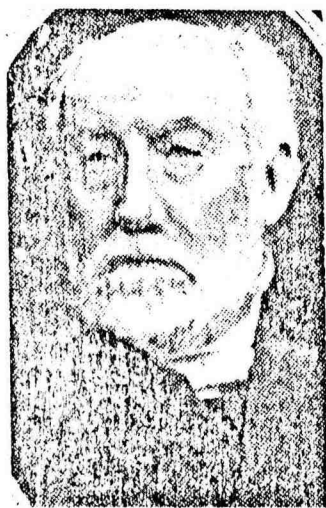
When the last Methodist Conference met in London in 1925, Fred Leitchfield, Norman Welch and Ira Robinson were there. The Methodists wanted the Presbyterian minister Rev. J.R. Douglas, to come with his members and be the first minister of Wallacetown United Church, which he did. At the inaugural meeting of the Official Board (this name from the former Methodist church) the following officers were appointed to carry on the congregational work: Session: Rev. J.R. Douglas, moderator, John C. Campbell, clerk, John C. Bain, Frederic Leitchfield, D.M. Littlejohn, Norman Welch, A.J. Braddon, John Robb. Stewards: James Campbell, James Forsythe, James Lackey, Dougald McFarlane, Thomas R. Small, John R. Robb. The trustee board were Jonas Page, Fred Leitchfield, D.W. Graham, J. Forsythe, D.D. McFarlane and George Lunn. (The Lunn's had come into union from Fingal)

So began a new time of fellowship in Wallacetown. First we will look at the session records through the years. Hours of service were 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Tyrconnell service was in the afternoon now.

Source: M. Welch's book "A Century of Service"

Wallacetown was a mission connected first with Fingal, later with Tyrconnell. Church services were held for several years in the town hall, then in 1875 the people decided to build a church. Rev. Ebenezer Teskey was minister then. Land was donated by Colin Henry, who though not a religious man himself, was public-spirited enough to realize that a church would be an asset to the community. Building committee was James Hind, D. G. McKellar and J. Risdon. The contractor was Duncan McLean, and a great-grandson of Thomas Small tells me how his grandfather told him that Thomas had laid the first beams. The name of Samuel Stidwill also appears in the first Official Board meetings, and he was an experienced carpenter, so he likely assisted also.

In 1876 the Conference Missionary Society report recorded "Our new church at Wallacetown has been completed at a cost of \$2,000. and the debt is all provided for. There is an increase in membership of 32. By 1877 the membership had risen to 109. Amasa Wood, later founder of Amasa Wood hospital in St. Thomas, gave \$500. to the building fund, and later at the church opening gave another \$500. George Casey, M.P. also gave \$500. A historical sketch from the St. Thomas Times Journal records that Rev. E. Evans, D.D. (a former circuit rider) conducted the dedicatory services; and on the following evening an old-fashioned tea meeting was held in a building which was originally an undertaker's parlour. Fingal choir furnished the music and the organist was Miss Doggart, who later became Mrs. Amasa Wood of St. Thomas. Mrs. Teskey, wife of the minister was the first Sunday school superintendent, and the first organist was Miss Cecelia Luton who later became Mrs. John Blackwood.



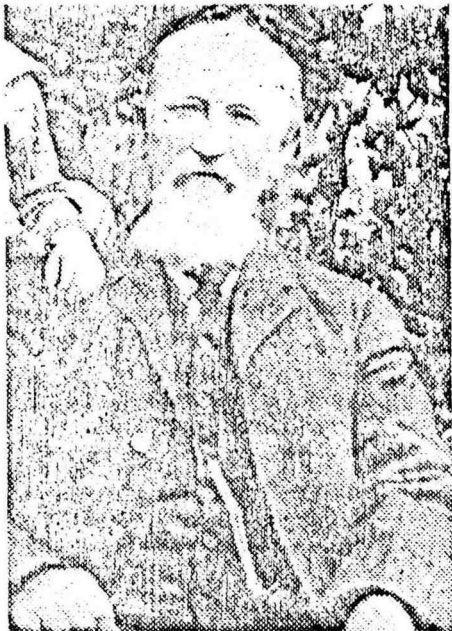
Rev. Albert Carman, D.D.

An interesting sidelight fits in here --that of the first Canadian-born Methodist church leader. He was the Rev. Dr. Albert Carman, whose ancestors ranked high among the Protestant founders of Canada. Born at Iroquois in 1833, not far from the Little Blue Church, he was ordained minister of the church, and later became superintendent of all Canadian Methodists. In 1876 as Bishop Carman, he was instrumental in persuading some progressive citizens of St. Thomas to found Alma College. This school for ladies of all denominations and races was a great asset to the surrounding territory.

At this time Tyrconnell was head of the circuit, along with Wallacetown, Wesley (Bismark, later West Lorne) and Garbutts (beyond the Coyne Road).

Source: M. Welch's book "A Century of Service"

The Conference minutes of 1868 state: "Resolved, that Fingal circuit be divided, and that Tyrconnell, Aldborough, Coynes (Garbutts), and Wallacetown become a separate circuit, to be called Tyrconnell." By 1872 Tyrconnell, Fingal and Port Stanley were each separate circuits. A report at this time also says "The people of Tyrconnell have painted their church and erected a commodious shed." Through all these years the circuit riders made their trips regularly through the settlements. In 1868 the records state that a parsonage was built in Tyrconnell. Rev. Alex. Drennan was missionary at this time, then came Rev. Benjamin Sherlock, Rev. Edward Cragg, Rev. Thomas Hanna and Rev. Ebenezer Teskey.



MR. ROBERT STEVENSON
Choirleader Tyrconnell Church
for many years.

During these early years there was another musical family who made a real contribution to the early days in Tyrconnell. Robert Stevenson was a carpenter, and in the wintertime he taught instrumental music. The family all played musical instruments and the Stevensons had an orchestra. When early anniversary times came in Tyrconnell, folks came from all around to listen to the special music, including the Stevenson orchestra. Robert Stevenson was also choir leader for many years.

There is another important part of church work that is often lost sight of. This is the labour of the caretakers who prepare God's house for the coming of His people.

For many years Mrs. Ben Green took care of Tyrconnell church for one dollar a month, and she gave it all back for the preacher's salary.

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