



James Buchanan – British Consul in NY and Early Canadian Church History

In 1816, two years after the end of the War of 1812, James Buchanan began 27 years of service as British Consul in New York City. Not only did he fulfill his consulate duties well, as is indicated by his long years of service for his country, but he exercised unusual Christian influence both as a member of a Haldanean British church in New York City and by influencing British subjects with similar restoration views to emigrate to Canada.

Buchanan was born in Omagh, Ireland in 1772, and as a young man he became a lawyer in Dublin. He had been brought up in the Church of Scotland, which was Presbyterian in doctrine, but in the early 1800s he became acquainted with the Haldane brothers, James and Robert, who had a similar religious background, but who, by this time, had become Independents, or Congregationalists. In 1808 the brothers accepted baptism by immersion, and identified as Baptists. Sometime during those early years Buchanan also made a similar change.

When he arrived in New York City, Buchanan united with what was called the “Church of Christ at New York,” a small group with Haldanean leanings. It was first formed in 1810, when William Ovington and eight others left Ebenezer Baptist church “to come together as disciples of the Lord Jesus, and to continue in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayers.” Very soon after the church began, Henry Errett, an Irishman and later the father of the well-known early Disciple, Isaac Errett, was baptized, and very soon, through his writings, identified and promulgated what the church stood for. Within two years, there were 28 members. This church is considered to be the indirect ancestor of the first Disciples congregation (Greene) to be formed in New York City.

As British Consul, Buchanan endeavoured to encourage British subjects, whether in their home land or in the United States, to help settle Canada. But, beyond this, he had a special interest in influencing those with religious views similar to his to go there. Some of the very first of these people that he assisted in going to Canada were the families of Thomas and Eleanor Stephens and George and Janet Barclay. The Stephens he knew personally, for they had come to New York City in 1811, and they were early members of the same church Buchanan united with five years later. Thomas Stephens and William Ovington had been successful business partners during the War of 1812, but after hostilities ended they were not able to compete against cheaper British imports, and Stephens decided, at the urging of Buchanan, to seek new opportunities in Canada in 1817.

The Barclays were from Fifeshire, Scotland, and while living there became Scotch Baptists, a group with views similar to the Haldanean Baptist. After coming to Canada with Buchanan's help, they affiliated with the Association Baptists, who were more mainstream than Scotch Baptists, and he taught school and preached. Later he accepted

the distinctive restoration teachings of Alexander Campbell, and he aided James Beaty, Sr. in forming a Disciples church in Toronto in the 1830s. When the Barclays first came to Canada, they settled about 90 miles east of Toronto, near the shore of Lake Ontario, where George taught school and did some preaching. Soon they moved to the Pickering area, where George and Janet remained the rest of their lives. The Barclay family was influential among Ontario Disciples during much of the 19th century.

Buchanan remained in contact with Thomas Stephens after the latter moved to Canada, and in 1819 he wrote to Stephens, who was then living in Markham, proposing that he organize a Baptist settlement in one of the newly opened townships. Stephens by this time was meeting with a few other Baptists in nearby Toronto (then called York). A leader there was a Scottish immigrant, Alexander Stewart, who, like Stephens, had trained in a Haldanean seminary in Scotland. Buchanan suggested that they ask for 5,000 acres, but they ended up obtaining 1700 acres, divided among nine families, who each received from 100 to 300 acres a piece.

Bishop Strachan, head of the Anglican Church in what later became Ontario and consequently prominent in provincial politics, raised some objection to the settlers at first, so they supplied a copy of a circular letter from the church in New York City to which Buchanan and the Stephens belonged. This seemed to satisfy the Bishop that these Baptists were reasonably orthodox. Buchanan very likely helped assure the Bishop and Lieutenant Governor Maitland that these people were desirable settlers.

The land given to Stewart, Stephens, and the others was in Esquesing Township, on or near the Credit River, a short distance from the location of the future town of Norval. At the time there was no road leading to their allotted lands, and they had to make their way through the woods to get there. They soon began meeting for church services on the land of John and Isabella Menzies, who were also Haldanean Baptists, from Perthshire, Scotland.

It was assumed that spiritual leadership would be provided for the new church by Stephens and Stewart. Indeed, all went well for the first year or so, but then there was a falling out between the two preachers over what John Menzies later described as “worldly matters,” and the little church divided, with some continuing to meet with Menzies and Stewart families, others leaving with the Stephens, and some choosing not to meet with either group. The Stewarts soon returned to York to again gather a Baptist church there. Menzies was left to try to lead the few who remained there – something he did faithfully for years, and eventually the church grew to a more significant size and hosted the Disciples’ first June Meeting in 1843. Several important early Disciple leaders were with the church for varying lengths of time, including William Trout, Alexander Anderson, and Jacob Snure.

Thomas Stephens may have had some association with the Menzies group before his death in 1833. His oldest son, James Dawson, thought his father was a broken man in his last years after some of his experiences in Esquesing. However, the widow of Thomas appeared on the membership roll of the Norval church in 1838, the same year that her son, William, was baptized. Most, if not all, of the Stephens children

appeared on the same membership roll, and many of them later became Disciple leaders elsewhere, so Buchanan's experiment, which at first seemed to be a failure, eventually produced fruit.

One other noteworthy Ontario Disciple who came to Canada, in part at least, because of Buchanan's encouragement, was Thomas Chalmers Scott, from the area of Dundee, Scotland. He arrived in Toronto in 1842, one year before Buchanan retired from his Consul post. Scott's talents, both in the church and in the business world, were soon apparent. He was closely associated with James Lesslie, a leader in the Toronto church alongside James Beaty, Sr., after Lesslie and Buchanan persuaded Scott to come to Toronto. Eventually Lesslie, Scott, and others formed a second Disciples church in Toronto, and soon afterward Scott provided a building in which the church met on Pembroke Street.

It is evident, then, that James Buchanan, though he lived in New York City during the years noted so far, had a significant influence on church developments in Canada. During his latter years in New York City, he became a reader of Alexander Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger*, and he occasionally submitted articles or letters to the paper. He presumably met Campbell when the latter visited New York City in 1834. By that time the church there had divided, but Buchanan continued to work with the original one, of which William Ovington was a leader. There was a third congregation, with much the same doctrinal views, which had evolved from a Baptist church. Campbell chose to meet with the two that were willing to commune together (something the church where Buchanan was a member would not do). This led to a lengthy letter from

Buchanan, published by Campbell in his paper, in which he maintained that the church where he was a member was the faithful one, for one of the others was composed of people who had separated from them, and the other had a preacher and some other members who had withdrawn from them. About that time another church was established, fully aligned with the Disciples, and the three that were there when Campbell visited eventually passed out of existence.

When James Buchanan retired in 1843, he made his home near Niagara Falls, Ontario, where Joseph Ash visited him in 1845. Buchanan showed him a large room in his house where he held public meetings and observed the Lord's Supper every Sunday – something he continued to do the remainder of his life.

Buchanan died at Elmwoods, near Montreal, October 8, 1851, in his 80th year, while visiting his daughter. Campbell reprinted a lengthy obituary from a New York City paper, which noted not only his achievements in his professional life but also his religious views. He was a member of a church that believed “that no act of worship should be observed that is not clearly ordered in the New Testament, or sanctioned by the practices of the first churches.” We know from a detailed account of worship services at the church he belonged to in New York City that this involved a rather extreme form of restoration, similar to what was later espoused by James Beaty, Jr. in Toronto and outlined in his book, *Paying the Pastor*.

Buchanan's standing in the world is evidenced by a marble tablet in his honor in Westminster Abbey: “James Buchanan, Esq., his Majesty's Consul in New York.” This memorial was erected

by the Duke of York. As important as this would have been to Buchanan, if he had lived to see it, his first priority was undoubtedly pleasing God through full obedience to his will. In so living he made a contribution, not only to the church in New York City, but also to the Disciples in Canada, although it is unlikely that he ever fully identified as one of them.---- Edwin Broadus

Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society - Archival Project

What it is

The CCCHS archive is a collection of materials pertaining to the heritage of the Churches of Christ in Canada. These materials have been collected over the years by those who have understood the significance of such materials. A sampling of the contents includes:

- Biographies and Canadian Church History
- Periodicals and Church Bulletins
- Complete collection of combined topics:
 - bulletins
 - personal profiles of families
 - personal profiles of evangelists
 - personal profiles of missionaries
- Institutional Information
 - Christian Colleges
 - Camps
- CD collections
- Cassette Tape Collection (Bruce Robinson Collection including GLCC Lectureships)

Why you should care:

Most of these are printed materials which are of immense value in preserving our past. The purpose of the archives is to make it available for any who would wish to avail themselves of

these items. Students, scholars, preachers, descendants of notable early Restorationists – everyone is likely to find items of huge interest in this sizeable collection.

Where it is:

The archive has been housed in Meaford for a number of years, at no expense to the Society, thanks to the arrangements made by Ron Knight to allow us to use his facility. Having a location has enabled this collection to be preserved to this day, and has been maintained by Roy and Edythe Williams.

THE PROJECT

However, the time is drawing to a close when we must vacate the premises that have been so generously made available to us until now, and **so we must find a new home** for this valuable collection.

In pursuing various options, the one that has risen to the top is to utilize the top floor of McPhee Hall at Great Lakes Christian High School. McPhee Hall is one of the very old buildings on the GLCHS campus, and its top floor has been largely unused in recent years. It is therefore in need of considerable refurbishing before it can be used for this purpose, as historical documents need a very specific climate control in which to survive. We understand from quotes that we have received that it will take roughly **\$30,000.00** to refurbish this space and orchestrate the move of the archive from Meaford to Beamsville.

Once this project is complete, the archive will be much more accessible to the brotherhood, not only for the city in which it will reside, but also for the fact that it will be on the Great Lakes campus where arrangements can easily be made for a visit.

The Appeal

Obviously, this is a substantial amount of money for a small Society to raise. We are grateful that we have not had to raise funds in the past but have been able to be self-sustaining by the dues paid by our members, as well as gifts that some have been moved to donate. But now, we would ask you to prayerfully consider our appeal for a one-time gift to transform the archive into an accessible repository of items from our *past*, that can be of great value in the *present* as we prepare for the *future*.

Donations may be sent to our financial officer in the following ways:

1. A cheque may be mailed to:
Randy Morritt
24 Edmund St
St Catharines, ON L2R 2G2
2. Funds may be e-transferred via email
donations.ccchs1@gmail.com.
(Please be sure to let us know the password in a separate email.)
Please indicate that your gift is for the archive project so that it will be used for that purpose.
All gifts to CCCHS are eligible for **Canadian tax receipts** which will be issued before the end of February, 2020.

Please visit our web site - <http://ccchs.ca/index.htm>, for more detailed information, including a page on the archive collection. (<http://ccchs.ca/Archive.htm>).
....Murray Hibbard

Plans for the 2019 Annual Meeting

are underway. Here is a preview of what to expect. We will be sending out a

completed poster in the near future. Please mark your calendars now and plan to join us for this special event.

20th CCCHS Annual Meeting

August 17, 2019
Tintern Church of Christ
9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Speakers and Topics

Stanley Helton:
"Why the Disciples in Western
Canada did not Quite
Divide.....Fully"

Shelley Jacobs:
"Canada's Best Kept secret:
Silent Cooperation Between
Christian churches and
churches of Christ in Western
Canada"

**Presentation by some of
Huntsman descendants:**
"Exploring the Huntsman Roots
with the Tallmans and Perrys"

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Please include your address, phone number and email address for our records. Since newsletters are distributed twice a year by email and post, please make sure we have your correct information on record for this purpose.

Donations

Donations are invited. Our biggest need at the moment are funds for the relocation of our archive from Meaford to Beamsville, including the refurbishing of the area in which it will be housed. Previous and future donated funds are used to make possible such projects as: the scanning of The Christian Quarterly (1916-1917); The Christian Monthly Review (1919-1933), in 2007; the microfilming of The Christian Gleaner (1833, 1836, 1838); and The Gospel Vindicator (1837-1838), in 2009.

Both donations and membership fees are tax- exempt.

Memberships dues are \$25 per year, payable to: