



NEWSLETTER

Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society
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BESSIE WALLACE GAY'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY MEMOIRS OF THE PORT COLBORNE CHURCH OF CHRIST

....Geoffrey Ellis

Bessie Edith Wallace was born in Mill Village, Nova Scotia, to Alonzo and Laura Matilda Wier Wallace in January, 1911. At age 12 she moved to St. Catharines, Ontario, with several of her family, Lavinia (24), Loney (15), Dorothy (9) and Philip (6), to join the rest of their family in 1923, John Harold, Grace, and Erwin, older siblings who had made their move to St. Kitts in the previous year. In her early years she was a member at the Raymond and Beecher Streets Church of Christ. With the establishment of the Niagara and Manning Streets Church of Christ in 1928, Bessie became a member of this new work, signing her name along with 33 others who began this work.

In 1931 on September 5, Bessie married Charles H. Gay of Simcoe, Ontario. In the early years they lived in Port Dalhousie and attended the Niagara St. Congregation. Here Charles served as secretary, beginning January 7, 1934, where he served until 1947. Then the family, including their children, Wallace and Beverley, moved to Fenwick where they worshipped with the Church of Christ there. Charles was listed as secretary of this fellowship until 1960.

Bessie's brother, Erwin Wallace had moved to Port Colborne in 1933, resigning the next year as secretary of the Niagara Street church. For a time he and his family continued meeting at Niagara Street. In 1939, Erwin and his wife, Margaret and his sister Ruby Beck and her husband George "Chum" Beck joined to plant the Church of Christ in Port Colborne. The first meeting took place on April 23, 1939 with children from the respective families present, Keith Wallace and Joyce Beck. Bessie had a long-time interest in this congregation, no doubt in part out of her love for and appreciation of her brother and sister. This is evidenced by her assembling a 50-year history in time for its anniversary in April 23, 1989. This history was recorded in the June 1989 issue of the *Gospel Herald*, p. 14, and is copied here.

The Port Colborne History

Present Membership – 30

Regular Attendance – 55

(Ed. Note: It was a privilege to witness the enthusiasm and optimism at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of this small church on April 23rd. The building was packed with well wishers. The brief history was prepared for this occasion. E.C.P.)

On April 23, 1939 four members of the church of Christ, Ruby and George Beck, Margaret and Erwin Wallace, and their children Joyce Beck

and Keith Wallace, met at the Oddfellows's Hall in Port Colborne with speaker W. F. Cox of Beamsville, for the first meeting of the church in Port Colborne,

In 1940 Lydia and Lawrence Hurst, Evelyn and Milton, Blain and Joyce Hurst came from Dunnville to worship with the church here.

In 1944 a special meeting was held by C. E. Elerick. In 1950 this group moved to meet in the Hydro Building on West Main Street in Humberstone. In 1946-52 John Whitfield was the regular preacher and during this period several men came to help and preach. Some were Allan Killom, L. J. Keffer, Oliver and Ernie Burdett, and Emerson Flannery, The congregation moved to a small building on Main Street.

In May 1953 Louis Pauls came from Saskatchewan to work with the church. During this period there were several baptisms, Bible correspondence courses, men's training classes, ladies' sewing classes, young people's meetings and cottage meetings.

In 1954 a lot was acquired at 700 Steele Street for a building. Loney and Erwin Wallace were the main builders, with help from many of the other members. A special meeting was held in January 1955 in this new building with speakers, Louis Pauls, W. F. Cox, and George Snure. There were three baptisms at that time. In 1957 C. G. McPhee held a special meeting for the congregation.

In 1958 a meeting was held with S. McNery a special speaker.

In 1958 Louis Pauls moved to New Brunswick to start a new work there, and later that year F. Alexander came to be our regular speaker until

fall of '59. Many from the area came to help and preach. Marlin Harless became the speaker in 1960 and '61 and Max Craddock worked with the congregation from 1962-64. Then Bruce Merritt preached until May 1965, and Harold Tabor, Jeff Ellis, and Keith Wallace filled in. Later in 1965 Ben Wiebe began preaching here, sponsored by a church in Kentucky, and in 1966 Bruce Merritt and family moved to Port Colborne and Bruce preached until 1970.

In 1967 Jim Allcock of St Catharines drew plans to raise the building onto a basement with Sunday School rooms. Erwin and Loney Wallace again did the building with other members sharing in the work.

Dale McNinch preached from 1970-71. Randy Morritt preached from 1975-77 and Bruce Merritt took up the work again until 1979. Brian Thompson preached 1980-84. Wil Maddeaux came in 1984 and preached until early 1989.

In February 1989 David Lock started working with the congregation preaching full time.

During the years 1939 to 1989, fifty-four baptisms and ten meetings were recorded.

- compiled by Bessie Gay

Keith Wallace was the featured speaker at the anniversary meeting. Louis Pauls and Max Craddock, both former preachers with the congregation, also spoke.

Charles Gay passed away in 1995. Bessie Edith Wallace Gay passed away in 2006, in her 96th year, in Port Colborne.

CONNECTING THE DOTS...

....Elgin Whitfield

History is essentially the study of the lives of people.

In his Book, "40 Years a Canadian Preacher". J.C. Bailey spends a little time on his family history. Since we share some of that history through what we in the "family" refer to as the "Cann Clan", I was interested in what he wrote. He identifies his Grandparents, William John Cann and Cordelia (Reynolds) as well as his Great Grandparents Joseph Reynolds and Anne (Coone) and Thomas Cann and Martha (Gilbert). J.C. gives us a brief history of the family connections. "Grandpa Cann was born in Hampton, Ontario. This is a small place north of Bowmanville, Ontario. It is not quite clear whether he was born in the village or on a farm. He first saw the light of day on February 21, 1859. He was the oldest of four children. The second and third ones in this family were twins. They were named Joseph and Mary. They died when they were one and two months old. The other child in this family was a girl named Bertha. She never married.

In the neighbourhood where my grandfather was born, and raised, there lived a large family by the name of Reynolds. When my grandfather was but a small boy he informed his parents that he was going to get a wife from that place. (This was when they were driving by the Reynolds farm.) Some years later he married Cordelia Reynolds.

My ancestry on my grandfather's side belonged to a sect in England that was known as "Bible Christians." At least my great-

grandfather belonged to this sect. What their doctrine was I do not know. When he came from England he threw his lot in with the Methodists. Whether the Gilberts, my great-grandmother's people, were of this sect I do not know. My great-grandmother was only six years old when she came to Canada, and apparently this particular sect never did exist in Canada. So, it is of little moment. My grandfather and grandmother were both reared Methodists. My grandfather was a man of high ideals. He refused to take a drink with his own father. His father smoked a pipe but he refused to smoke. It would seem that some of his descendants could imitate him to profit in this matter. I am happy to say that in his large family there has been very little drinking. May it ever be so.

Great-great-grandfather Gilbert died when I was four years old. He was 94 when he died. That means that he was born in 1813. If the family came from England in 1842 that would mean that he was 29 years of age when he crossed the Atlantic. He was a tailor by trade but whether he followed his trade in Canada I do not know. I know that he was a farmer in this country. When he was more than seventy years of age he was running a reaper. The horses ran away, and he lost both arms. He lived for more than twenty years more without the use of his arms. He had been a well to do farmer for those times. (Excerpt from "40 Years a Canadian Preacher".)

A few years ago, I was attending a gift and craft show when I came across a book seller with a table full of used books. One of the books on

the table caught my eye. It was titled "A Place Called Solina". This would have meant nothing to me, except that a few months earlier I had gone to visit Solina with my Mom and Dad in search of some family history. Specifically, we were in search of the graves of my Great-great-great grandparents Joseph and Anne Reynolds. We found those grave sites in the cemetery beside the Eldad United Church on the western edge of the village of Solina. I purchased the book as a gift for my Mother, but before I gave it to her I read it with a particular interest in the chapters on the history of the local churches in Solina. I also took note of the frequent references to the Reynolds family. Some of the stories that I found blended with, while others added to the information that J.C. Bailey shared in his book. Following are some of those stories.

Joseph Reynolds was a member of the Eldad Bible Christian church. Joseph was listed as one of the "local" preachers and he also served as a class leader. Sometimes he would be called to preach at the church in Oshawa as well. Since he refused to make his horses work on the Lord's Day, he would walk there and back, (a distance of about 12 kilometers) regardless of the weather, to perform his duty, which he took very seriously. Joseph, no doubt delivered many hundreds of sermons over his life time. Joseph Reynolds is described by one of his Grandsons, Arthur Reynolds: "My grandfather was one of the founding members of the Eldad Church. I never knew him but apparently, he was of remarkable character. He never went to school,

but the titled aristocrat for whom he worked in Cornwall, England, taught him to read the Bible. And he would never prostitute his power of vision by reading anything else! He could not read script and could write nothing but his name" His youngest son, Dr. J.B. Reynolds, used to say that his preaching sounded like something out of Paul Bunyan, his English was so clear and choice...yet in ordinary conversation around the farm he sounded like the unlettered man that he was.

The following excerpt is taken from the obituary for Arthur Reynolds, son of Joseph and Anne. It was written by Joseph Benson Reynolds (his younger brother) in 1934. Joseph Benson Reynolds unlike his father, was a well-educated man. He started as a teacher and rose to eventually be the President of the Ontario Veterinary College (now the University of Guelph). In his eulogy for his older brother, he gives us a flavor for life in the village of Solina in the 1860-80 period.

"Seventy years ago, on the farm now known as the Langmaid Farm, one mile south of Solina, lived the Reynolds family—the father and the mother, Joseph and Ann Reynolds, and twelve children. Three of these born in Cornwall England and a fourth born in Canada, children of Joseph Reynolds and a former wife (Sarah Broad). Two were children of Ann Reynolds and a former husband, Croft Osborne. Six children had been born to Joseph and Ann Reynolds, and of these Arthur was the oldest, at this time ten years old. About this time, the three eldest daughters married. After they had left

home, three other children were born in the Reynolds household, so that by 1872 there were again twelve children in the home..... The moral and religious atmosphere of the Solina community was strict and uncompromising. The early settlers were many of them Bible Christians from Cornwall and Devonshire, whose difference from others consisted not so much in religious doctrine as in the rules of conduct. Prohibitions were the order of the day. Dancing, card-playing, drinking strong liquors, smoking tobacco, were practices forbidden or condemned by the church element, and you were either a Christian or a sinner according to your attitude on these questions of conduct."

(My personal observation is that these prohibitions were still very much the order of the day when I was growing up in the churches of Christ in Sault Ste. Marie and Thessalon almost 100 years later. This shows the tremendous influence of the Cann/Reynolds connection. Both of those congregations were started by people who traced their ancestry back to John and Cordelia Cann.)

Not only were the Reynolds family members of the Eldad Bible Christian Chapel, the Cann and Gilbert families appear to be associated with the Bible Christians as well. Thomas Cann's brother Edward is listed among some of the early "local" preachers at the Eldad church. In a passage on some of the local preachers who took turns exhorting the congregation, J.B. Reynolds mentions a "Mr. Gilbert, who lost both of his arms in a reaper accident late in his life, is remembered for his

sermons as well, because his grandson would drive him with his horse and buggy to Eldad Church of a Sunday, then find the hymns and Scripture reading for him". (and so J.C .Bailey's statement about not knowing the religious background of his Great-great grandfather Gilbert is answered.)

As I read through "A Place Called Solina" I was able to fill in some of the blanks in the brief family history that J.C. Bailey shared in his book. It helped to shed a little more light on the history of my family and church connections to a group of "Bible Christians" from a small village in what would have then been Upper Canada. Contrary to what J.C. Bailey knew at the time that he wrote, both sets of his Great grandparents had been associated with the Bible Christian movement, which had indeed made its way from South West England to Canada.

When I read what Joseph Benson Reynolds wrote about life in the community of Solina and the influence of the Eldad Bible Chapel, it occurs to me that William John Cann and his wife Cordelia (Reynolds) received from their parents and grandparents a legacy of Faith which they passed on to their children and to their children's children. That legacy of faith has endured into the 6th and 7th generations. Their religion may have had more to do with method, obligation, duty and prohibitions than I am comfortable with today, but it challenges me when I think about what influence my faith might have on future generations in my own family and church community.

RECORD NUMBERS ATTEND THE 17TH CCCHS ANNUAL MEETING

Twenty-eight members and more than twenty visitors attended the annual meeting held at the Ontario St. Church of Christ in St. Catharines, Ontario on August 20, 2016. Geoffrey Ellis and George Mansfield presented excellent research on the Alonzo Wallace family and the influence they had on the church in Nova Scotia and in Ontario. Many of the descendants of Alonzo were able to be there for the occasion. The St. Catharines congregation was greatly influenced for over seventy years by members of the Wallace family.

Jim Dale of Waterloo, ON gave an interesting presentation entitled Jacob Snure: "A Pioneer of the Church in the Niagara Peninsula". Jim is a grandson of Jacob Snure.

The ladies of Ontario St. made a special lunch highlighting some of the recipes that were favourites of the Wallace family. The St. Catharines congregation had many fond memories to share of different ones of the many Wallace brothers and sisters who came to Ontario in the early 1900's.

The oldest surviving member of that family is Dorothy Ellis (102 years old). Geoffrey Ellis gave a presentation: "Remembering Dorothy Ellis".

George Mansfield had served for over six years on the board and it was time for him to retire. Ed Broadus gave a speech thanking George for his work as chairman of the board.

When a member retires from the board, a new member must be elected. The Historical Society is happy to announce that Murray Hibbard of Cambridge, Ontario was willing to take up this good work and the Board wishes to welcome Murray.

We want to thank Elgin Whitfield for accepting the office of Chairman of the Board.

Many of those present were very pleased with the outcome of the Annual Meeting. We hope that future meetings will be filled with much good historical information and that more and more of those who are interested in the history of the churches of Christ in Canada will join us and add to the growing archival information.

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Membership Dues

Membership in the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society is available to interested individuals for \$25.00 per year. The annual meeting in August of each year is an opportune time to purchase or renew your membership. Otherwise you may contact the Financial Officer, Margaret Hibbard. (vhibbard@bell.net) or 705-843-6696) Checks may be made out to CCCHS and mailed to 156 Sunset Beach Rd., R. R. #2 Iron Bridge, ON P0R 1H0

CCCHS Business

Concerning CCCHS Tenure Schedule for Board Members:

The by-laws of the CCCHS state: The length of tenure of a board member should not exceed 6 years. The current Board Members' retirement status is as follows:

Elgin Whitfield	Aug. 2017
Bob Hibbard	Aug. 2017
Margaret Hibbard	Aug. 2018
Dave Carruthers	Aug. 2018
Murray Hibbard	Aug. 2020

*Note: Board Members are elected to the Board and not to a position on the Board. The Board Members select the officers from its membership.