

1975

MACNAB STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
HAMILTON, ONTARIO

100 PLUS 21

BEGINNINGS

Mason

Charles Lyle

I am Robert Angus McKay, a Scottish mason of the old school. The year is 1854 and as a master mason, my pay is \$1.00 a day. Knox Church is overcrowded and Presbytery has agreed that a new Presbyterian congregation be built on the corner of Hunter and MacNab Streets. This "wee kirk", built in the Scottish Gothic Revival style, with its thick stone walls, will stand for a thousand years.

The Honourable Isaac Buchanan

Andrew Johnston

It is my honour to lay the cornerstone for this sanctuary. Much of the money to pay for this new building, which will seat a thousand people on the main floor and in the gallery, comes from the American church, the first Presbyterian congregation in Hamilton. Thus is MacNab the lineal descendent of the oldest church in the city. You know that I am a trustee of this congregation, a member of the Legislature, and a founding member of the Hamilton Board of Trade. The Church in Canada is dear to my heart. Every Canadian should be able to attend a Presbyterian church and I therefore offer \$250.00 to every congregation which builds bearing the name of Knox. (Drafts were forwarded to Knox Church in Dundas, St. Catharines, Guelph, and Galt in due course.)

A CENTURY AGO

1870, The Manse

Marion Gow

I love this manse. Yes, it's the first Presbyterian manse in the city. Built of stone from the mountain just behind us, it has a beautiful rose garden and so comfy on a cold day, but what a job keeping all the fires burning. Fourteen rooms, but of course we have the servants' wing. It's not easy keeping good help nowadays.

1873, The Tower Bell

Roy Dafoe

Listen to the tower bell a-ringing! This 3,000 pounds of brass was given by the brother of the first Chairman of the Board of Management, which was only organized twelve months earlier. And what a commotion! A certain Donald McLellan, a member of the congregation, insisted that the Board of Management was unbiblical and had no authority in scriptures. Later, this Donald McLellan had to be removed bodily from morning worship because of his audible comments criticizing the minister.

1875, The Rev. Donald Fletcher

Jack Allen

As minister of MacNab in 1875, I saw the name of our church changed from Canada Presbyterian Church to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Once more there is only one Presbyterian denomination in Hamilton -- St. Paul's is no longer "Kirk", Central is no more "Secession" and MacNab is no longer "Free". We all belong to the same Presbyterian body, the largest denomination in Canada. John Cook is our first Moderator and the Presbyterian Record is our national magazine.

1877, Hymn Singing

Vera McNeil

Imagine! The thought of singing hymns in MacNab! For the first quarter century of our history, only psalms were sung and the only accompaniment was the precentor with his tuning fork. In 1877 a petition was received by Session suggesting that hymns be introduced to MacNab. But knowing of the strong opposition, the Session thought that a vote from the whole congregation should first be held.

1878, The Sunday School Hall

Rosemary MacDonald

The Sunday School Hall, or Lecture Hall, as it was known a century ago, was built of mountain stone. The ladies said that the space under the sanctuary was no longer fit for children. The Board listened and within a year the new hall was built to the west of the sanctuary. Forty-three children belonged to the Junior Mission Band.

TRIALS

1888, The Organ

Margaret Smyth

Imagine an organ in the kirk! For more than thirty years,

the only musical instrument in MacNab was the tuning fork. The first precentor was John Wilson who led the congregational psalm singing for twenty-two years. After much heated discussion and years of dissension, the Session finally agreed that an organ be installed in the sanctuary of MacNab. Some church members resigned, but the installation took place and was of such quality that a number of the pipes of 1888 are incorporated into our present Casavant organ. Without electricity, one marvels how Miss Alice Stuart, who served as organist for many years, could teach school weekdays after her physical expenditures with the bellows each Sunday.

1895, The Railway

F. Glover

The T.H. & B. Railway pushed boldly into Hamilton with a brazen disregard for what was beautiful or holy, covering our tower with sooty grime. MacNab had its share of fine lawyers and the railway was made to pay for its folly. Fifty years later, when the tunnel was built, the same firm of Chisholm and McQuesten extracted an even greater sum of money for MacNab, which helped to cover the renovation of the church.

1901, The Vestry

Forbesia Harvey

The generosity of the family of the Hon. Isaac Buchanan resulted in a beautiful vestry being built, as well as Choir Room, Board Room, etc. Part of this was later removed when MacNab "went modern" and replaced the central preaching desk with a chancel, lecturn and pulpit.

1925, Disruption

Gladys Richards

Great names in the Union Debates included fiery Banks Nelson of Knox Church, and Charlie Cowan of St. Andrew's. In the MacNab Session Minutes, the question is virtually ignored. Seventy persons separated from MacNab but the vast majority continued their lifelong love affair with their dear Dr. Beverley Ketchen, minister of MacNab for over forty years.

REBUILDING

Renovations

Jean Currie

Great rejoicing! A legacy from the Campbell estate in 1930 enabled the church to undertake extensive renovations under the skilled direction of Stewart McPhie, architect and member of MacNab. The three-sided gallery was removed, the floor lowered and interior pillars added, as well as cedar ceiling, stained glass and chancel. We see the results around us - one of the most beautiful churches in Canada, with stained glass recognized by the National Gallery as the "finest" collection of Scottish glass in Canada.

Downs and Ups

Ron Sutherland

Hamilton was hard hit by the Great Depression, and the manse served countless "knights of the road" travelling the T.H. & B. The beautiful commemorative plaque remembers those of the congregation who served in the two World Wars, while the colours of the 173rd grace our sanctuary. The past quarter century has seen the neighbourhood of MacNab transformed from single family dwellings to multi-occupancy, stainless steel office buildings and apartment high-rises. Twelve hundred senior citizen apartments alone have been built by the government in our neighbourhood. Most of our membership walk to church and currently a \$50,000 recreation centre is being constructed in the space unused for over a century. Church Hall and House are daily used by various church and community groups as MacNab ministers to Christ in this community.

People

T.G. Black

Names like Turner, McQuesten, Chisholm, Buttrum, McPhie have spanned virtually the entire 121 years of MacNab. Families have come to worship and to be nurtured, and have gone forth to serve. Men and women have entered into full-time Christian service in our denomination, beginning with the son of our first minister and recalling such current names as George Young of Sarnia, Stan Gentle of Southampton, Bill Milne of Ormstown, Gordon Firth of Calgary, Donald Campbell of Sherbrooke and now Charles Lyle studying for the ministry at Knox College. In our several callings, we all face this 121st year with expectancy. By the Holy Spirit we are called to serve Him with heart and soul and mind and body, and our neighbour as ourselves.

121st Anniversary
Sunday, May 4, 1975