

Bedeque United Church

The History of a Methodist Circuit in Prince Edward Island

Tracing its Roots in the Cultural, Educational and Commercial Fields of the Community.

By E. S. D.

CHAPTER NINE (Continued)

At the last service held in the old church in the spring of 1887, Rev. C. C. Turner, viewing his congregation from the high pulpit for the last time, preached from the text, "Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away," Hebrews 8:13, in a sermon, which while doubtless challenging his congregation to build a fine new house of worship, seems from the Scripture text to have been also an apology for the removal of the old. The third and present church was built in the last eight months of 1887 with considerable despatch and without corner-stone laying ceremonies.

The contractor, John MacCallum, a good Presbyterian from Lower Bedeque, had novel ideas on how to make thirty-eight hundred Methodist dollars build, finish and pew a church, 50 x 31, with a vestry, 30 x 24, and still yield a reasonable profit. One brilliantly conceived short-cut and money-saver was the erection inside the tower of the spire which was then hoisted into its place seventy-eight feet from the ground. This achievement, as remembered by Wm. T. Bowness, was accomplished with as much rope and tackle as would rig a ship! Of the carpenters who worked on the church only one, Ernest Gay now of Hampton, Va., has lived to see its 60th anniversary. He had the pleasure of a visit in 1947 from J. Harrison MacFarlane, one of the present elders of the church.

The pews in the new church, made by George Webber of Summerside, differed in every respect from those in the old. They were long and friendly, and free, with red plush cushions showing to advantage against the ash and walnut woods of which they were made. The spire furniture of pulpit, table and chairs, costing seventy dollars, was purchased from the shop of H. A. Compton. A new Bible (this one without the Free Church marginal notes) was on the pulpit for the first time. The gift of Hon. William G. Strong, It took precedence over James Connell's 1849 gift which went to the vestry for Sunday School and prayer-meeting use. Another gift at this time was a set of collection plates from Wellington Burns of Summerside.

Calling the people to the dedicatory services of the new Church on January 8, 1888, was a six-hundred pound bill, costing three hundred dollars, the gift of Hon. Benjamin Rogers, a native son, whose affection for the church and community of his youth thus found practical expression.

As the musical notes of the new bell died on the clear morning air, the choir occupying the corner to the west of the pulpit, with Mrs. Collin Wright presiding at the new organ, sang the anthem, "How Beautiful in Zion," as a processional, while the pastor, Rev. E. C. Turner, accompanied by Rev. Job Shenton of Charlottetown and Rev. C. W. Hamilton of Margate, marched impressively up the aisle. The sermon preached by the visiting Charlottetown pastor, as a prelude to a solemn service of dedication for Methodist Churches, was based on a solemn text from Second Chronicles, twenty-ninth chapter and seventeenth verse, which by a strange co-incidence, showed a similar day and month for the dedication of Solomon's Temple: "Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Lord."

Dedicatory Services

The large morning congregation of "five hundred people," (perhaps the 1888 reporter exaggerated a little) who crowded the church and vestry to overflowing, were in their places again for the afternoon service. Many of them were from other Prince County congregations which had been at one time part of the all-inclusive Bedeque circuit. Sharing in the services of the new church meant sharing of Sunday dinner in many hospitable homes in Bedeque. The theme of the afternoon service was Prayer, with Rev. C. W. Hamilton preaching from 1 Kings, Chapter 8, Verse 22. Appropriate anthems and hymns included, "Prayer is the Soul's Sincere Desire." At the evening service, the pastor of First Methodist Church, Charlottetown, spoke on the Kingdom from a text found in the second chapter of Daniel, forty-fourth and forty-fifth verses.

Only a few of those who attended the dedicatory services in 1888 could remember similar services in 1818 when the first church had been opened. One of these Mrs. Nathaniel Wright of North Bedeque, known familiarly to the community as Aunt Nancy, and specifically as Big Nancy Wright, to distinguish her from her sister-in-law, Little Nancy, generously contributed \$300.00 to the new church. She and her brother, James Wright of Bedeque in his 85th year, and Jesse Wright at the mill in his 80th year, would doubtless compare the comfort and beauty of the new church with the plank-bench homeliness of their father's barn, where the first Methodist services had been held. Job Wright of Middleton and Frances Wright, wife to William Schurman, were the only ones of the Stephen Wright family to see the third house of worship. Nathaniel Huestis, in his 89th year with five more to go, probably brought the only adult memories of the beginnings of Methodism to the opening of the third church.

Bedeque Methodists were never very much interested in their history. Believing that life is a one way street, they were rightly concerned with what lay ahead on the High Way rather than thinking of a past they could not retrieve. They might not agree with Winston Churchill that "the longer you can look back the further you can look forward," but even the least historically-inclined would admit, from a brief study of Bedeque Church annals, that history has important lessons for the open mind. One of these lessons, self-evident, though often overlooked, is the relative unimportance of church buildings which all church histories, including this one, seem to delight in telling about.

Fruitful Years

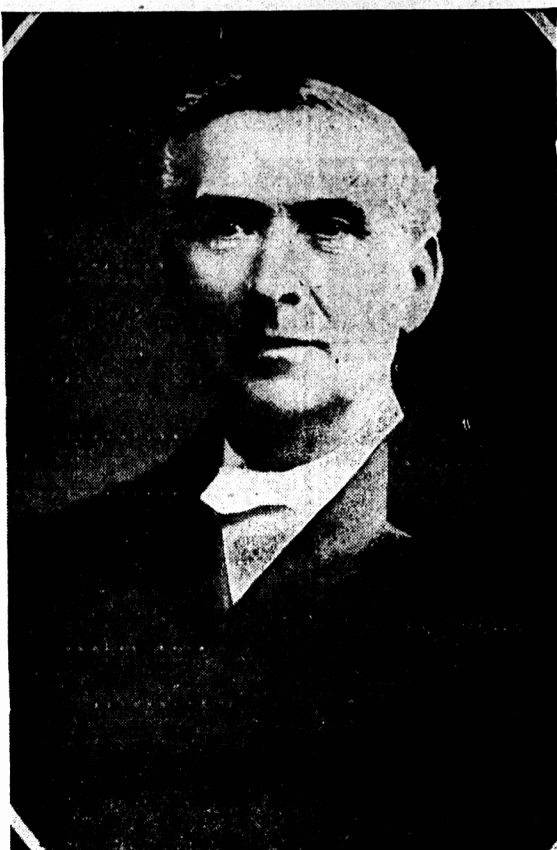
The important thing during Mr. Turner's three year pastorate, (1886-1889), was not the building of a new church. It was rather the "adding to the church of such as should be saved." The church is never a building apart from believers, and Mr. Turner was instrumental, by the Spirit's guidance and the powerful working of a revival throughout the whole circuit, in bringing nearly a hundred members into the body of Christ. Nearly a half were from Centreville Church, and while a few were teen-aged most were of the age class which sixty years later would be called "young adult."

Who can measure the value to a church of a new Membership which included three from the Black family, Wm. Callbeck, Colin Craig, Mrs. John Davidson, Mrs. Fred Davidson, three daughters of the Nelson Inman family, W. Artemas Leard and four daughters, Thomas Moyses, Ellis Moyses, Mrs. Wes. Newson, three of the Vickerson family, five Wrights and many others who came into fellowship at Centreville at this time, and for many years gave, and in a few instances continue on earth to give, their best in the service of the Master? In Searletown also the newly acquired membership of this period was to provide leadership material for many years with such names as Trueman, Lowther, Huestis, Wright, Leard, Black, Myers and Stang occurring frequently in the list of new communicants.

The new members were soon given responsible offices in the church. Rev. Wm. Harrison, who succeeded Mr. Turner as pastor in 1889, nominated "Bro. Wm. Callbeck and Bro. Charles S. Wright" in 1890 as members of the board of trustees to which they were duly elected. In 1892 new cemetery trustees including Thomas Moyses, Allison Hooper, Albert Bell, A. M. Wright, Colin Wright, W. A. Leard, A. T. Wright and Robert Price were appointed. In the same year the resignation of Morice Wright as chapel steward brought to that office William Callbeck who was to fill the position in the faithful manner required of stewards for fifty years. Additional prayer leaders appointed on the circuit at this time included:-

Searletown—Lewis Trueman.
Bedeque—William Callbeck.
Charleton—David T. Lowther, Henry Lowther, Lewis Leard.
South Shore—Robert Price, William Wright, Nathaniel Pearson.

The licensing of Thomas Moyses as a local preacher on trial by the Quarterly Meeting of December 15, 1892, marked the official beginning of a lay-preaching career unequalled for persuasive power and far-reaching results in the annals of Bedeque Church. The joy of bringing others to Christ has been the key note of a devoted life which has had expression in many other ways, but which counted personal evangelism the most satisfying of life's achievements. Mr. Moyses' moving testimony, before Presbytery in October 1946, to the delight in sharing the Master's work, sometimes thought of as the minister's work only, will long be remembered by those who heard it. Mr. Harrison's three-year pastorate, ending in 1892, was unique in the fact that though funerals were conducted on other parts of the circuit none were made at Lower Bedeque cemetery. This ministerial term also saw the final payment made on the debt of the new church. Three of the trustees, A. M. Wright, Major Wright and Colin Wright as-



REV. WILLIAM HARRISON
Superintendent of the Bedeque Circuit
1889 - 1892

sumed responsibility for payment of the last \$362. Major Wright and Colin Wright were the merchants and postmasters at this time at Centreville and Central Bedeque, respectively.

The Bedeque Methodists were but little ahead of their older contemporary, the Bedeque Presbyterian congregation, who in 1891 erected what was also their third house of God. Built by Thomas Beatty and dedicated the same year, it was a fine example of rural architecture. But as a fine house doesn't necessarily mean a fine home, so the real glory of the Presbyterian congregation was not in a building but in the body of believers who came every Lord's Day from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south; for many of them a six to ten mile drive, with a faithfulness pleasing to preachers and astounding to strangers.

The Lower-Bedequers who came to church in the winter-time over the ice could not help but feel how convenient it would be to come over the water in the summer. Shortly after the building of the third church a movement got under way which, in 1893, resulted in a petition signed by four hundred people asking the government to build a bridge and abattoir from Howatt's Shore to Murray's Island, claiming that from eight hundred to a thousand acres of marsh land could be reclaimed. The dream never materialized though the agitation kept up for a number of years.

New Church Dedicated

The new church was dedicated during the ministry of Rev. W. Tufts, the third pastor at North Bedeque. Rev. R. S. Patterson had completed his long unbroken ministry of fifty-six years in 1882, when death called for the seemingly tireless servant, who, as preacher, farmer, schoolmaster, lawyer and even sometimes, physician, gave to his flock the fatherly care and example which only the word pastor in all its richest meaning could encompass. A generous man, loving in his early years, and double-tithing (one-fifth) in later life, Mr. Patterson still managed to leave, as a monument to his industry, a sizeable estate at his death. His successor in the North Bedeque pulpit, Rev. W. Scott, stayed but four years, being the immediate predecessor of Mr. Tufts who demitted the charge in 1892.

At Central Bedeque, the Baptists, not feeling the need of discarding the ancient landmark, still cling to their old meeting-house. However in 1894, under the guidance of Rev. W. H. Warren, the church was made to look like new by the addition of tower and vestry and a thorough renovation in furnishings and interior decoration. The congregation meanwhile used the Methodist church for Sunday afternoon services. The mid-week prayer service has no early mention in Methodist records, being possibly first introduced into the community by the Baptist brethren, who in 1854 in their Bedeque record book, asked that Wednesday evening prayer meetings should be held "from house to house, at seven o'clock in the summer and early candle light in winter."

(To Be Continued)

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Church Activities In Summerside

The Y. P. S. of the Summerside Church of Christ held its weekly meeting on Tuesday evening in the church hall with Miss Marie Dekker in charge of the Worship period and Mr. Leigh Linkletter presiding during the business session. Plans were made for an Easter play entitled, "The First Easter". After an interesting Bible Quiz, conducted by the Minister, on the hills and mountains of the Holy Land, games were played.—S.

The "Guiding Light" C. G. I. T. of Summerside Trinity Church held its weekly meeting in Epworth Hall on Tuesday evening. Gloria Woodside presided during the devotional period and was assisted by Mrs. William Heckbert, who read the Scripture lesson. The fourth chapter of the Study Book "Under the Tree" was discussed by Mrs. R. E. Dewar. Reby Best was in the chair during the business session, due to the absence of the president, Esther MacKay, who is a patient in Prince County Hospital. Arrangements were made for affiliation with the senior W. M. S. on the first Tuesday in March, also for the "Pow Wow" and initiation on the same date. Plans were discussed for the raising of funds for the

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M. R. E. C. "Taps" closed the meeting.—S.

The Summerside A. Y. P. A. held its regular meeting in St. Mary's Hall on Tuesday evening with Miss Helen Mills presiding. The Misses Shirley Coles and Frances Lecky were appointed to the Membership Committee. Arrangements were made to hold a Rummage Sale in the hall on Saturday afternoon, February 28. Detailed plans were made whereby the members will take over the church services on February 29 in St. Eleanor's in the afternoon and in Summerside in the evening. The first chapter of Study Book Number One was begun and an interesting discussion was led by Mr. David Cornish. After the meeting adjourned the members worked at leather craft.—S.

In Memoriam

DR. N. W. LEARD, SR.

Friends and relatives in Prince Edward Island will regret to learn of the death on Sunday, February 8th, of Dr. N. W. Leard, Sr., at his home in Jersey City, N. J. Born in Tryon, January 15, 1863, Norman Wright Leard was the fourth son of the late John N. and Frances Jane Leard and was in his 86th year. An older brother, Mr. Wm. E. Leard of Beatty, Sask. who recently celebrated his ninetieth birthday is the last surviving member of this family.

N. W. Leard was educated at Prince of Wales College, then taught for a number of years at Port Hill before going on to the University of Pennsylvania Dental School where he graduated in 1890. His dental practice was in Jersey City where he lived for the last fifty-eight years.

Predeceased by his wife the late Ruth Ann Wallington, he leaves his son, Dr. Norman W. Leard, Jr. of Upper Montclair, N. J. and two daughters, the Misses Ruth I. and Mary G. of Jersey City, and three grandchildren. Mr. J. R. Leard of this city is a nephew of the deceased.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday February 11th., with Rev. A. Boylan Fitzgerald officiating and with members of Bergen Lodge of the Free Masons in attendance. Dr. Leard, a 33rd degree mason, was a prominent fraternal figure in Jersey City.

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