



NEWSLETTER

Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society
Vol. 8, No. 1-2, Summer-Fall, 2012

LOG MEETING HOUSE OF NORVAL CHURCH STILL IN EXISTENCE

By Edwin Broadus

The worth of the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society was demonstrated in a serendipitous way this past fall when a woman in Norval, Ontario, interested in preserving an old building in that town, somehow learned about CCCHS and wrote George Mansfield, the board chairman, seeking information about the log meeting house of the Norval Church of Christ.

This building was constructed in about 1841 on the property of James and Isabella Menzies, and it was located on the Tenth Line in Esquesing Township in what was then Halton County (now Halton Region). It was of special significance in our own history, because, among other things, the first June meeting of the Ontario Disciples was hosted by this church.

Most, if not all, of us supposed that this early log church had long since been destroyed, and the news that it might still be standing was received with great excitement. George forwarded the request to Geoff Ellis and me, and after some email correspondence with Pat Farley, who sent the original inquiry, and Barbara Succo, current owner of the building, we arranged a visit to see it on December 6th, 2012.

The building is no longer on its original site, for it was long since removed to the next line east, and so it is now located at 9924 Winston Churchill, immediately north of the sign indicating the city limits of Norval.

In addition to the two women just mentioned, we were joined in the tour of the building by Mark Heuston and two men from the immediate community who are interested in

of the building, took Geoff and me to see some grave markers for the Menzies family at the nearby cemetery as well as to the location of



The main portion of this renovated structure on Winston Churchill contains the old log meeting house used by the Disciples church in Norval in the 19th century. It has been remodelled with the addition of a kitchen (left side) and a porch (right side). Some think the original entry was where the large window in the center of the main portion of the building is now located.

John Menzies' farm on the 10th Line (no buildings are left on the farm) and the large, octagonal home of John's son, James, a short distance south of John's property.

As mentioned, the former church building is now used as an artist studio. After it was moved to its present location around 1873 the log exterior was covered over and a porch was built the length of one side and a kitchen was added on the other side. The original portion of the building is approximately

20'x30' and, because of the peaked roof, there was a loft, part of which could have been used as a balcony (at the present time the entire upper part has been made into a second story).

Within two years after the meetinghouse was first built, the church had 46 members. Since families then tended to be rather large, there would have been, in addition to adult and teenage members, a considerable number of children in attendance, so one can well imagine that the little building was often filled to capacity.

John and Isabella Menzies first came to Canada in 1817 from Perthshire, Scotland. When they reached Montreal they were out of funds and had to remain in that area for a year while he earned enough money to move on to Upper Canada. In 1818 they met Alexander and Janet Stewart, who had just arrived from Perthshire. Both families were Baptist and had been influenced in Scotland by the Haldane brothers. Alexander was a preacher who had been trained in Robert Haldane's school.

The two families, with their children, soon moved on to York (now Toronto) where they found other Baptists, including Thomas and Eleanor Stephens, who, like Stewart, had been trained at Robert Haldane's seminary, although Stephens was Irish.

Soon most if not all the members of the new Baptist church in York applied for land, which was granted to them near the Credit River, a short distance from the future site of Norval.

As John Menzies later put it in a letter to a friend in Scotland, "We came to the woods on the 13th of March, 1820, and the church was formed in my house." For about a year all went well, but then, Menzies said, some differences arose between their two preachers (apparently Stephens and Stewart) "in some worldly matters," and the church divided. Stewart remained for a while, but Stephens apparently quit meeting with them. After the split, they reorganized with seven members. Stewart eventually moved away, to Toronto, where he again organized a Baptist church (the forerunner of the present Jarvis Street Baptist Church). It was from this church that in the 1830s some, including James Beaty, Sr. and James Lesslie, broke away to form a Disciples congregation, which was the forerunner of all the Toronto churches from

the three main branches of the Restoration Movement.

Meanwhile, at Norval, or Esquesing (township), as the church was more often identified, the Menzies were steadfast in holding meetings in their home. Menzies said that at one time they were down to four members. During these years Menzies, whose native tongue was Gaelic, began to do some preaching in English and also continued to study the Bible. He was so proficient in the latter that Joseph Ash said that some called Menzies "the living, walking concordance."

By 1833 the church began to grow. In 1835, James Mitchell, who later became one of the church's elders, was baptized, and in the same year a young Alexander Anderson, who later became one of the Disciples' leading preachers in Ontario, was also baptized.

In 1838 William Trout's name first appeared on the church's roll. He had moved to Norval to run a mill on the Credit River, and he proved to be, along with his family, a tremendous asset to the church. Like Menzies, he was a capable public speaker, and he was soon chosen to be one of the church's elders. By this time, and possibly through his influence, their differences had been settled with the Stephens family, for Trout's son, William H., later recalled a church meeting at the Stephens' house in 1840, before the log church building was constructed. (Thomas Stephens had died in 1833.)

As mentioned before, in 1843 the Disciples first June Meeting was hosted by this church. Whether they crowded into the log building or met elsewhere on the Menzies farm, we don't know. William H. Trout was there as a boy and wrote about it many years later. Among the visitors who came all the way from Ohio were the Hayden brothers, known far and wide in the churches for both their singing and preaching abilities, and it must have been an exciting time, not only for young William, but also for all the others who were present.

It is exciting today to stand inside this building and to think that Christians like the Menzies, James Black, Joseph Ash, Alexander Anderson, the Trouts, and an untold number of others once walked these same floors, worshiped God here, and mingled in fellowship with one another.

This church passed out of existence, probably not long after John Menzies died in 1859. But its influence lives on. As mentioned already, Alexander Anderson was famed as a preacher and traveled among churches all over the province. William Trout and family moved to the Georgian Bay area and founded the Meaford church, which continues to flourish even today. Members of the Stephens family went to Owen Sound and helped establish a church there. James Menzies (son of John) moved with his family to Toronto, where he was an influential church leader. Descendants of some of these people are still active in churches in the province in the 21st century.

NEWS FLASH! COLLECTION RELOCATION

The CCCHS archival collection was well settled in the historic structure, the 1887 Meaford fire hall, in a designated room in time for its official opening, August 18, 2012. This location was made possible because of the kindness of the Knight family of Meaford. While providing an archival setting for their ancestor, Stanley Knight's valuable collection, space was given gratis for the CCCHS collection. Recent developments have resulted in the sale of the fire hall and the relocation of the Knight archive to 334 Sykes St. S., in Meaford, ON (N4L 1X1). Space identical to that supplied in the 26 Nelson St. S location is being made available in the new location. Of recent construction, the new space will lend itself to insuring features required for archival storage: temperature and moisture control, fire protection, security, etc. The collection will be moved to its new home early in 2013.

For the present, ordering of publications and CDs and forwarding of archival contributions can continue to be made through the address, CCCHS, 120 Moccasin Dr., Waterloo, ON N2L 4C3 (519-885-3702, ccchs1@gmail.com).

General inquiries should be directed to chairman of the board, George Mansfield, Box 1179, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0 (905-516-9228, george4now@gmail.com).

Membership status and dues should be forwarded to Margaret Hibbard, financial officer, 156 Sunset Beach Rd., RR 2, Iron

Bridge, ON P0R 1H0 (705-843-6696, vhubbard@bell.net).

Website: www.ccchs.ca

THE DISAPPEARING CHRISTIANS OF CORNWALLIS TOWNSHIP

By George Mansfield

In the 1980's I came across a sign high over the door of an old potato warehouse. It read "*Port Williams Church Of Christ.*" This building, now gone, had been built in 1903. The congregation began with nearly 100 members, grew to 140, but by 1923 the bell, pews and pulpit were moved to the Baptist church. In 1930 the building was sold to the Port Williams Fruit Company. What happened? Why did this church cease to exist? We presently have no answers. There were not one or two but five different churches of restoration persuasion in this relatively small township which vanished to the extent that there is almost no recollection of them by residents in the area,



even those of advanced age.

Location of the five Restorationist congregations in Kings County, Nova Scotia

One historian comments this way:

"In spite of this seemingly impenetrable wall of faith, or perhaps because of it, five Christian churches were established in Cornwallis. Four of these have disappeared, leaving scarcely a trace, except in the vague memories of a few older people. The fifth and last building has been used for apple and potato storage for forty years and had ceased to function as a place of worship twenty years before that. Nevertheless, for nearly a century these churches played an important, and at times an exceedingly active, part in the religious life of the area. In doing so, their story is not without a strong element of human interest."¹

This same writer wonders if the non-denominational nature of the churches coupled with zealous outreach efforts on the part of the evangelists was in part to blame for the dying out of the churches.

Some of the preachers who served in establishing these works and maintaining them include: John Doyle, Benjamin Howard, J.A.L. Romig, E.C. Ford, George J. MacDonald, Thomas Bates, W.F. Pattee, T.F. Dwyer, and more unknown to us.

At present one church of Christ that came as a result of an outreach effort by of the Halifax church of Christ in the 1970's meets in their own building at Middle Dyke.

¹The Forgotten Christians of Cornwallis Township, E.L.Eaton, 1977

EUGENE PERRY HONOURED AT GRAND OPENING

(Article appearing in the September 2012 *Gospel Herald*)

The 13th annual meeting of the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society (CCCHS) was held at Meaford on Saturday, August 18, 2012. The meeting itself was an historic event, celebrating the placement of the society's archival collection in its new

permanent home, in the landmark Meaford Fire Hall.

Dr. Eugene Perry was the featured presenter on the occasion, delivering a powerful paper, "Reminiscences, Observations and Concerns." And Dr. Perry was awarded the society's "Historian of the Year" recognition. Chairman for the meeting, and chairman of the CCCHS's board of directors, George Mansfield noted, in making the award, that this honour was due for two major reasons. Eugene's 1971 Pepperdine University Master's thesis on the history of periodicals in the Restoration Movement in Canada has become a stimulus for a growing number of studies of the Canadian experience. As well, the preserving of Eugene's extensive collection of periodicals and other papers pertaining to Churches of Christ in Canada in the 19th and 20th centuries contributed to the formation of the CCCHS and is the core portion of the society's current collection.

The meeting acknowledged the appropriateness of Meaford as the home for the society's permanent home. The Meaford Church of Christ was one of the earliest congregations to be established in Ontario—1848. And over its 165 years, it has been one of the leading congregations in the province. Eugene Perry, in his presentation, dubbed it "the Jerusalem of Canada."

In recognition of Meaford's central importance and of the significance of the society's 2012 activities in its meeting in Meaford, Geoffrey Ellis prepared a paper, "The Disciples of Meaford, 1848-1914: Reports from the Periodicals." Drawing together the various reports of people and activities in Meaford that appeared in some fourteen periodicals that were published during that period, the sixty-page paper gives a compelling first hand account of the ongoing activities of this vigorous community.

Ellis was invited by the board to introduce this paper during the meeting. In his description, "The Disciples of Meaford' Considered," he focused on evangelism and soul winning that are the major emphases of the periodicals. Of particular interest are the details of the efforts of prominent American evangelists who began to arrive after the 1872 coming of the railway to Meaford. Over a period of some thirty-five years, sixteen well-known American evangelists are listed in the periodicals as effective workers in Meaford. Twenty-two meetings by these

men are recorded with a harvest of 296 won to the gospel. It is Ellis's hope that this gathering of reports will be a welcome supplement to the Meaford congregation's excellent 150th year anniversary history, *The Meaford Journals, 1848-1998*. Ellis followed with a power point presentation in which the archival collection was described.

Founded in 1999, the society proceeded with the assurance that its archival collection would be welcomed into the religious archives of a Hamilton university. In 2004 the option was removed as administrative redirection ruled out this possibility. For the past eight years, as the society's collection was steadily growing, a search for a suitable location for its permanent home was ongoing. Then an offer was received from Ron Knight, former CCCHS board member, that the collection might be placed in the setting that Ron and his family were preparing for their ancestor, Stanley Knight's extensive and eclectic lifetime collection. With that object in mind the iconic Meaford Fire Hall had been purchased. Designed and built in 1887 by architect, James A. Ellis, the fire hall had more recently been enlarged with the addition of a large bay. A room has been constructed in this setting for the society's collection. Ron Knight gave to the meeting the history of the fire hall as well as an overview of the early years of the Meaford church.

The activities of the society's meeting concluded with the ribbon cutting ceremony and the formal opening of the new home for the society's collection. Called upon to cut the ribbon were Eileen Dale, who has diligently worked during the years that the collection was in Waterloo in processing the growing collection—which is now approaching 2,000 items, and Eugene Perry.

The activities of the meeting prior to the opening took place in the nicely appointed meeting room in the new addition to the Meaford Town Hall—on the site where gospel meetings had taken place as well as the significant Harding-Wilkinson Debate on Baptism (1884). In the business meeting that began the day, Margaret Hibbard, of Iron Bridge, Ontario, was elected to the board by the society's members.

2012 "HISTORIAN OF THE YEAR" AWARD

"The Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society, to Dr. Eugene Perry: In grateful recognition of a lifetime of service in leadership in Christian education, Christian journalism, mission work, and shepherding in the Lord's church, of his contributions to the Historical Society as a founding member of its Board and as treasurer for over a decade, and of his achievements that have resulted both in supplying the core of the Society's collection and the stimulation for the ongoing study of the Canadian Restoration movement by others, this certificate of appreciation is awarded as Historian of the Year, 2012."

"THE DISCIPLES OF MEAFORD, 1848-1914" CONSIDERED

(An excerpt of the report given by Geoffrey Ellis at the annual meeting of his paper presented to the historical society.)

The Meaford Church of Christ is one of the oldest congregations of its fellowship in Ontario, having its beginnings in 1848.

(Other early congregations include Beamsville whose roots are in the Clinton Township, or "Lakeshore," congregation, beginning in 1832, but coming to town only in 1885; Jordan, having the same roots, beginning ca. 1840; Omagh, 1845; and Selkirk, 1848.)

However, Meaford stands head and shoulders above its sister congregations in its careful records maintained consistently over its 165 years. It is without peer in its publication of *The Meaford Journals, 1848-1998*, a superb summary of these records for its first 150 years. And what's more, these records tell a story of one of the most colourful and fruitful of churches.

Some day, with the riches of material available, a careful history of this congregation deserves to be written. For this special occasion, however, as the archival collection of the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society is formally deposited in this community, I am presenting the paper, "The Disciples of Meaford, 1848-1914, Reports from the Periodicals." With little commentary and with no attempt to draw out historical conclusions, this paper attempts to draw together the reports of the actual participants in the congregation's life that appear in the some fourteen periodicals that were published during the period. It is

not suggested that the almost 60 pages of these reports are exhaustive or comprehensive, but collectively they do provide a vital insight into the rich life of this congregation. It is hoped that the results will prove a welcome supplement to *The Meaford Journals*.

As to my credentials for taking on this task, my direct ties with Meaford are largely family. My ancestor, George Ellis and his family, emigrating from Kent, England, in 1851, settled in Meaford. He and his wife are listed in the first journal recorded in *The Meaford Journals*, as #77 and #78, with the only information given, as "dead" (p. 11). The second record book also lists them and supplies some information: both "baptized in 1858," and for George, "withdrew," and for Mrs. Ellis, "deceased February 17, 1877" (p. 23). A goodly number of Ellises are subsequently scattered throughout the records and are presumed to be, in the main, descendants of "George Ellis Sr. and his wife." Included among these is my grandfather, William F. Ellis, who appears in the records as "Willie Ellis, August 24 D. Stirling baptized has moved to Owen Sound, married to Sister Charrie Tolman (sic Tallman) of Smithville and moved to Soo Ontario" (p. 41). [The move to the Sault Ste. Marie occurred shortly after their marriage at the turn of the century; returning to Meaford some time later—the *Bible Student* records William and Charrie Ellis living in Meaford in 1904—the couple with its growing family moved to Owen Sound in 1909 where they conducted meetings in their home for the next ten years, moving to Smithville in 1919.] It remains to be said that the paper, "The Disciples of Meaford," was possible because of the progress made by the CCCHS in collecting and making accessible the periodicals from which the reports are drawn.

A word is deserved regarding the periodicals themselves. It needs to be asserted that people were as socially engaged then as now. Yes, we have Facebook with opportunities for multiple "friends." Yesteryear, our communications kept Canada Post in the black. Early in the 20th century, myriads of postcards were mailed. In the 19th century church periodicals provided an important social connection. The reports sent in were personal, informative, and engaged. It is also to be noted that the use of the English language blossomed during this period—it

has been observed that the Victorian era (Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 to 1901) was the period of the finest usage of the English language, with a reversion to pictographic communication from then till now! Thus, the periodicals are treasures to be explored for multiple reasons...

(The balance of this paper may be found at the CCCHS website, www.ccchs.ca. Follow the links, Archives/Papers/"The Disciples of Meaford' Considered.")

2013 MEMBERSHIPS NOW DUE.

2013 CCCHS membership fees, covering Sept. 1, 2012 through Aug. 31, 2013 are now being received. Annual fees are \$25.00 (for both voting and associate memberships). Direct your payment to financial officer, Margaret Hibbard, 156 Sunset Beach Rd., RR 2, Iron Bridge, ON P0R 1H0
705-843-6696
vhibbard@bell.net

Would you like to become a member of the historical society? Contact any member of the CCCHS board of directors for information.

Board of Directors, CCCHS

Chairman:

George Mansfield
Box 1179
Beamsville, ON
L0R 1B0
905-516-9228
george4now@gmail.com

Vice-Chairman:

Elgin Whitfield
14300 7 Conc
Uxbridge, ON
L9P 1R2
705-228-8155
elginwhitfield@xplornet.com

Secretary:

Wayford Smith
4465 Michael Ave.
Beamsville, ON
L0R 1B5
905-563-5109
wayma@sympatico.ca

Historian:

Bob Hibbard
260 Birchcliffe Cres.
Hamilton, ON
L8T 4L2
905-385-0465
bethhibbard@yahoo.com

Financial Officer:

Margaret Hibbard

156 Sunset Beach Rd.
RR 2,
Iron Bridge, ON P0R 1H0
705-843-6696
vhibbard@bell.net
