

ONE HUNDRED YEARS

... IN THE ...

Harrington Presbyterian Church

1857 = 1957

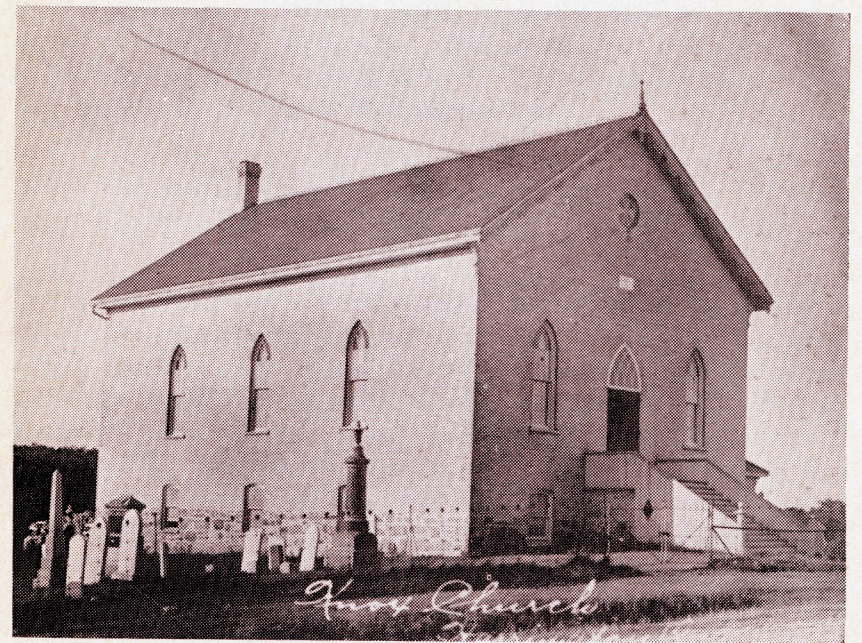
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BY W. A. ROSS

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HARRINGTON, ONTARIO

1857 - 1957



Church Building Erected 1857;
Bricked 1891.

Oxford Historical Society

FOREWORD

Rev. R. A. Sinclair, B.A.

When the Kirk Session of Knox Presbyterian Church, Harrington, decided to mark the congregation's Centennial with the publication of a brief historical sketch, there was no question as to who should be the author. Mr. W. A. (Billy) Ross of Embro was the obvious choice. Already well past the four score years, his life has covered much of the story which he tells. For many years he lived within a few hundred yards of the Church building. Famous as a master of the violin and the pipes, he is also well known as the writer of a history of Embro and West Zorra, and the father of two outstanding men, Prof. Alex Ross of the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, and Burns Ross of Washington, D.C.

The Session wishes to express deep appreciation to Mr. Ross for this labour of love which he has fulfilled for Knox Church.

But, while Mr. Ross is the author of this booklet, he would be the first to acknowledge that there is Another who is the real Author of the story. For the story of Knox Church, as with any Church, is the story of God's gracious leading of His people. It is the story of God's servants, ministers, elders, teachers, worshippers, who over a period of one hundred years have sought to walk in His way in this lovely place where God has cast their lot. It is the story of a people's faith and steadfast devotion and fellowship in Christ. It is the story of God's faithfulness and loving kindness. Who can measure or number the ways in which God has blessed the worship, the homes and the lives of these people?

To-day we honour the generations of the past who have left us such a goodly heritage under God. May He in His love and mercy continue to guide and bless us and to prosper His Church in our midst.

We love the venerable house
Our fathers built to God :
In heaven are kept their grateful vows,
Their dust endears the sod.

* * *

They live with God, their homes are dust;
Yet here their children pray,
And in this fleeting life-time trust
To find the narrow way.

"Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward."

ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN THE HARRINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

By W. A. Ross

A century is a long period of time; its beginnings are well beyond the memories of men and women today, and it is only through the printed word that we can obtain information of the events recorded concerning the early days of our Church. The Session minutes represent one of the many sources of information which we have of that time. These minutes were carefully compiled and they give us an accurate account of the past.

The Harrington Presbyterian Church is one of the few churches in this part of Western Ontario that is of centennial age. Our Church was erected in the early summer of 1857, but the inception of the congregation dates back to 1856 when John Fraser, a merchant in the Village of Harrington, invited the Reverend William Meldrum, of Puslinch, who was doing mission work in Vaughan Township, to come to preach to the people. Mr. Meldrum accepted the invitation and preached on one Sabbath day in the bush back of the lot where the Church now stands.

Although no definite steps were taken to extend a call to Mr. Meldrum at that time, a common understanding existed among the people to the effect that as soon as a church should be erected, they would ask Mr. Meldrum to assume the pastoral charge. Mr. Fraser again came to their assistance by presenting them with the plot of land on which the Church now stands. Early in the summer of 1857 the Church was built on a site a few feet to the rear of the present structure. Mr. Meldrum accepted the call to serve as pastor.

The church was formally opened in the latter part of June, 1857, when Communion services were conducted by that respected pioneer preacher, the Reverend Daniel Allan of North Easthope. The first elders inducted were George McLeod, Hugh Rose Ross, John McLeod and William McKenzie. Mr. Meldrum was Moderator



REV. WILLIAM MELDRUM
First Minister - 1857-1870

of the Session. Sunday School was established, and prayer meetings were held in the homes of the congregation. Five days were devoted to the Communion services, which were held once a year in June. Each of the five days had its own significance: Thursday was fast day, Friday was the day of self-examination, Saturday was preparation day, Sunday was Communion and Monday was the day of Thanksgiving. The Gaelic services were as long as the English services, and usually preceded the English service.

In reading the records of the Kirk Session of the Harrington congregation, one is impressed with the very few cases of discipline that were dealt with before the Session in the first thirty-five or forty years of the congregation's life. They were stern in those days but we must bear in mind that family discipline was also strict, more so than at the present when we have so many instances of juvenile delinquency. Juvenile crime was rare a hundred years ago. As the years went by the Church altered its method of dealing with troublesome members. The Session began appointing committees to deal with offenders rather than having them appear before the Session.

After serving the Church for thirteen years Mr. Meldrum resigned his pastorate in 1870. The following year the congregation extended a unanimous call to the Reverend Daniel Gordon of Indian Lands, Glengarry; the induction took place July 4, 1871.



Mrs. C. W. Gordon

Mr. Gordon possessed a fine physique; he was tall, powerfully built, with flashing blue eyes, and a spring in every step. He was a good preacher, often original in his methods. On more than one occasion he startled his congregation out of their composure by some remark not connected with his subject. On one hot, sultry Sunday when many of the congregation had given way to the fatigue of the past week, and were nodding their heads during Mr. Gordon's sermon based on the story of the separation of the tares from the wheat, the evil from the good, the minister decided to gain control of his sleepy parishioners. Raising his voice he called out, "Wheat! Wheat! It's selling at a dollar a bushel in Stratford!" The response was immediate. "Yes! dear friends," said Mr. Gordon, "when I mention that kind of wheat you waken up, but when I talk about the spiritual wheat you are indifferent and fall asleep."

Mrs. Gordon was a valued helpmate for her husband. A well educated, cultured lady, she organized the first W.M.S. Auxiliary at Harrington in 1877, and served as a Bible class teacher and Sunday School superintendent for many years.

One of the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon, Charles W., was the first man to go from the congregation into the ministry of the Church. In later years he gained fame as the outstanding Canadian writer "Ralph Connor."

The elders inducted during Mr. Gordon's pastorate were Alexander Kerr, Kenneth McKenzie, Alexander Sutherland, Adam Green, James Yool, Robert Heron, Hector McLeod, Colin McIntosh, George Mackenzie and John C. Ross. On the Board of Management were Kenneth Kerr, William Murray, Donald Murray, James Matheson, Eben Sutherland, John Matheson, Peter McKay, George McIntosh and John Campbell. In 1890 Mrs. Gordon passed away suddenly, and Mr. Gordon, then advanced in years, resigned his charge.

After a vacancy of a year and a half, the congregation extended a call to the Reverend A. G. McLachlin. By this time the Church was in need of wise guidance and inspiration. In Mr. McLachlin, it found the leadership it needed. The new pastor was unassuming, tactful and learned. Under his guidance the Church soon prospered. Its progress was soon apparent in all branches of its work. Two organs were installed, one in the Sunday School and one in the auditorium. Considerable money was collected for the Century Fund. In 1891 the old frame building was moved nearer the road, and the whole building brick veneered. The interior was decorated. In 1897 a new manse was built of red brick, situated a little east of where the old frame one had stood.

The elders during Mr. McLachlin's pastorate were John Murray, D. Bayne, George McKenzie, A. G. McKenzie and Donald McKenzie. At the close of Mr. McLachlin's time in Harrington there were eighty families belonging to the Church and one hundred and seventeen communicants. Mr. McLachlin resigned in May, 1905, and in October of that year he was succeeded by the Reverend A. H. Kippan.

Mr. Kippan's powers as a preacher were of the highest order. During his ministry a choir was organized under the leadership of Mr. James Martin; previously the singing was conducted by the precentor. It was during Mr. Kippan's pastorate in June, 1907, that the congregation observed the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Church. On the Sabbath the Reverend Daniel Gordon from Winnipeg preached at the morning service, the Reverend Gustavus



Rev. C. W. Gordon, D.D., LL.D.
"Ralph Connor"

Munroe preached the Gaelic service and the Reverend A. G. McLachlin took the evening service. George Meldrum attended, representing his father, the Reverend William Meldrum. A successful garden party was held on the manse lawn on the following Monday night.

Six years later in the autumn of 1912, owing to ill health, Mr. Kippan resigned. During his stay at Harrington and that of Mr. McLachlin, the temporal affairs of the Church were well administered: the board of management comprised George Campbell, Kenneth McIntosh, Murdock Kerr, John Duncan, Hugh Murray, James S. McKay, Andrew Kerr, Angus Matheson, William Hill and Dr. McDougal. Here I should refer to the only surviving member of this group, Mr. George Campbell, who served on the board for fifty years. Now in his ninety-third year, Mr. Campbell still takes an active interest in the affairs of the Church.

EARLY MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH AS TAKEN AT THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY IN 1907



Rev. A. H. Kippan, B.A.
1905 - 1912

Rev. Daniel Gordon
1871 - 1890

Rev. A. G. McLachlin, B.A.
1892 - 1905

During this period of the Church's history the records tell us that never before had the congregation been in better spiritual and financial condition than it had been under the pastorates of the Reverend A. G. McLachlin and the Rev. A. H. Kippan.

Mr. Kippan was succeeded by the Reverend P. W. Currie. After a faithful but brief ministry, Mr. Currie resigned in 1914. In the same year the congregation extended a unanimous call to the Reverend Lawrence Newton. Mr. Newton brought to the Church youthful vigour and enthusiasm. The Young People's Society now became a strong force in the work of the Church. Mr. Newton was a good musician and his musical talents were very helpful in the service of praise. After five years at Harrington, he announced his

decision to return to College to take postgraduate work. In the following winter of 1919, the Harrington congregation became associated with that of Brooksdale. In January, 1920, Mr. Cornett was inducted and was given charge of both congregations. He held this charge until 1925. During his time and that of Mr. Newton the elders were Alfred Raper, W. G. McKenzie, John Murray, Donald McKenzie, James D. McKay, W. J. Smith, Samuel McKay and John A. McKay. The managers were George Campbell, Angus Matheson, Andrew Kerr, W. T. McKay, Angus Reid and W. J. Matheson.

The year 1925 was a year of crisis for Knox Church, Harrington, for it was on June 10 of that year that the Union Movement reached its climax. When the poll closed and the ballots were counted, the voting result was forty-seven for union and fifty-six against. Forty-seven withdrew their names from the Communion Roll and joined the newly constituted Broadview United Church. This action was followed by the resignation of Mr. Cornett.

For nearly three years following the vote on Union the Church was without a pastor. For a part of that time Reverend G. E. Loughheed served as a supply minister. A non-ordained student, Mr. A. McCauley proved unsatisfactory. In the summer of 1929 a unanimous call was extended to the Reverend J. M. Millar, who was inducted by the Presbytery on June 4. In November of that year Mr. Millar was taken suddenly ill and died in the Brantford Hospital.

Previous to Mr. Millar's death the Presbytery of Stratford decided to associate Burns Church, East Zorra, with Knox Church, Harrington, in one pastoral charge. This plan was put into effect when the Reverend W. A. Hunter was inducted July 8, 1930.

During Mr. Hunter's ministry the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Church was observed. The anniversary was fittingly celebrated June 25, 1932, when services were held in the Church which was filled to the doors both morning and evening. A successful garden party was held in the church sheds on the following Monday night.



Rev. Wallace Wadland, B.A.

It was also during Mr. Hunter's ministry that Wallace Wadland, son of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Wadland, became the second person of the congregation to enter the ministry. He is now the minister of the Presbyterian Church in Rock Island, Illinois.

It was in 1930 that the congregation received a legacy of a farm owned by Lexy Morrison. About the same time an invitation was given Broadview United Church by Knox Presbyterian congregation to share with them in cemetery decoration services. Both congregations decided to hold these services each year on the third Sabbath in August.

The elders in the Church at this time were Donald Manson, James Thompson, Samuel McKay and J. A. McKay. The managers were Angus Matheson, George Campbell, W. T. McKay, Murdock Kerr, Archibald Manson, Charles Lupton, Thomas McKenzie, James Manson, James S. McKay and Hugh Murray. Gordon Innes was treasurer, Stanley Morris, secretary, and Hugh Murray and James S. McKay were trustees.

Early in 1934, Mr. Hunter resigned, having received a call from Madoc, Ontario. On May 22, 1934, the Reverend Oliver Mann was inducted into the pastoral charge of Knox, Harrington, and Burns Church. Mr. Mann remained with the Church for five years, performing his duties faithfully and well. He was succeeded in 1939 by the Reverend Mr. Williamson, who remained a year and six months. At the end of which time he accepted a call from a congregation at Mitchell.

In 1941 the Harrington and Burns Church separated and in the autumn of that year the Harrington Church became associated with Knox Church, Embro, under the ministry of the Reverend Alexander McLean. The linking of these two congregations has proved a wise and happy relationship. For seven years until 1946 the two congregations enjoyed Mr. McLean's pleasant and profitable ministry. Owing to ill health Mr. McLean resigned and removed to Chatham where he passed away some three years ago. It was during his ministry at Harrington that electric lighting was installed in the church under the supervision of Gordon Morris.

Late in 1947 the Reverend J. Isaac took charge of the Harrington and Embro congregations. His pulpit gifts were of a high order and his sermons were plain, earnest and practical, dealing with the hearts and consciences of his hearers. In May, 1953, he accepted a call to Moncton, Ontario. In the same year a unanimous call was extended to the Reverend Robert Sinclair of Bassano, Alberta. Mr. Sinclair has served us well for three years now and we hope he will lead us in our century celebration.

But this resume of the history of our Church would be incomplete without reference to the work done by the men and women who have led us in the service of praise during those hundred years.

A Mr. McDonald led the singing in English during Mr. Meldrum's ministry, and Donald McKay, "Frisky", led the Gaelic singing for many years. Donald was well qualified to serve as a leader. He disdained a tuning fork; clearing his throat and screwing up his face (much to the amusement of the younger ones in the audience), he would repeat or chant, in a clear strong voice, the

first two lines of the Psalm as was customary in the Gaelic service. Then the congregation repeated them and so into the Psalm. Donald continued to lead the singing in the Gaelic service until it ceased in Mr. Gordon's time.

John Murray led the singing in English for many years until his place was taken by James Martin who served in this capacity for twenty-one years. Under his leadership the first choir was organized. The choir leaders and organists who followed from time to time were Mary Barrons, Mrs. James Thomson, Mrs. Hugh Reid and Miss Margaret Innes. The present pianist and choir leader is Miss Helen Thomson.

The following are the personnel and officers of the different organizations at the present day:

Session: Donald Manson, James Thomson, Harry Murray and Alvin Innes.

Managers: George Campbell, honorary member, Sutherland MacKay, Archibald Manson, Alexander Thomson, Alster Clark, Meldrum MacKay, Gordon Innes, Wm. Matheson, E. A. Monteith and Nolan Morris.

Sutherland MacKay, treasurer and Alvin Innes, secretary.

Trustees: Meldrum MacKay, Robert Duncan and Thos. MacKenzie.

Auditors: Colin MacDougald and Bruce McLeod.

Church Officer: Walter Eames.

Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Meldrum MacKay, president, Mrs. Ed. Monteith, vice-president and Greta Clark, secretary-treasurer.

Women's Missionary Society: Mrs. Alvin Innes, president, Mrs. Sutherland MacKay, secretary, Mrs. James Thomson, treasurer.

Sunday School: Donald Manson, superintendent, Mrs. Burns Innes, Mrs. R. A. Sinclair, Mrs. Alvin Innes, Annabell Lupton, Fred Innes, John Thomson and Rev. R. A. Sinclair, teachers.

Young People's Society: Fred Innes, president, Annabell Lupton, vice-president, Jessie Lupton, secretary and Jim Thomson, treasurer.

Many changes have taken place during the past one hundred years. The new Elizabethan age has found many substitutes for Old Dobbin, and the sheds that sheltered him.

Knox Church, Harrington, still carries on, however, in this new age. In many respects the Church has a more important part than ever to play in these days "amidst the strange disease of modern life". As the Church has changed in the past, so it may change in the future. One hundred years ago five days were devoted to the Communion season once a year; now we have Preparatory service and Communion Sabbath three times a year. In Mr. Meldrum's ministry a precentor led the service of praise; today a choir and pianist have taken his place. The Gaelic service and singing are no more. One hundred years ago the cemetery was not the place of beauty it is today where rest so many of the old pioneers who loved their Church so well.

Throughout those one hundred years the Harrington congregation has had very few dissensions. Throughout its vicissitudes, its anxieties, struggles, disappointments, lights and shadows, the Church has emerged triumphant. Assisted by their genial and energetic pastor, all the organizations are carrying on splendid work. The Church is more than able to meet its financial obligations. If this zeal and loyalty are carried forward into the new century ahead of us, we need have no fear of the future.

