

LOOKING BACK.....

This article is submitted in the hope that it will refresh the memory of those who perhaps do not remember clearly the early days of our church, and also for the many who were not even born fifty years ago.

After church union in 1925 the congregations of the two churches, the "Presbyterian" church and the White Church, "Methodist" met and decided that a new building was definitely needed and the following offices were filled:

Minister: Rev. J. M. Colling

Session: Stephen Webb, John Love, Clerk, John Gill, Wm. Patterson, J. W. Holt, Thos. Love.

Trustees: Andrew Turnbull, Aaron Ireland, Isaac Bestard, Jr.

Board of Stewards: Albert Morenz, Joseph Oliver, W. J. Lovie, T. Sherrit, John Eagleson, Arthur Baker, Thos. Love, Treas.

Building Committee: The Minister, John Love, Thos. Webb, Stephen Webb, Thos. Love, John Gill, Andrew Turnbull.

Finance Committee: The Minister, Aaron Ireland, Lloyd Taylor, Isaac Bestard, Jr., Ed. Gill, Wm. Baker, W. E. Turnbull.

At the present time only two of all these committees are living, namely Arthur Baker, and Wm. Baker.

Work began immediately - most of the early work by local volunteer labour.

The shed at the Presbyterian church was torn down and from that lumber augmented by new lumber a large covered shed was built where our manse now stands. When it was finished, Sunday School and church services were held in it until the new church was completed.

After obtaining blue prints, etc. the contract for carpenter work was let to Beaver Bros. of Crediton and mason work to Robert Crellin.

The demolition of the Presbyterian church now began because the bricks from this church were used for the inside walls of the new church. This was done by volunteers.

On May 24, 1927 the corner stone of the new church was laid. A platform had been erected and a number of outstanding church officials took part and about 3000 people from the district and distant points attended. The ceremony was conducted by the Rev. J. C. Clarke, president of Huron Presbytery. Illness prevented Mr. Colling from being present.

All the dignitaries were seated on the platform when a call came into the shed where the women of the church were busy getting ready for the supper to be held that night, for the President of the "Ladies Aid", as it was known in those days. I can still see Mrs. Thos. Webb, hurriedly take off her apron, smooth down her dress as she said "Dear me, had I known about this I would have dressed differently".

Corner stones were laid as follows:

"Ladies Aid" - Rev. S. A. Carriere, who for forty-two years was minister of the former Presbyterian church, Thos. McMillan of Seaforth, M.P. for South Huron for the Trustee Board, W. S. Medd, M.L.A. for the Sunday School, and H. Houston of Exeter for the Young Peoples organization.

Edna G. Desjardins

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Excerpts from the Congregational Record Book re the May 24th Service, 1927.

"....The Clerk of Session, Mr. John Love, in a very able manner gave the history for past fifty years taken from the records of the two uniting churches, in which he gave the names of former ministers and some of the leading officials of said churches during the half century and which was written on Parchment and placed in a glass jar along with other records and placed in Corner Stone to be preserved for future generations.

On a table standing on a raised platform erected for speakers a donation box was placed and throughout the whole programme many liberal donations were placed in honour of the new church building.

At five o'clock p.m. in the closed shed the celebration was continued by a hot supper provided by the ladies of the congregation, the proceeds of which were used towards the furnishings of the new church building.

At 8:30 p.m. refreshments being cleared away and seating provided in the closed shed where a suitable platform was erected, the evening programme was commenced and continued till eleven o'clock p.m.

The Pastor of Grand Bend Church, Rev. J. M. Colling being indisposed through illness, the chair was taken by Rev. D. McTavish of Exeter. The Sunset Male Quartette of London furnished the music. Addresses were presented by the Chairman, Rev. D. McTavish, also Rev. Mr. Clark, Rev. A. M. Grant and Rev. D. Williams.

After an excellent and interesting programme the National Anthem was sung by the Sunset Quartette as leaders, and by audience.

The greatest day in the history of Grand Bend Church closed with Benediction."

T. Love, Sec.

When Union came about and before the present church was built, church service was held in the former Presbyterian Church. At that time I was President of the Y.P.U.

That winter the Young People divided into two groups, The Reds, and The Blues. Each group invited whoever they wanted on their side and on meeting night each group put on a program, and these were judged on which was the better. What talent there was in Grand Bend, and we had wonderful meetings.

I was honoured as President of Y.P.U. to assist Mr. H. Houston of Exeter, who laid the corner stone for the Young People's organization. Mr. Houston was the main organizer of our camp services which began long before union, and were held in Gibbs Park.

Early in the year, Ross Love and I became members of the Choir. Mr. Sol Pollock was Choir Leader, and Mrs. Olive Webb was the Organist.

I recall one morning at a very serious part in the sermon a young mother got up to take her baby out. As she stood up the baby's foot caught the hat of a lady sitting in the seat ahead and tipped it over her eyes. From the Choir this was rather amusing. To-day we have neither ladies' hats nor babies in Church.

When the church was first opened, we had Sunday School classes for all ages downstairs, but as the S.S. grew, in 1933 it was divided into two departments, known as Junior and Senior Departments.

We were very crowded in the S.S. during July and August with children on vacation. They visited from far and near, even several from the U.S.A. who were anxious to keep up their attendance. It was a busy time for the Superintendent and teachers signing vacation cards.

I taught S.S. and for a time was Junior Superintendent, and later on Senior Superintendent. I worked in all organizations of the church, and three times was Secretary Treasurer. I attended Presbytery many times, and several times went to Conference. The Church was my whole life. I retired from active work in 1976.

Wellwood Gill

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS
1909-1910

Sam Carriere Jr. and I were chums. He liked to come to the farm for the fun of digging out ground hogs and the like, while I enjoyed visiting the Manse and swimming in the lake. I helped Sam run one of the first milk routes in Grand Bend, with milk from the family cow, a part Jersey which occasionally got into Mrs. Carriere's garden.

Sam and I, one on each side of a covered pail, would visit the campers in what is now known as Eccleson's Park, and the camper would come out with a dipper or a quart sealer, or whatever - five cents a quart, no questions asked.

The village cows pastured on the roadway in the summer. Cow tags cost two dollars for the privilege of pasturing on the roadway.

In the wintertime, the family cow shared the stable with Mr. Carriere's horse, called Burns, a rather large sorrel driver. He was hitched to an open top buggy for transportation to and from the Presbyterian Church at Corbett, where service was held on Sunday forenoon. Back at Grand Bend a service in English was held at 2:30, followed by the French service at 4:00.

The Church at Corbett was turn down and some of the white brick, along with brick salvaged from the Grand Bend Church, were used for the inner course of the new United Church. The brick-layer contractor was Robert Crellin, and the carpenters were Edward and Harry Beaver from Crediton.

Bill Love.

Billwood Bill

Memories of the Grand Bend Church

As Grand Bend United Church approaches its 50th anniversary, it recalls to our minds the earlier days of the outdoor services.

We, members of the Follick family have fond memories of summers spent with our parents at Grand Bend. The church played an important part in our lives.

(1918 - 19) Dr. and Mrs. Follick, our parents, with their first three children holidayed with his aunt, Maria and William Harry Gill, who lived on Main Street.

(1922) Later, our parents bought land in Oakwood Park, living with their now four children in a cottage built by Clayton Walker, while building our present cottage called "the Pioneer".

Our children and grandchildren are still enjoying life at the same cottage, some of them purchasing cottages of their own.

We, as a family, have many memories of the Campers Open Air Church which was non-denominational:

As children we were spread on the old "buffalo" robe at the brow of the ampitheatre of the campers church, while the congregation sat on wooden benches facing the minister. He stood on the platform of the little rustic chapel along with the choir and the "fold-up" pump organ.

Names that come to mind, people who were active in the church were:

Mr. Leichliter, a Baptist minister from Alabama, a summer resident at Grand Bend impressed us as children, with his southern drawl, his sermons, his singing and his charm.

The male quartette of local people, included Saul Pollock, Emery DesJardins, Buster Ravelle and another.

The indispensable Mr. Houston, a driving force in the church, helped in any capacity needed. He always read the announcements, mentioning the evening service at 7 p.m., always with the added "God willing, and weather permitting".

Favourite hymns were:

"The Church in the Wildwood" (which actually described the setting)

"Shall we gather at the River"

"All Hail the Power of Jesus Name"

"Sweet Hour of Prayer"

All of these on a cardboard folder.

(1927) With the building of the new church, the Campers Open Air service was moved to the church property.

Rev. Carriere, a Grand Bend minister for many years at the Presbyterian Church here was honoured to be asked to lay the

corner stone of the new church. This name is of significance to us because of our Aunt marrying into the Carriere family.

Our Uncle Don (Emery) Carriere often related incidents of his boyhood spent at the Manse in Grand Bend. The Carriere boys were apparently quite mischievous. Marguerite was the daughter of the family.

We as children, were regular attendants at the new Sunday School. Our little group of brothers, sisters, visiting friends, cousins, all of varying ages, used to walk through the bush to Sunday School, requesting to be kept in one class, and requesting Mrs. Ridley as our teacher.

Having been raised Methodist, we were unfamiliar with "the catechism". Mrs. Ridley was very patient with us.

We are pleased, as Summer Residents, to be able to still attend the United Church of Grand Bend.

Evelyn (Follick) Charles
Ruth (Follick) Dunsford
Marion (Follick) Murray

Away back before the Presbyterian Church was built, service was held in a School House placed back at the East Cemetery fence. The Rev. Carriere was very young then, and he gave his sermons in both French and English. The Board of Elders was chosen and two of them were William Turnbull (my grandfather) and William Fullton, our Grandmother's brother. She was Agnes Fullton. I don't know the names of the others. Later on the plans were agreed upon to build the church and manse.

Bees and bees were held for both men and women, trying to make money. The men cleaned all the old plaster off the white brick and it was used for the inside brick of the present church.

The last funeral I remember of in the white brick church was Mrs. Elmer Lawson - Elsa Love, Bill and Colin's sister. She was a music teacher, and Agnes and Mabel took lessons from her. The first wedding in the new church was the fall of 1927, and the couple was Fern Gill and Colin Love.

Rev. Morley Colling was our minister, and Mrs. Colling was our Choir leader. Mrs. Olive Webb was our pianist (Olive Oliver then), and Choir Practice was Thurs. night from 8:00 till we were finished. There were two services each Sunday, the church always being filled for evening service at 7:30, so we always tried to keep our best anthem for night.

The Sunday School was really well attended in those days. In the summer we often had a class or two of the girls go out on the benches - the boys we kept indoors.

Olive Miller