

# Wallacetown United Church reviewing 125 years of history

Come back to 1791 when the first regularly organized Methodist class in the Province of Ontario met. While churches of other denominations waited for enough settlers to come so a congregation could be formed, the Methodist circuit-riders searched out the individual settlers scattered over the countryside and ministered in their own way to their needs. In the local area, many worship services were held in the school house on Mr. Backus' farm.

In the summer and fall of 1855 the first Methodist Church in the area was built in Tyrconnell on land donated by Meridith Conn. Mr. Conn, Peter Crane, R. Barr and Jonas Page Sr., were the builders. The church windows were clear glass, frosted by applying a strong solution of Gilet's Lye to the interior. The church was heated by two stoves at each end of the building. On cold Sundays, for after noon Sunday School, the girls huddled around one stove and the boys around the other stove.

The singing at the Sunday service was led with a tuning fork. People attended church with horse and buggy during spring, summer and fall, while in the winter they used a snow cutter (two person sleigh) or bob sleigh (family). When the families grew they came to church in a democrat in the summer. The horses were placed in a shed behind the church. If the winter weather was heavy with snow, members would meet in each other's home for Sunday School and worship service.

Now, for some history of Wallacetown. The land on which Wallacetown grew up was very low and swampy, not very attractive to home seekers. At one time it was called Frogtown, no doubt on account of the many pools of water where frog orchestras must have been numerous. It was a native of Argylshire, Scotland, Donald Currie who arrived in 1833 and purchased parts of Lot 12 on both sides of the Talbot Road.

In 1876 the Wallacetown Methodist Church was built at a cost of \$2,000. By 1877 the membership of the church had risen from 32 to 109. Rev. E. Evans, a former circuit rider, conducted the dedicatory service. The building was a single story building with wood siding

painted with clear glass windows. There was no choir loft at this stage of the structure.

The Quarterly Church Meeting held great significance for the Methodist people. A meeting on Saturday followed with Sunday Service at 11:00 a.m. Bread and water were passed and all took part of this. Only persons possessing a Quarterly Ticket, issued by the local Methodist Church, permitted attendance to the luncheon, while non holders were refused admittance. The dominant note in these quarterly meetings was an intense religious feeling, along with the numerous social friendships renewed and enjoyed by all these scattered settlers. Rev. James Walton was the minister at Wallacetown in 1875 to 1878.

This sketches the first 25 years of the Methodist Church in Dunwich.

*This article was prepared by Don Page, Wallacetown, and presented during the service at the United Church on Sunday, April 30, 2000. Until the 125th anniversary celebration in November, a monthly presentation on the life and work of the church and its members will be prepared.*



# Exploring Wallacetown United Church history

## 1900 - 1920 Celebrating a Proud History and a Bright Future

Well another month has gone by and it's time for more highlights of the history of our church and community during the years of 1900-1920.

The ministers of the Methodist Church, Wallacetown in this time period were Rev. Ezra Powell 1900-1903, Rev. George Jewitt 1904, Rev. James Husser 1908, Rev. John Kennedy, Rev. Dr. A. McKibbin, Rev. Harvey Kennedy 1916, Rev. J. W. Snell 1919, Rev. Rutherford 1920.

Looking back to the official Board Church Record Book it is recorded that Fred Kourtz was appointed to the Wallacetown Sunday School Committee and William Page of Tyrconnell was licensed as a local preacher. He had come to Tyrconnell from the old land about 1900 on a cattle boat, where he worked to pay his ocean passage. The crossing took one month. A little later he went back to England and brought his bride. Through the years, he took services at Tyrconnell and Wallacetown when the ministers were on vacation.

Fred Leitchfield was a local preacher in Wallacetown at this time.

In 1908 Rev. James Husser came as a minister and there is the following report by him - 1 death, 21 removed by ticket, 21 were dropped by having left the community

years ago, 9 received by letter and 8 on trial, a decrease of 28. Our membership is now 218. There were 10 baptisms and 3 marriages; the pastor had preached 125 sermons, 19 of them missionary, also anniversaries. He had conducted 52 prayer meetings, made 480 pastoral visits, and 77 visits to sick people.

New names on committees were Harry Stevenson, Sunday School and Erie Trothen, steward for Tyrconnell. George Shearing and Charles Small as stewards of Wallacetown.

By 1911 the pastors salary was \$900.00 (an amendment to have it remain at \$800.00 was lost).

In February, 1912, a congregational meeting was held in which a motion was passed that each church is to choose their own date for annual meetings as soon after the close of the conference year.

It was recorded around the early 1900's - 19 native sons of Wallacetown have studied medicine. There were medical names such as Keillor, Lucas, Cameron, Gunn, McColl, Ruthven, Backus, Gow and Ripley.

Another source of pride was its nurses, lawyers, dentists, teachers, preachers, engineers, authors, professors in Canadian Universities, politicians, contractors, successful business men and very prosperous farmers.

During the years of World War I, the citizens of Dunwich and Dutton did their patri-

otic part to do what they could - to those who enlisted - or by raising money for war efforts - to the Red Cross Committee of the Dutton Women's Institute for shipping bales overseas, consisting of quilts, pillows, pillow cases, handkerchiefs, the many pairs of knitted socks and hospital gauze bandages. These bales were ongoing during the war years.

In 1915 a train carload of flour from the Dutton Flour Mill, made from local wheat was shipped for the relief of the people of Belgium.

In August, 1915, nine train cars of steers were shipped from Dutton to France.

Citizens determined to "keep the old flag flying" as they termed it. A recruiting campaign was held in Dutton and at Wallacetown Fair. Main Street was decked with flags, the band played, church bells rang, Elgin Regiment Band and the Highland Pipe Band played at the fair where a recruiting tent was set up.

June, 1916, a farewell was held for 15 Dutton boys and 11 Dunwich boys as they left for the war with the 91st Battalion.

It was announced on May 1, 1919 that the people of Dutton and Dunwich favoured the erection of a Memorial Hall in Dutton over some other type of monument. At Wallacetown Fair that fall the County of Elgin presented Certificates of Service to the returned veterans of World War I.

On May 7, 1918 the Official Board of the church extended its heartfelt sympathy to Mr. A. Keillor and family in the loss of their son Private Sydney Keillor, who gave his life for his country in the battlefields of France. A memorial service was held in Wallacetown Methodist Church where a very large crowd gathered to pay tribute. Rev. Harvey

Kennedy was pastor at this time and Mrs. Rev. Kennedy sang, "Let Us Have Peace."

By this time the ministers salary had reached \$1100.00 and when Rev. J. W. Snell came for a year in 1919 it was \$1350.00. At this time George Lidster had been added to the Sunday School board of management and George Stidwell was on the board of stewards.

New hours of service were arranged, with Dutton at 11:00 a.m., Tyrconnell at 1:30 p.m., Wallacetown at 3:00 p.m. and Dutton again at 7:00 p.m.

In 1915, on August 9, two ladies were welcomed as members of the official board.

In 1916, Fred Leitchfield had resigned as a local preacher.

In 1920 the WMS (Women's Missionary Society) was organized on October 12th by Mrs. J. A. Snell of Dutton. She was District Superintendent.

The first WMS president was Mrs. Rev. Godfrey 1920-1924. The recording secretary from 1920-1945 was Mrs. George Lidster (grandmother of Pat Hansen).

## Telephone Service

In 1904 the Dutton Village Council approved poles for the installation of telephone service to the village residents.

In 1905 the Wallacetown and Lakeshore Telephone Company had a line extended to

Coynes and Tyrconnell.

Long distance service came into being in 1906 between Dutton and Dunwich phone company and Bell for its customers.

## Hydro

It was 1913 when the main line from Niagara to Windsor passed through Dutton.

In 1914 the Reeves of Dutton and Dunwich were on a committee to look into hydro for the area. That magical day was Monday, August 30, 1915 when Sir Adam and Lady Beck were present in Dutton. When at 8:30 p.m., he pressed the button and Main Street, Dutton was transformed. Hydro didn't come to the Wallacetown Church until after

church union in 1925.

These are some of the highlights of these 20 years, and so, we give thanks as we remember what individuals have done in the past. Their day-to-day life, some as Sunday School teachers, the influence of individuals, their Christianity was a living gospel, the sacrifices they made to attend worship and their examples in life, as well as words. Those people who have prepared others to share the future in the church, we give thanks.

Presented by,  
Louie Lackey



# Celebrating a proud history and a bright future . . .

## History of the Wallacetown United Church 1880-1900

Let's try to picture what it would be like if we could step back in time to life in the 1880's and 90's in Dunwich Township. We would have travelled to church by horse and carriage instead of horseback as the roads had improved to the point that riding in a carriage was possible. The clothing we would have been wearing would have been dark in colour and very plain, large hats and long skirts or dresses worn by all the women, proper suits for the men, dresses and high

button shoes for the girls and knickers for the boys. Being of the female sex, I would not have been allowed to stand at the front of the church and speak as this important role was only assigned to the men.

The entire life of all Dunwich communities was undergoing a major change brought about by the building of the Canada Southern Railway from Detroit to Buffalo in 1872. Dutton grew very quickly as well as other communities along the railway. Wallacetown and Tyrconnell lost many merchants who moved to greener pastures in Dutton which incorporated as a village in 1891.

Wallacetown Methodist Church had been built in 1875 and became head of the Methodist Circuit in 1880. In 1881, Dora Green who later became Mrs. Jonas Page Jr., became the organist at the age of 12 and continued in this position for the next 40 years assisted at times by Mrs. Alfred Koehler.

The local newspaper, then called The Enterprise, reported that a social was held at the residence of Jonas Page under the auspices of the Tyrconnell/Methodist Church. A beautiful autographed quilt, the work of the

ladies of the church, was sold to Mrs. Meredith Conn. Fifty dollars was raised for the quilt that can be seen today in our church basement.

Other community events that year included the Wallacetown Fair Prize announcements. Mr. Alvro Keillor (a member of this church) took first prize in cheese making. Three train carloads of cheese from the Dutton and Wallacetown factories were shipped out. The creamery in Wallacetown located on the corner of Talbot Line and Pierce Street burned down in 1885. There was another fire in Wallacetown years earlier which destroyed many businesses and occurred in 1886.

Changes were occurring in the churches - Dutton was no longer just a stopping place for the Methodist circuit riders. A church was built and in 1887 a parsonage was purchased. Rev. T.R. Earle was the minister and in 1888 the name of the circuit was changed to Dutton. Services were held in Tyrconnell in the morning, Wallacetown in the afternoon and Dutton in the evening. Rev. Eli Middleton was the next minister.

In 1887 the community was saddened by the death of Mr. Jonas Page - one of the eldest residents of Tyrconnell. He, along with George Braddon, were stewards in Tyrconnell at the time. John Lyons and Thomas Small held those positions in Wallacetown. Church events reported in 1888 and 1889 included evening musicals furnished by the united choir of the three churches and garden parties in June where ice cream and strawberries were served. In March of 1889, all churches were closed for two weeks because of a smallpox scare. The envelope system for collection was adopted at this time.

Ministers at the time

usually only stayed for two years. Those listed were Rev. James Watson, Rev. Wm. McCann and from 1890 to 1894 Rev. Charles T. Scott and Rev. J. E. Moore. Rev. R.C. Beer ministered from 1897 to 1900.

The Epworth League, a society of young people which was founded in Cleveland, was formed in Wallacetown and Tyrconnell. A church official would conduct the opening devotions and then a young person would have a topic for the evening and then hymn-singing would occur. This was one of the forerunners of Young Peoples' societies in the United Church.

Other church events that occurred during that time were retreats, often held at the hotel in Whiteside's (Duttona). This hotel was operated by Charles Lyons and was located just before you travelled over the bridge. Other hotels in the area included the ones at Coyne's Corners - at McGugan's and Braddon's (Jim Barber's). Musical entertainment in the area was often led by Joshua Bobier who had just taken up the fiddle at the age of 40. He continued to entertain many as he was still playing at the age of 96 when he died.

Sunday School was often held in the afternoon and in different locations other than the church as it was too far for the children to travel. There was one located on the 9th Concession approximately half a mile from the Aldborough-Dunwich Townline.

These are just some of the highlights of these 20 years - stay tuned till next month for the next 20 years (1900-1920).

A large portion of this information was obtained from "Wallacetown United Church - A century of Service" by Margaret Welch.

presented by  
Rosemary Leitch



# Wallacetown United Church History

1940 - 1970

by Rosemary Leitch

As we continue with the review of our history we are once again reminded of the great effort put forth by those in our church community and the local area as well. These years covered the period of the Second World War as well as the Korean War when many volunteered to serve our country. Many food parcels and clothing packs were gathered from within the community and sent to Europe. There was a welcome home for all those in the congregation who had served. An Honour Roll in the Church lists 26 names.

If you recall, Dr. MacDonald had just passed away and Rev. A.V. Walden had taken over as minister until 1941. Rev. Theodor Turner came next until 1943 when Rev. Hill Hamilton of Wolsley, Saskatchewan took over.

In 1944 a new Minshall electric organ was dedicated to Mrs. Graham's 50 years as church organist. Mrs. Norman Welch then took over as organist and choir director. Winter of 1945 was full of stormy weather and therefore the annual meeting had been delayed until March 17th. The furnace had been lit in preparation when an explosion blew out a basement window and a fire oc-

curred. A bucket brigade controlled the fire until the local fire department arrived. Considerable damage necessitated the complete renovation and redecorating of the sanctuary. Services continued at the Church in spite of all the work. No annual meeting since has surpassed the excitement of that year's gathering!

Many items that we still see today at the front of the Church were dedicated in 1948. The baptismal font was donated by the Chalk family, a pulpit drape with the United Church Crest, Bible marker and brass jardiniere were presented by Mrs. Glandfield in memory of Dr. W.J. Glandfield. The Shipley family donated a cross for the Communion Table in honour of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Shipley.

The Session records in 1949 reported that approximately 105 members took communion. Remember that back then only those children who had been confirmed were allowed to take communion.

The ministry of music was very strong in the church and still remains so. The choir in 1947 had 23 members with one of those persons still in our congregation - Doris McFarlane now Barber. Both of Doris's parents were also in the choir at that time.

In 1950 Rev. Hamilton moved on to the West Lorne United Church and Rev. Grant Mills took over.

In March of 1951 a meeting was held where a vote was

passed to form a dual pastorate with Dutton, with each church to be completely in charge of its own affairs but served by the same minister. Rev. Mills stayed until 1952 when Rev. Clarence Beacom was inducted. In 1953 a CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training) group was organized for the girls in the community led by Mrs. Ken Welch. Anna Tokarz was also a leader for a few years later.

In 1959 the Bethal House was opened and clothing and quilts were donated by the congregation.

For many years discussion at most annual meetings often centred around the need for alterations to be made within the church and in 1960 these dreams came to be. A centre aisle was constructed, a new entrance, new lighting, new kitchen, complete with steam table, a ladies parlour, new washrooms and Sunday school rooms. The enrollment at the time was over 100 children and the new rooms were a very welcome improvement. We had Sunday School in the Wallacetown Hall until everything was complete. The entire project cost \$20,000 and was mortgaged at an interest rate of 5-1/2%.

I remember the 1960's very well in the church - the years when the junior choir was established. Many hours were spent by our mothers as they stitched together the white choir gowns that you see here today. The choir was led by Leta West, Louie Lackey, Karen Sloetjes and Mary Manchester with Phyllis MacDonald as pianist. We would have practise every week after school and had lots of fun learning many songs to sing in Church.

In 1961 Rev. J.W. Shaver arrived from Warton to replace Rev. Beacom. Ken Welch was recommended to Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry and was licensed as a minister

in 1968. A gown was presented to him by the Session.

The Women's Association and WMS became one in 1962 and the United Church Women (UCW) was formed. The first president was Mrs. Willard Watts and vice president Mrs. Earl Shipley. Those who served as secretaries were Mrs. Carl Bobier, Mrs. Victor Betts and Mrs. McGugan. Others who served as presidents were Mrs. Don Lackey and Mrs. Ruth McKillop. In 1966 the J.C. Campbell family gave a new Electrohome organ in memory of their parents. 1967, Canada's Centennial year saw the burning of the church mortgage. Rev. Murray Barnett also arrived from Saskatchewan to begin preaching.

Session members throughout these years included Gordon Campbell, Lloyd Lackey, Lawrence Holland, Doug Simpson, Stewart West, George McArthur, Norm Sutton, A.C. White, Morley Page and Earl Shipley.

Sunday School superintendents that served over these years included Victor Betts, Earl Shipley, Don Lackey and Jim West. One can only imagine what a huge job it was keeping over 100 children in line.

So over the years many have willingly offered their services to the Church and one cannot speak of these volunteers without mentioning Chester Armstrong who first began caring for the church building in 1949 when he used to arrive early to light the furnace fires. He continued as caretaker for many years following this and also sang in the Church choir.

Next month Louie Lackey will bring us from 1970 til the present 2000 - our 125th Anniversary celebration so join us then!

Most of this information was obtained from "Wallacetown United Church - a century of Service" by Margaret Welch.