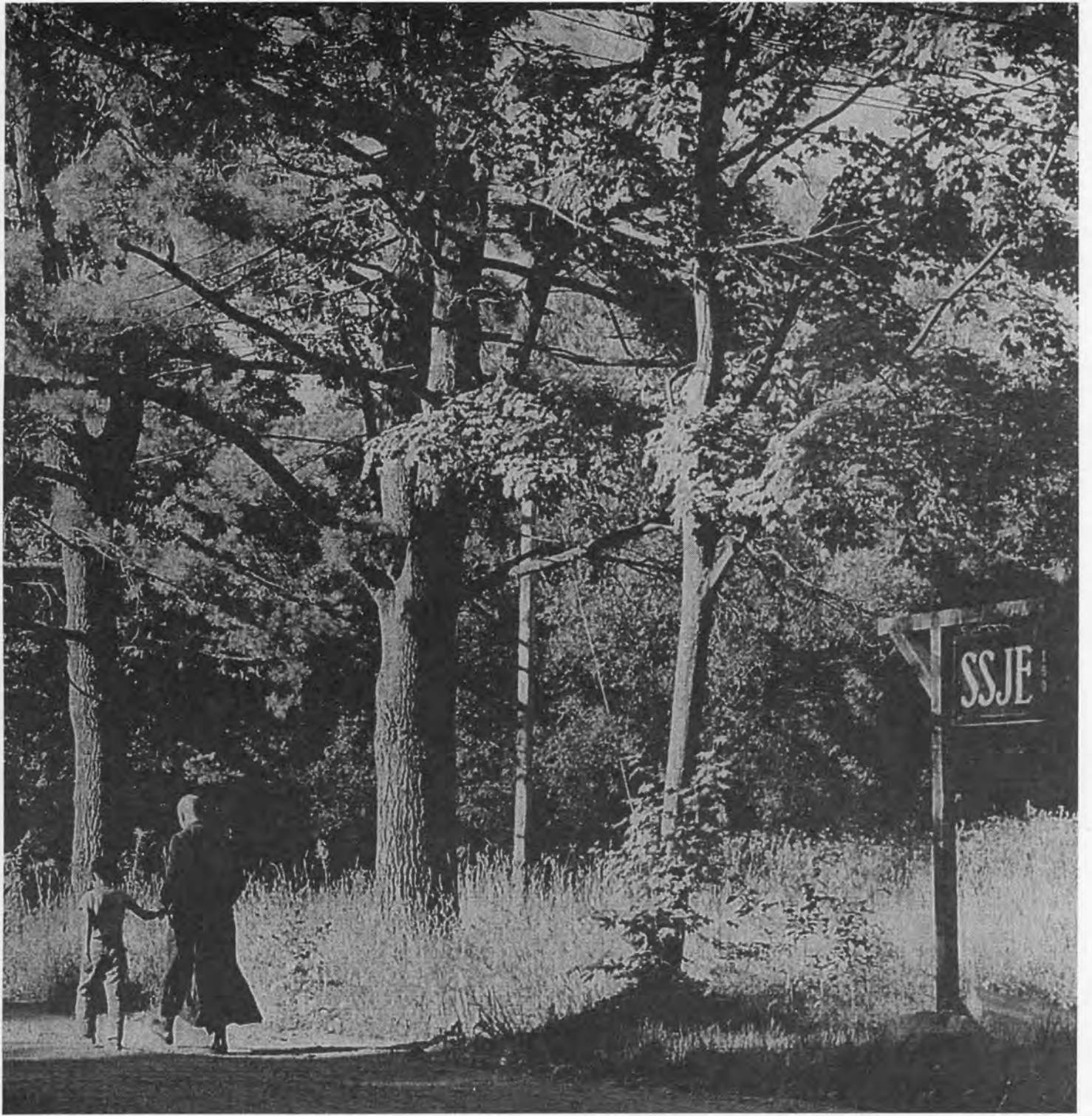




A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE
CHURCHES IN
MUSKOKA



BY GARY DENNISS



A Brief History of the Churches in Muskoka

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Gary Denniss

Cover photo: Utterson, Ontario, Presbyterian Church which once sat on the lot south of the current Utterson Post Office. My appreciation goes to Diane Chatillon for use of this picture.

You are holding a copy of the fourth edition of this book, of which there are 60 copies. Since the first printing on December 24, 1996, it has been very positively received. As people have kindly informed me of errors or additional information, changes have been made, for example the history of the MacTier United Church is completely redone. I would also note here the existence of a new Alliance congregation that has been meeting at Riverside Public School since March 2, 1997.

Each page of this book was hand-lettered with a black thinline marker, a task that took well over 300 hours - and used up 15 markers!

Our present era seems to be an age obsessed with itself. Our sense of history has never been weaker. I hope this book helps fill some of that void.

Edition 4, Book # 42.

Preface

In Matthew 18:20 the words of Jesus are recorded as saying

“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

The 1964 General Council of the United Church declared

“The origin of a congregation is not the time when a building was started or opened or the year when a minister was settled or called, but the very first meeting in the name of our Lord for prayer or church business.”

What these quotations are saying is that the church is really people, not buildings. But people who make up church congregations usually want a special place to worship God in their own way, according to their traditions. That is basically what this book is about. All across the District of Muskoka there are dozens of churches; in fact, as I write there are 112 buildings that can be specifically identified as churches (and you will see that I have added a few extra from bordering communities as well), and they represent 20 denominations. There are also congregations that meet in homes, schools, hotels, halls, and other churches, although they do not figure largely in the total picture and are not included in the above statistics.

I have endeavoured to be as accurate as possible but know from experience that errors do occur. This book is a basic reference volume and certainly is not the complete story of every church in Muskoka, but it is an attempt to provide an inventory of our spiritual legacy. Many

are those who have loaned or given me pictures and information. Even the smallest help has been appreciated. Once again I thank everyone for their time and interest.

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- Rev. Lynn Uzans
- Clara Watson, Steve Widdifield, Elva Wilson, Morg. White, Irene Wallbridge
- Karl Zande (with assistance from Andy Goetgheluck)

And many others who offered words of encouragement.

Dedication

- To God be the glory great things He has done.
- To my wife Grace and our children Deborah, Londa, and Steve who are patient, prayerful, and positive in their support of my local history adventures.



- To Barb Paterson, Jack Laycock, Flora Renaud, Wib. Campbell, and Mary Lou Matchett whose unexpected generosity came just when it was needed most.
- To those who read this volume, thank you for buying it. I trust it is worthy of your ownership and will be a useful addition to your local history collection.

Request

With the publication of this material I realize that the surface has barely been scratched on this topic. As always I welcome constructive suggestions and additional information and photos. I am willing to make arrangements for the borrowing and copying of such resources to keep on file for reference purposes or use in a second edition of this book. My name, address and telephone number are given here.

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1.

The Anglican Church

The Protestant Reformation of the early 1500's created many aspects of the Christian faith. One of the most important was the Anglican Reformation in England. Having no particular leader, it was dominated by the ruler who was the head of the national church, who, by the 1534 Act of Supremacy, became Henry VIII. The Church of England spread to Canada because of the global extent of British settlement. St. Paul's of Halifax, built in 1750, became Canada's first Anglican church building, but Anglican influence first touched our shores by way of the explorers such as Hudson and Frobisher in the 1600's.

Once established, the great missionary societies of England such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.), dispersed men and dispensed money to further the expansion of the Church of England into Canada. Christian education and literature was provided through the Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.), and indeed even the most rural of churches often had extensive libraries of hard-cover Christian books. This kind of support was maintained up to the early years of World War II. The name Anglican Church in Canada became official in 1955.

English Churches literally dotted Muskoka and still outnumber those of any other denomination. Many have closed but the majority remain and are often the recipients of a revived interest of spiritual heritage in our day. Some cases in point are Newholm, Aspdin, and Lancelot, among others. "Algoma 100," a history of the Diocese of Algoma published in 1973, informs us that "In 1860, the Rev. William Ross reported that he was holding services once monthly at Muscoca on the Severn River." Thirteen years later when the Diocese formed, frame churches were recorded for Bracebridge, Draper, Gravenhurst, and Mary Lake. The latter church, which is Port Sydney, is now Muskoka's oldest Anglican Church still in existence (1873).

With the coming of the Cowley Fathers to Bracebridge in 1928, the history of the Anglican Church took on a new dimension that carried with it a unique ministry that lasted until 1983. Their contribution to Muskoka and the Anglican Church here will be dealt with separately in the book later, but, as you will readily learn, the Society of St. John the Evangelist (S.S.J.E.) did not operate independently of the larger church body but was very much intertwined with it. So now we come to a section that recognizes some of the Anglican Churches of Muskoka that no longer exist.

Allensville - St. Michael's Church is closely associated with the Hares family, in fact in 1868 their home was one in the community that hosted Anglican services. In time a site was obtained and a frame church was erected beside the old Muskoka Road, roughly midway between Madill's Church and the Cairns' Presbyterian Church. The population shifted southward after a few years, so just before the Second World War, the Hutcheson Company moved the building further south and relocated it on a new foundation. The exterior was refurbished with grey insulbrick and many other improvements were made to make the building more usable, especially in the winter season. St. Michael's is one of the small Anglican churches that the S.S.J.E. took under its wing. Mr. Edward Hares was the church warden at the time of its closing in the mid 1970's.



ST. MICHAEL'S - second location



HARVEST HOME
ST. MICHAEL'S

3. Bardsville - There was at one time a log church at Bardsville on lot 8, concession 10 of Monck Township. It sat on the south side of the old Port Carling Road on the hill above the school that once existed in that vicinity. Although very little is known about it, a note in the Blanchard family records for November 8, 1888, shows that Mr. Harry Blanchard agreed to line the walls, nine feet high with tongue and grooved lumber; put in ten new seats, and build a plain porch in front of the church. All of this for thirty dollars - twelve to be paid in advance by Henry Austin, the People's Warden, and the Bishop of Algoma would pay the remainder on completion. This church had among its worshippers a goodly number of German Lutheran families that settled in the vicinity and chose to attend Anglican services rather than start their own. The old Bardsville Anglican Church was finally dismantled about 1900 and some of the material was used to make improvements to the newly moved St. George's Church at Falkenburg Station.

Cromptons Shortly after William Crompton came to Muskoka to "spy out the land" for the English Church, his little "chorister" son died in early 1874. Crompton's other sons hand-built a little log chapel on lot 12, concession 5 of Stisted Township in his memory. Used for many church functions, it eventually closed when the church at Aspdin became a reality.

Ferrishill - Located on lot A, concession 5 of Draper Township (along what we now call Reay Road), this was a little log backwoods church of the 1880's. It did not last long but was part of the Draper, Ryde, and Oakley Mission that was in "one of the roughest... most difficult pieces of country in Muskoka." It was here that Rev. Arthur H. Allman served for so many years, and enjoyed a very fruitful ministry.

Hoodstown - St. Jude's was built on Hewson Street in the village of Hoodstown at the north end of Lake Vernon, sometime about 1880. It went the way of most buildings in Hoodstown when the great metropolis failed to thrive. Its baptismal font lives on in St. Mary's Church in Novar.

Lynx Lake - Built in 1877-78 on land formerly owned by 4. David Ferguson, Trinity Church was Brunel Township's first church building. The log chapel sat on lot 11, concession 6 and was used for about a dozen years. It was the forerunner of Holy Trinity at Newholm.

Lewisham - At one time the southeastern section of Ryde Township was quite well settled. The Anglicans had a church here known as Christ Church, however, by 1897 it closed. In 1934 the S.S.#3 Ryde School



S.S.J.E. revived the Anglican presence in this remote community and began to hold services in the schoolhouse of S.S.#3 Ryde. This was the most southerly congregation the Cowley Fathers had, it being 26 miles from the Mission House in Bracebridge.

Northwood - Little is known about this pioneer church other than it sat beside the Alport Road on lot 11, concession 11 of Muskoka Township. The site is marked in the 1879 Muskoka Atlas on property owned by William Suttaby. During the 1920's the church was torn down. It was named St. John the Divine.



Courtesy of Mrs. R. Meeks

Norway Point - A small frame Anglican Church is now incorporated into a cottage along the Norway Point shoreline on the Lake of Bays. Known as St. Mary the Virgin, it was served mainly out of Baysville, then became one of the responsibilities of the S.S.J.E.

5. Purbrook - A strong Anglican congregation formed in this Draper Township hamlet in the early 1880's resulting in a frame church building by 1884. During the fall of that year much of



the interior was completed in readiness for the Bishop's visitation in early December. In those days it was possible to go easily by road from Uffington to Purbrook, the distance being six miles. At Easter in 1885 the record is noted to say "that some of the ladies from the Purbrook station had

walked five miles cutting their way through three feet of untracked snow in order that they might be present at the service... In the evening the combined choirs of Uffington and Purbrook ably rendered the service of sacred song entitled, 'The Man of Sorrows,' illustrating the passion and death of our Lord." Many pioneer families were associated with Christ Church over the years including the Kirbys, Clarks, and Colsons. This was another church served by the S.S.J.E. in later years.

Stoneleigh - St. John's Church was a little log church like so many other early churches in Muskoka. Quite a number of Anglican families lived along the road to Baysville and in January 1876 they met with the Bishop. He was desirous that a church be built during the spring season and arranged for fortnightly services to begin immediately with an appointed lay reader.



Courtesy of Peter Bruce

Stanleydale - The picture of the Anglican Church known as St. John's was taken some time prior to 1920. The men shown with the minister were riverdrivers who had stopped in for an impromptu service. The earlier services for this congregation were held in the Ashworth Orange Hall



(a beautifully restored building^{6.} now on site at the Pioneer Village in Huntsville) prior to the construction of the church in 1886. The roof on this building was so steep it was very difficult to shingle. This was one of the churches that the Rev. L. Sinclair had as he walked his circuit each weekend. More about him later.

Torrance - The building pictured here is the original Orange Hall built at the corner in the village in 1908. Later on the Orangemen built a new hall so the Anglican's bought the old one. St. Alban's was the first church in the village. In the early 1960's it amalgamated with the Bala congregation and that is why the church there is called Trinity - St. Alban's. This picture came from "The Early History of Torrance," with permission.



Ufford - About 1887 a church of hand-hewn logs was built by Jack Kay on lot 13, concession 4 of Watt Township. One of the original churchwardens was Anthony Knowles. By 1915 there were too few people to support the work so Bishop Thornloe permitted the sale of the structure for \$25.00. The land was sold also except for seven-one-hundredths of an acre which contained a cemetery of seventeen graves, among whom were the wife and daughter of the first churchwarden. It was Mr. Knowles who acted as lay-reader when no one was able to come to St. John's to take the service, in this, one of the three churches that once existed in Ufford.

7. Religious Communities- I have already alluded to the work of the S.S.J.E. in the District. Over the last 125 years more than ninety Religious Communities have been established within the worldwide communion of Anglican Churches. The S.S.J.E. was one of three such Religious Orders that found their way into Muskoka.

The Society of St. Margaret (S.S.M.) was founded as a Religious Order for women at East Grinstead, England, in 1855. An American Mother House was developed in 1871 at Boston and it was from that source that the S.S.M. was invited to Muskoka to supplement the work of the S.S.J.E. among its rural missions. Four Sisters arrived in Bracebridge during July 1933, and set up a temporary convent in a small brick house on the eastern edge of town, about a ten minute walk from the S.S.J.E. Mission House.



Pictured on the left is the new convent building that served as the permanent headquarters. Although much of what they did was medically related (delivering babies, post-operative care, wound dressing, etc.), they also shared in the Cowley Fathers' Sunshine Programme of providing food, clothing, and necessary household items. Their original Sunshine house burned on December 28, 1936, but was soon replaced with a larger building. Their record of depression work was very needful and deeply appreciated in the lives of many impoverished families during these financially difficult years, and all of it was done without any regard to religious affiliation. The Sisters of St. Margaret were responsible for the building of Holy Cross Church, a small frame structure that once sat on the north side of Taylor Road. It was built in the late 1930's by the people of the area with the help of Sister Jean Margaret, who, along with everybody else, did her share of nail pounding. Regretfully the S.S.M.

had to withdraw from Bracebridge in 1944, leaving their convent and supplies to the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine (S.S.J.D.) who then came to fill the gap. This



Religious Order was started in Toronto in 1889 and was the the first Canadian Religious Order in the Anglican Church. These Sisters were pioneers in the field of convalescent care in Ontario, having opened their Saint John's Convalescent Hospital in May, 1932, which

became well known for its therapeutic treatments. Coming from their Mother House in Willowdale, these Sisters carried on the visitation work of their former colleagues and assisted with the unique Sunday School by mail for children of the mission families. They operated two Sunshine Houses - one for relief purposes, and the other for education involving such things as confirmation and kindergarten classes, instructional groups for young mothers, and even a credit union! The smaller of those two facilities is shown below. Saint John's Convent with its lovely chapel



served as a guest house for Associates and Friends of the Order who came to Muskoka for rest and spiritual refreshment. Indeed, at one time serious consid-

eration was given to making the Bracebridge branch the Mother House of the S.S.J.D. Those plans did not work out. In 1960 they transferred back to Willowdale. The convent

9. was sold to Mrs. Ethel Flynn who had it remodelled into an apartment home known as 'Mollmar Heights.' The nearby Sunshine House was converted to two apartments in the same year - 1961. Actually the SSJD came to Muskoka in 1926 and still maintains its presence here. That story is told here with grateful help from Sister Thelma-Anne.

"Bally Croy"



"Bally Croy" (meaning beautiful view) is the name of the summer cottage of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, located at Port Sydney. Situated on land which formed part of a grant of Crown Land to Sydney Smith in 1873, it was purchased by the

Sisterhood in 1926 and has been used by the Sisterhood ever since. The original "Bally Croy" house is shown above and the first chapel is shown here on the right. A generous bequest enabled the Sisterhood to replace the first buildings with a new bungalow-style structure in 1965.



The new building is shown on the left in 1985 during a special celebration. Although "Bally Croy" has served primarily as a holiday house, in the 1930's the Sisters did pastoral visiting of farm families in the Port Sydney neighbourhood.

The Society of St. John the Evangelist (S.S.J.E.) was founded 10. by Rev. Richard Meux Benson at Cowley, Oxford, England (hence the name Cowley Fathers) in 1865. In 1870 a branch house was begun in Boston and it was from there that the S.S.J.E came to the Diocese of Algoma upon invitation from Bishop Rocksborough Smith. The American Superior dispatched three members of the Society to live and work at Emsdale in September, 1927. Due to inadequate accomodation there, Father Roland F. Palmer, Father Alfred L. Rose, and Brother Edward relocated to Bracebridge to take up residence on a property given by Rev. Robert Sadler. At first they literally camped out in an unfinished retreat house which, along with the Sadler home, became the original structures of the S.S.J.E. complex on the north side of Maple Street. These latter events took place in 1928.

Development continued over the next few years leading to a pleasant block of grey stone-faced buildings, flanked to the south by the Collegiate Church, dedicated in 1933. High on the outside wall hung a vast and magnificent "Christus Rex" which gazed down on the road below, that same figure now occupying a less imposing position in the little cemetery of wooden crosses beside the former chapel. Inside, a gift of the workmen who built the church, was a three foot wide, nine foot long monolith of local granite that served as the altar. A carpentry shop (where church furniture was made), a printing press (for books and papers such as "The Little Paper," "God's Rock Garden," "Sunshine Paper"), a guest house, and six other buildings were set in the middle of large wooded grounds that sloped away to the Muskoka River which bounded the property to the west. Here the mission bell was rung seven times throughout each day, signifying various changes in the regimen of the men who dedicated their whole lives to God's service and prayer.

Although they carried on many benevolent works at "the house on the hill" they are perhaps best remembered for their interaction with the people of Muskoka where they



The S.S.J.E. Church and Mission House, Bracebridge.



A group of S.S.J.E. Brothers with some of the Fathers - the latter wearing clerical collars and identified left to right as Fathers Frith, Hawkes, Hemming, Palmer (in white), McCausland, Thornton and Garrard.

served the many little Anglican Churches in communities from Clear Lake to Ilfracombe, and Beatrice to Lewisham. The mention of names such as Fathers Palmer (Superior from 1927-47 and 1963-65), Rose (an Oxford M.A. in music), Hawkes, Loosemore (author and ardent Orangeman), Frith (shown here



at work in the Cowley-Bracebridge Press print shop), Turney, Thornton, Lockyer (the gardener), Morley (who drowned in Lake of Bays), Boyd, Garrard, McCausland (an academic) and others evoke many fond memories in the minds of those who knew them. Aspdin, Lancelot, Vankoughnet, Purbrook, Newholm, Baysville, and Falkenburg (shown below)

are just a few of the places the Cowley Fathers served in established Anglican churches. They also conducted mission stations of their own, often using one-roomed schoolhouses as meeting places. Examples for this would be Stoneleigh, Ufford, Beatrice Town Line and Yearley. Then there were their own S.S.J.E. churches which they either built or bought:



Bracebridge	Collegiate Church	1933	stone
Clear Lake	St. John the Baptist	1933	frame
Matthiasville	Holy Family	1933	frame
Parkersville	Love of Jesus	1933	frame (former United)
Rocksborough	St. Peter's	1933	log
Taylor Line	Holy Cross	1938-39	frame (in conjunction with the Sisters of St. Margaret.)

13.

In 1938 it was reported by Bishop Smith that the S.S.J.E. were holding services in 19 churches and 14 mission stations as well as the Collegiate Church. It was at this time that they built a little log chapel in Ryde Township at Allen's Corners.



Shown at the left are members of the Taverner and Ruttan families at a 1938 confirmation service with Bishop Smith seated in front and Father Loosemore standing at back right.

(Photo: Ernie Merkley)

In 1947 a second log church was built closer to Barkway (this story is told later) which was abandoned in 1963 when they bought the former Barkway Free Methodist.

Shown here on the right is the Clear Lake SSJE church as it appeared in the spring of 1970. It was demolished due to highway construction. To the left is the Matthiasville S.S.J.E. Church which still exists beside the South Branch of the Muskoka River, but not as a church.



Matthiasville



Clear Lake

With six surviving members and heavy financial considerations, Father Frere Kennedy (the last Superior) announced in January 1982 that the work was closing in Muskoka.

The Easter service of 1983 ended 55 years of mission work¹⁴ that was unique in its scope and dedication. The property was deconsecrated on January 8, 1988 by Rt. Rev. Leslie Peterson, the Bishop of Algoma. The site, with the exception of the cemetery, was subdivided and sold - the chapel now a dwelling place. Sadler Dr. and Palmer Ct. are the only other visible reminders of this historical venture. The Canadian Order merged with its American counterpart. In August 1995 Fathers Brian Bostwick and Carl Winter travelled to Bracebridge to take part in the ceremony dedicating an Ontario Heritage Foundation plaque to commemorate "The Cowley Fathers at Bracebridge." I am indebted to Mr. Al. Newell who provided me with the photograph he took on that occasion.



Fr. Carl Winter

Fr. Brian Bostwick

The following pages contain brief historical accounts of the Anglican Churches still in full or limited use.

St. Mary's of Aspdin



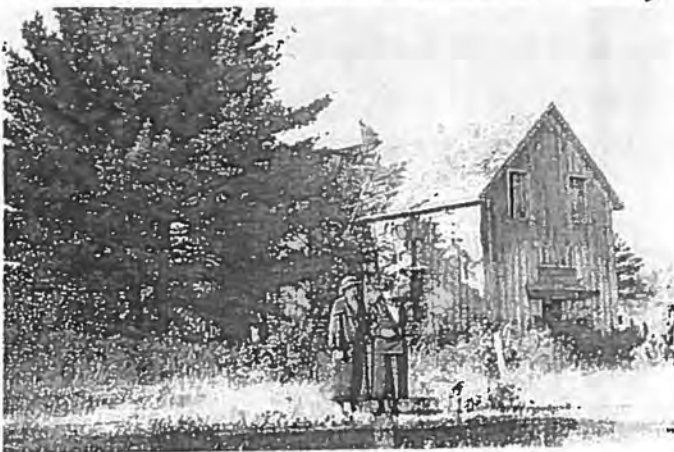
St. Mary's has been the recipient of a successful community effort to restore its historical value.

The cornerstone of the first stone church in Muskoka was laid on September 30, 1885 by Rev. William Crompton, "In the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Each child of the Sunday School brought a stone from his own home and put it himself into the wall. Nearly a year later on August 15, 1886, St. Mary's Church was opened,

the place being filled to capacity. This enduring structure is considered to be the most outstanding of the twenty-two churches that Rev. Crompton built. One of the pioneer settlers of Aspdin, William Crompton had been a licensed lay reader in his native England. When his little boy died early in 1874, his other sons built a little log church with their own hands, in his memory, to be a private chapel. In the meantime Mr. Crompton began to hold services at a house and store in Aspdin. In 1878 the congregation decided to build a log church, naming it St. Mary's, in memory of a much-loved daughter of one of the church families. It was at the latter end of 1884 when an unknown lady in England offered to provide funds to the extent of £600 sterling, on condition that "a stone church should be erected of the plain and substantial kind." And now, in 1996, an appeal has gone out to preserve this historic church from the ravages of time. There has been a positive response to save this part of Muskoka's heritage.



The historic English Church at Aspden, built in 1886 by Rev. William Crompton. He also had erected a building called Clifton Hall. It was built on church property and was under the church's control. No religious, political or partisan meetings were allowed in Clifton Hall as it was meant solely for the moral and intellectual improvement of those who chose to take advantage of the design. There were four basic rules of this hall (shown below) and they were:



1. No smoking.
2. No spitting.
3. No bad language.
4. No intoxicating drinks.

Mr. Crompton personally saw to it that a library of 700 volumes was part of this hall.

Trinity - St. Alban's of Bala

During the summer of 1920 this frame edifice was built, being located on the main road within two minutes walk of the C.P.R. summer depot and the steamboat wharf. It had commanding views of the falls on the front side and



of the lake and harbor to the back. Built upon solid rock, the wooden structure's sides and roof were shingled with British Columbia cedar. "The design is Tudor Gothic, carefully modified in detail for the sake of simplicity and to harmonize with its picturesque environment... The plan of the church is cruciform... An especial feature is the furniture..." so says the Algoma Missionary News account of January, 1921, which goes on to tell about the extensive use of cedar throughout much of the interior, which indeed is beautiful. Anglican services in Bala were first held in the Swastika Hotel, later called the Bala Bay Hotel. The first ordained minister, Christopher Lord, came one year later in 1919 and remained until 1931. The property and funds to erect Trinity Church were donated by Mr. George Edwards in 1919. Mr. Richard Hamill was the builder hired to do the work. The building was dedicated free of debt, due in no small part to the generosity of summer visitors in conjunction with the permanent residents of the town.

Mrs. Isabel Edwards provided me with material and a tour, the latter including the chapel of the Welsh saints, a special room which was mainly the work of Rev. Jack Watson who wished to commemorate the connection with Bala in Wales. Mr. Bob Petry kindly loaned me the above photograph.

The Church of the Holy Manger at Barkway 18.

The name of the small church at Barkway is unique, and so is the altar because it is in the shape of a manger. This church actually had its beginning in a hewn pine log home that had been built by the Abernathy family about 1880. Later, as the family grew and a larger house was provided, the old log building was converted to a hay barn, then a sheepfold. Years later another family purchased it and moved it to a new site but eventually it fell into disuse. As it happened the S.S.J.E. was holding services in the Allen's Corners schoolhouse but they wanted to get a hold of some old logs to construct a log chapel. They obtained the derelict sheepfold and reassembled it on a new foundation by December of 1947. Along with the unusual altar an old ox-yoke on one of the inside walls bore the inscription "Take my yoke upon you." This building, located about a mile north of Barkway, was used until 1963 when the S.S.J.E. purchased the former Free Methodist Church at Barkway (built about 1890). It has continued to be the home of The Church of the Holy Manger.



St. Ambrose of Baysville

The first St. Ambrose Church (pictured here on the left) was built in 1898 with the help of a grant from the S.P.C.K. The site had been deeded to Bishop Fauquier in 1880 by W. H. Brown, the founder of Baysville.

The first full-time priest was the Rev. A.W. Hazlehurst who was appointed in 1895 and stayed until 1927. In 1901 the growing congregation built a new frame church (the building on the right in the above picture) and then used the former church as a Sunday School and Parish Hall. Both of these buildings were destroyed by fire on September 2, 1919. Mrs. Hazelhurst died from the shock of the fire which burned their life's work in effect. There is a memorial window in the new church which is dedicated to her memory. That new church was consecrated on May 17, 1922 and still serves the village. In the interim period, the old public school was purchased for \$100, served as a church for three years and has continued in service ever since as the Parish Hall. In the above picture, Rev. Hazlehurst and his



courtesy of Bill Kelly

daughter Daisy stand in front of the 1901 version of St. Ambrose Church. As a reward for his long and devoted service to the church, the Bishop of Algoma appointed the Reverend Mr. Hazlehurst an Honorary Canon.



From 1941 until 1955 St. Ambrose Church was under the pastoral care of the S.S.J.E. In 1955 the Diocese of Algoma re-organized the churches in the area, creating the Lake of Bays Mission, with the incumbent living in Dorset. The first priest in charge under the new arrangement was Rev. R.H. Nixon. His work included the pastoral care of St. Mary's Church at Norway Point, a mission church of St. Ambrose started shortly after Rev. Richard Warder came following Canon Hazlehurst. St. Mary's is no longer functioning as a church. St. Ambrose is said to be the only Anglican Church in Canada with that name. It honors the Bishop of Milan, Italy, who is best remembered for bringing music into the church.

Christ Church of Bear Cave

Located on lot 27 of concession 12 in Cardwell Township this log church has stood as a house of worship to God for well over a century. In writing of its genesis, Mrs. Ella Godfrey says



“James Edward Foreman gave a piece of his land for a church... it was built as a non-denom-

inational church - later taken over by the Anglicans.” The sign on the front of the building reads: 1880 - Christ Church - Anglican - North Cardwell.

My former student, Ted Currie, described the setting of the building this way in an article he wrote in 1986 - “The square timbered church building (is) built upon a huge rock outcropping of the Canadian Shield...” This is very much in evidence as one views this site, but Ted went on to record this sad commentary about the insensitivity of humans - “(The church) has been stripped by vandals over the years, and when services are held there now, members must bring their own Bibles, candles, seats and heat. If they want music to accompany the service they must sing unaccompanied. Some person stole the church organ, the pews, the lighting system, and even the prayer books were pinched.” Although regular services are no longer held at Christ Church, this church once served those who farmed or logged for a living in this isolated corner of Muskoka District. It is one of four log church buildings remaining in Muskoka.

St. Mary's of Beatrice

22.

The Anglican missionary that organized new churches at Falkenburg and Ufford also founded an early work at Beatrice as well. A church was erected here in the 1870's. Although the Methodists and Presbyterians had churches here too, it has been St. Mary's that has endured. The present lovely brick veneer church located not far south of Austin's Store and Garage, was opened in 1914 and was consecrated in 1917. The building, churchyard, and cemetery are well cared for and are a credit to this small but tenacious congregation. An example of this took place in September 1996 when residents of the community got together to reshingle the church roof - a job that was accomplished by a workbee organized by Ellen Gray. Mrs. Austin told me that while they are few in number, all bills are paid as a result of the generosity of local as well as summer residents. A visit inside the church enables one to appreciate the three-light east window depicting Jesus, John, and Peter, a memorial to the pioneer Hamilton family.



St. John's of Beaumaris

St. John's is beautifully situated on a gently sloping half-acre lot just a short walk away from Lake Muskoka. The inviting flagstone path leads worshippers to the open door of the quaint frame church that was built about 1890-91. It wasn't until 1916 that the property deed was finalized, signed by the two surviving warden/trustees, John Willmott and John Hutton. Other supporting families at this time were the Blanchards, Prowses, Redmonds, and Rileys. For most of its history, St. John's has been a summer church welcoming vacationers and local residents alike to worship God on lovely Tondern Island in Lake Muskoka. And yet it ministers in other ways as well. Two unique record boards in the foyer give evidence of 206 baptisms and 50 weddings that have taken place from 1907 until 1996 in the holy solemnity of this church. One of the earlier incumbents to administer these rites was the Rev. W. A. J. Burt, a dietary conscious Anglican minister who believed it was unbiblical to eat bacon, etc., as he felt Christians were bound by Jewish food laws. It was Rev. Burt who, on July 21, 1910, baptised the nine month old daughter of George and Mabel Freemantle. That girl, Myra Eleanor, grew into a well educated young woman who, in time, gave sixty years of service as organist at both St. John's of Beaumaris and St. Mark's of Milford Bay as well as maintaining a teaching career at St. Mildred's - Lightbourn Anglican Private School, first in Toronto, then Oakville. Not only did both churches share

organists, but ministers as well, including those noted below: 24.

J. Selwyn Rhodes 1931-42

John B. Lindsell 1943-46

W.A. Hankinson 1946-72

William Graham 1975-89

Ray Porth 1989- the present minister, who like

all of the above lives at the rectory located in Milford Bay.

The Pittsburgh/Muskoka Foundation has been very generous in its support of St. John's, Beaumaris, from 1981 to the present time.

Pictured below is a young Myra E. Freemantle, the photo coming from St. Mark's Church at Milford Bay through the courtesy of Wib. Campbell. Norma Stewart, a friend of mine from Oakville, writes- "... Myra Freemantle ... taught Latin at St. Mildred's - Lightbourn School in Oakville for a short period before her retirement ... she taught Latin at St. Mildred's College in Toronto, conducted the choir, and served as principal at one point." The two schools amalgamated sometime later and continued to operate out of Oakville.



courtesy of St. Mark's Anglican Church and Mr. Wilbert Campbell.

St. Thomas' of Bracebridge

As I am preparing this material in July, 1996, St. Thomas' Church is marking its centennial, but like Robert J. Boyer states in *The Muskoka Sun* of July 4, 1996, many "church congregations in Muskoka are older than the buildings they occupy..." This is certainly the case at St. Thomas' whose parish roots go back at least as far as 1866. The present, well-maintained church on the main street in Bracebridge was originally built in 1896, had the bell tower added in 1904, and was expanded in 1993 when the new Browning (parish) Hall was completed.



However, regular Anglican services really started 130 years ago when the Rev. Mr. Wray was the first missionary. The original log church was located on the east side of the Muskoka Road in Macaulay Township just north of the fledgling village - now the site of St. Thomas' Cemetery. Not being very convenient for village people, the congregation began to meet in the upstairs room of the Orange Hall. This building was located at the foot of

Manitoba Street and was used by the church from 1870. In May of that year the first minister, Rev. Thomas Ball, came to serve what was still known as St. James' Church. Through his efforts a new church was opened on October 6, 1872. That building, shown here on the right, sat on the place that was later occupied by the former Browning Memorial Hall. Mr. Boyer points out that "when the new church building opened ... the parish changed its name ... to St. Thomas' to honor their



first rector and in appreciation for his hard labors in raising the building fund and aiding in arrangements." It was the Rev. James Boydell who was rector when the current St. Thomas' was built. He was a man of extraordinary energy. He owned the first bicycle in Bracebridge and used it to go about his duties in the area. On a few occasions he even ventured to

Toronto! In his time here, from 1885 to 1898, the white frame church was used as a church meeting place. One of the stained glass windows in the current building is a memorial to the work of the S.S.J.E here in the Muskoka District.



St. George's of Cooper's Falls

The little hamlet of Cooper's Falls gained its post office in 1878, but four years before that a group of Anglicans began to meet in the log schoolhouse of S.S. #4 Rama Township. This arrangement lasted for ten years until the frame church was built on lot 10, concession A of Morrison Township in Muskoka, roughly a mile and a quarter west of the hamlet.



The location of St. George's is unique in that it is the most southerly church in the District, edging out its neighbouring Free Methodist Church by a few feet.

Mr. Frank Cooper, whose family has been involved with the church for many years, noted the fact that this is Muskoka's only Anglican Church in the Diocese of Toronto, all others (since 1873) are in the Diocese of Algoma.



The original Anglican Church in Dorset was a 20 by 40 foot structure built of rough boards and the inside was unfinished. Although there is no record of services there until April 16, 1895, they were held regularly after that until the church burned in 1907. There is no written record of when the new church was built but it was likely in 1909 or 1910. The original wainscoting on the walls with scrolled tin squares continuing up to the peak of the cathedral-like ceiling forms part of the interior decor to the present day, in this, Muskoka's most easterly church building.

In 1955 when the Anglican Lake of Bays Mission was formed, St. Mary's got its first resident minister. Rev. Roy Nixon, the first occupant of the rectory recalls "a three-roomed log house with a path in place of a bath, plus a pump and well that I thought didn't function. I soon learned how to prime a pump!" The Rev. Tom James arrived in Dorset and found "a heavy brass ball... with a screw top, obviously designed to contain something." He later learned he had encountered a "pomme"-it was designed to be filled with hot water so the priest could warm his hands... on winter Sundays.

St. George's of Falkenburg

This church was built on a one-acre church property that was provided for in the original survey plan of Falkenburg (known as "The Junction" because the Muskoka Road and the Parry Sound Road met here) in 1874. Early in 1875, the Bishop of Algoma approached Matthias Moore regarding the plans to build a church. Work began in September and by October it was said that "the English Church, roofed and sided and floored is quite a handsome church." On February 6, 1876 the consecration service was held. After the



St. George's at its original site where the Moore Cemetery is located. The church sat here from 1875-1885. This picture came from the Moore family album via Mr. Bob Petry.

railway came through this part of Macaulay Township, settlement patterns began to change as people tended to build homes in the area of the train station.

Since most of the congregation had moved, so did the church! In early November, 1886, the church was dismantled at its original site (lot 3, concession 10) and reassembled at the present location (lot 2, concession 9) where it is still functioning. To the right is a picture of Matthias Moore (1824-1893) the Falkenburg pioneer church warden. The remains of he and his wife Susan (1825-1910) are interred in the little graveyard that developed near the first church.



This church began as part of the Franklin Mission when Mr. Harold King was sent out from Toronto to hold services in the pioneer log schoolhouse near Boyce Cunnington's mill. King boarded with the Hungerford family at Lumina. He soon realized the potential for a church and received support from people such as Mr. Tom Salmon, an English public school boy and a graduate of Oxford University. As a young man he had discovered the lovely Lake of Bays, had chosen a spot and settled. Indeed, it was part of this very property that was selected for the church site, the work proceeded and the church became a reality in 1902.



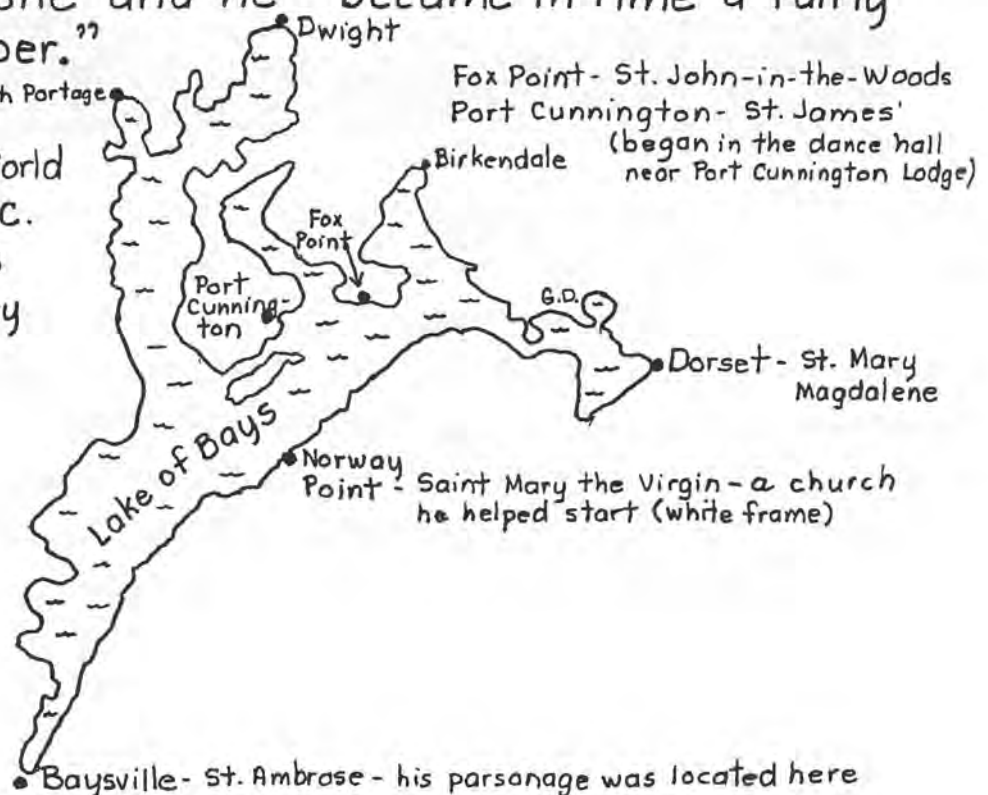
At first this church could be reached by water only and it was quite a sight to see boats coming from all directions and tying up at the church dock. The Rev. Richard C. Warder was assigned to the Lake of Bays circuit of churches as a young priest during the late 1920's. He writes of his experiences in "Northern Exposure" published in 1957. "As my first winter in Baysville sped along I heard frequently from Bishop Rocksborough Smith about the boat I would have to have to do my work when the lake ice thawed. The parish church of St. Mary, in the town of Stafford, in England, was performing a wonderful

31) missionary work by purchasing and partly maintaining a fleet of mission boats in different parts of the world, and the Bishop was in contact with them about a boat for the Baysville mission... I received word... that St. Mary's, Stafford, was prepared to provide me with a boat."

After a period of waiting, the young clergyman got word from Bracebridge that the boat had arrived. He went out with Kelly to the railway and saw his boat sitting on a flatcar. He goes on - "To say that I was astonished was to put it mildly. The Bishop's words were true; it was a large boat indeed... it was over nine foot in the beam. It had a huge engine with two carburetors, a big steering wheel - a veritable Noah's Ark. I went back to Baysville and hired two big teams of horses to fetch my boat, the St. Mary of Stafford, to the Baysville River. It took the teams the better part of a day to fetch the boat. It made quite an imposing procession."

Rev. Warder goes on to tell of his many adventures in his nautical career. He actually ended up abandoning the first two vessels he obtained, finally achieving success with the third one and he "became in time a fairly proficient skipper."

The Anglican World of Rev. Richard C. Warder and his boat, the St. Mary of Stafford.



Located east of Huntsville beside Highway 60, St. Paul's red brick church is one of the least hidden churches in Muskoka! Reference to its long history in the community of Grassmere is made in the bulletin used for Decoration Sunday, July 27, 1975. It, too, began as part of the Franklin Mission. Early services were conducted in the home of Mr. Francis Morgan, Sr. In 1874 his home was dedicated as a place of worship. In 1881 Mr. Green donated the land upon which the church is built. Funds from England were used to augment the local building coffers. On September 2, 1891 St. Paul's was dedicated. Lamps were obtained through the proceeds of a picnic held in a grove opposite the founder's home, and were in use for fifty-nine years. In 1963 the church was wired for light and heat. The exterior of this small building was bricked in 1919 through the generosity of the Ogle family. The front doors were donated by All Saints' afternoon Women's Auxiliary in 1953.

The churchyard containing the cemetery was the subject of a fundraising venture in 1975 in order to establish the government mandated perpetual care fund.



St. James' of Gravenhurst

Miss May Lindsell writing about the history of St. James' in "The Light of Other Days" reviews the early Anglican work in Gravenhurst as follows- "established ... in 1865. Early services were conducted in a settler's shanty by a visiting priest, Rev. Jones, of Orillia. An article ... on October 25, 1867, mentions an 'Episcopal Church, nearly completed.' ... This wooden frame building was located at the south end of town; the only remaining traces are the tombstones in the cemetery..." Realizing later on that the actual village would develop a little further north, plans were made to build a new church. Mr. Dougald Brown (of the beverage firm) donated the site and a new building went up by 1882, during the incumbency of Rev. Llwyd. Writing in "Algoma 1873-1973" Boyd Higginson's historical notes record - "The church burned in 1887 and was replaced by the present beautiful building, one of whose special features is its memorial windows." One of these windows is in memory of Archdeacon Lindsell who, after serving as rector from 1914 to 1917, went on to be Chaplain at the Muskoka Hospital for forty-three years.

Christ Church of Gregory

34.

In 1991 the Centenary Committee of Christ Church Gregory had an excellent record of their history prepared by Andrew W. Boyd. Upon request a copy of that booklet was sent to me by James A. Boyd, Andrew's father. The following quotes from that source are used below.



"The first parishioners of Christ Church Gregory... were people who used their own energy and labor to construct a focal point for their social and religious community. They did this without the benefit of a wealthy diocese and without the boon of clergy reserves that could be sold as sources of revenue. They were a small congregation, and the work of erecting a church took them ten long years. In May of 1881, amidst the blackflies and underbrush, work commenced... When the first service was held at the time of Thanksgiving on October 18, 1891, seating consisted of planks resting on nail kegs and blocks of wood... the completion of the interior of the church took seven years... and was entirely dependent upon the ability and will of its volunteers." The church, clergy cottage, and well kept cemetery are a credit to those who still care for this lovely site.

"The story begins in the autumn of 1871, when the Rev. Thomas Ball, missionary at Bracebridge, came to a home about 2½ miles north of... Huntsville, and held a service. Host for the evening was Mr. Charles Morley, who had gathered a congregation of seven people. From that gathering grew the parish of Huntsville." As a result of Rev. Ball's effort, Huntsville became an outpost of the Mary Lake Mission with headquarters at Port Sydney. In 1874 when Rev. Edwin Cooper was in charge of the mission, services were held every two or three weeks in Huntsville's original Orange Hall. The impetus to build came after Bishop Fauquier's visit in the winter of 1875-76. John Scarlett's store was in the final stages of completion so the service was held there. Women who brought babies to this event used the unstacked shelves to "store away" their infants. The Bishop's comment about this interesting happening upset the mothers so much that immediate plans were made to build a meeting hall (not a church). Land was donated by William Cann (the site of his old log shanty) and the building was erected under the watchful eye of the noted church builder Rev. William Crompton. Of course it became the Anglican place of worship but only until 1894 when it was destroyed in Huntsville's great conflagration. Meanwhile the inimitable Rev. Thomas Llwyd had come to the area as All Saints' first resident priest in 1883, and he proved to be a 'mover and a shaker.' During his twenty year stint, the burned out hall was replaced; All Saints' Cemetery was established; a rectory was purchased (which is still in use); the beautiful stone structure that is a noted landmark in the town was opened on Trinity Sunday, June 9, 1895. As if that list wasn't enough, before he died he persuaded his congregation to build a new Parish Hall. This was completed in 1908 and is now called Sutherland Hall to honor the service of Rev. George Sutherland who served this parish from 1954 to 1989. A first time event for this church occurred during the writing of this material when Rev. Lynn Uzans became

the first woman rector of the parish. Her tenure of duty followed that of Rev. Eric Paterson who designed the All Saints' logo during the 1995 commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the church building, shown on the left below.



The Rev. Lawrence Sinclair photo: M. Parker

One cannot pass over an incredible individual such as Rev. Lawrence Sinclair (1847-1941). Born in Scotland, he was fond of nature and spent much time bicycling over country roads in his native land and beyond. In 1882-84 he traversed Scotland, England, France, and Spain, racking up 8000 miles in the process. Responding to a call to God's work through Bishop Sullivan in 1888, he came to Canada, and became a minister, being ordained at Rosseau in 1890. This dedicated man served in many places and for several decades - he did supply work in northern Ontario for churches in the Manitowaning area when he was 89 years old! It was he who walked a one hundred mile circuit every weekend (leaving Friday and returning Monday) to hold church services in the northern Muskoka area. In 1923 he and his wife took up residence in Huntville, wrote and published poetry and assisted with services at All Saints' Church up until 6 months before he died in his 95th. year.

Christ Church of Ilfracombe

This is the third of six stone churches we will encounter in this book. Geographically it is the most northerly church in Muskoka - lot 25, concession 14 of Stisted Township. In the history of Christ

Church, Ilfracombe written by Allan Trussler, he records "In the spring of 1878, prayer meetings were conducted by Captain Harston in the farmhouse of Charles Smith on... Buck Lake... meanwhile the land on an adjacent hill was cleared and a log church was commenced early in... 1879. At the opening in July... the church was so filled that many had to stand... Such opportunities of hearing a clergyman came so seldom that people would travel miles to be present." Later a new site was procured and the cornerstone of the current lovely stone church was laid on July 28, 1886. Two years later, the famed walking preacher, Rev. Lawrence Sinclair, became the minister. He gave 25 years of service to this congregation, although they were not consecutive. Quoting again from the history which refers to Christ Church as a "jewel in the Muskoka woods," the Rev. Sinclair stated at the 1890 consecration service: "Nothing can be more encouraging than to see people continuing to meet in this church as regularly as in the past, and thus show their love to worship God in His house on earth, looking forward to that better home... eternal in the heavens." And, indeed, the "English bloods" supported this church. In 1902 when Ilfracombe had 92 inhabitants, 50 or more could be found in church!

St. George's of Lancelot

38.

It has been said that this hamlet has two beautiful things—its name, and the Anglican Church. Originally the community was called Durnford but when the pioneers wanted a post



office they discovered that name was in use, so they chose Lancelot instead. As far as the church is concerned it is not original either! The current structure was built about 1880 to replace a log building that

was erected under the ministry of Rev. William Crompton in the 1870's. The property (lot 15, concession 12 of Stephenson Township) was given to the Diocese of Algoma on July 20, 1875. Both churches have occupied the lovely corner site at the top of Benner's Hill across from Pioneer Lodge which was the location of Lancelot's post office when it opened on July 1, 1877. Until 1996 St. George's Church had sat unused for nine years, but Clare Martin and others have finally succeeded in reviving an interest in this historic church with its rough hewn pine chairs and other antique furnishings.



The interior of St. George's Church is relatively the same as it was in 1880 when the structure was built.



All Saints' of MacTier

All Saints' Anglican Church in the village of MacTier is a small, frame building situated at a main corner facing High Street (which is Muskoka Road 11). It was built in 1912 and seats about 72 persons. The adjoining Parish Hall was added in 1965 and is accessible from the main church structure. Due to the convenient location of the Hall, many organizations in the community use its facilities for a variety of useful purposes. The Anglican Church Women take responsibility for the care and maintenance of the Parish Hall.

Improvements such as panelling and a new furnace have kept the building up to date, including changing the position of the altar so the celebrant faces the congregation during the service.

The first rector was Rev. Clerk. Other early ministers were Rev. P. Steed, Rev. Daniel, Rev. Robinson, and Canon S. Craymer. More recent rectors are Rev. Peter Park, 1959-66; Rev. John Rose, 1966-67; Rev. John Watson, 1967-80; Rev. Wayne Putman, 1980-83; and Rev. Robert Kelsey, 1985-94. Dr. David Hardie is the current pastor, and also serves Bala. He is a medical doctor from Parry Sound who is studying to become an Anglican priest. (Thank you to Elizabeth Ineson for her help with the above information.)

As we saw earlier, St. Mark's and St. John's of Beaumaris have historical ties of common interest that extend to the present day. For instance, Mr. Wilbert Campbell has been a warden and the treasurer for both churches for twenty-five years and maintains an active interest in the newly self-supporting role these churches now have.

St. Mark's has existed at Milford Bay since the mid-1870's. We learn from the Algoma Missionary News of March 1, 1876, that Bishop Fauquier conducted a service at nearby Point Kaye that year and held discussions re the possibilities of obtaining the services of a clergyman. Although the Bishop could not fulfill their request at that time, he licensed a lay-reader to hold regular Sunday services. The account continues - "they are about to erect a church... it was decided to meet delegates from Port Carling, Point Kaye, and Bardsville, to consider what it would be possible for them to do in part payment of a clergyman's stipend." The Muskoka Atlas of 1879 indicates a church on lot 26, concession 9 of Monck Township, the picturesque site beside Lake Muskoka chosen for that original chapel. It appears from the rather sketchy written records that this edifice was not very adequate for the winter season as services were held from October to May in the schoolhouse across the road for several years before the first place of worship burned in 1917. Right away it was decided to build a new church on the same ground which was located at the junction of the Village Road and the "Butter and Egg" Road (or Centre Road). The construction work was accomplished by William Muddiman and James Blanchard who had the building ready for an opening service on December 2, 1917. The official dedication came the following year. Three stalwart pioneers of this era were John Hutton (in whose memory the church bell was later dedicated), Edward Prowse, and John Willmott, Englishmen all who settled in or near Milford Bay about 1872. Such gentlemen as these desired to encourage the spiritual develop-

41. ment of their friends and families and provide for them a rich religious heritage. And they would be pleased to know that what they started has survived to the present day. Shown immediately below on the left is Dr. Ray Porth, the current minister of the Parish of Muskoka Lakes (Milford Bay, Beaumaris, Port Carling, Mortimer's Point, and Gregory). On the right is the Right Rev. Ron Ferris, the current Bishop of the Diocese of Algoma.



courtesy of wilbert Campbell

Shown below is St. Mark's Anglican Church of Milford Bay as it appeared on May 7, 1996.





One of six stone churches in Muskoka, the history of this site hangs on the wall just inside the door. William Mortimer, a builder in the Township of Medora, left the property for St. James' Church to the Synod in 1910. According to the historical account in the October 1913 issue of the Algoma Missionary News, the Right Rev. George Thornloe, Bishop of Algoma, opened the church on August 10, 1913. The Bishop preached to a full church crowd on the sermon topic of "The Church as a House of Prayer."

The article goes on to say "The church is a most substantial structure of pleasing ecclesiastical design and is beautifully situated on the shore of Lake Muskoka. The walls are of solid masonry, the stone being found in the vicinity, and are surmounted by a handsome and heavily timbered roof. The construction of the building was done by Mr. Alf. Mortimer and his brothers." The furnishings in the building are of solid oak and were donated by Miss Elsie Doolittle. The church was opened free of debt.

Holy Trinity of Newholm

In my files I came across some historical notes written down for me in 1991 by Rae Marie Campbell. The following quote is pertinent for our purpose - "The first schooling in Brunel Township was indeed in Seely's home on Sundays in conjunction with Anglican Church services which were also held in their home between 1871 and 1878. The first teachers were Elizabeth MacInnes and Annabella Ferguson. Most of the families at that time were centred around Lynx Lake and west to Port Sydney. The log Anglican Church was built on David Ferguson's property (lot 11, concession 6) at Lynx Lake in 1877, opened in 1878 and schooling was continued on Sundays until S.S.#2 was built at Newholm. By then, a large number of families were moving to the Baysville Road area... David Ferguson was also involved in the building of the new Anglican Church..." which was built in 1887 on the southeast corner of lot 15, concession 5. Although well used for many decades, the time came when Holy Trinity stood as the last of the original buildings of Newholm, and it was in a state of decay and a target for vandals. John Riviere-Anderson, John and Barb Groves, and others recognized the value of this historical landmark and in 1994 began a successful campaign to preserve the site, which has culminated in the beautifully restored and useful church.

St. Mary's of Novar (Parry Sound District)

44.

It is from notes written by Rev. L. Sinclair that we find these facts recorded as of Monday, April 8, 1889- "... the Rev. Rural Dean Llwyd in behalf of the Bishop visited the district of Novar and... purchased the new site for St. Mary's from Mr. Mc Gillivry at the sum of Thirty Five Dollars to be paid in cash, and a receipt to be given for Forty Dollars, Five Dollars being reckoned as a donation ... towards the Church." A building committee was appointed shortly thereafter, and Rev. Sinclair later says (writing in 1890)- "On Easter Sunday the Rev. Rural Dean Chowne took charge of St. Mary's Church ... " Unfortunately that building was burned after a lightning strike on May 24, 1902. Undaunted, the Anglicans built a new frame church, the work being done by D. A. McLennan of Huntsville. The opening service was on December 17, 1902.



The first bell in Novar arrived from Troy, New York on October 19, 1905 by train and was duly installed in the belfry of St. Mary's Church. (This item was noted in The Church Chronicle of All Saints' Parish, Huntsville)

45.

St. James the Apostle of Port Carling



In 1993 my friend Joyce Archdekin Payne brought out a splendidly written history of this church. With her permission I quote: "Beginning about 1870 Anglican church services were occasionally held in various settlers' homes... conducted by a clergyman who travelled out from Bracebridge... and by lay-readers who lived in the vicinity.

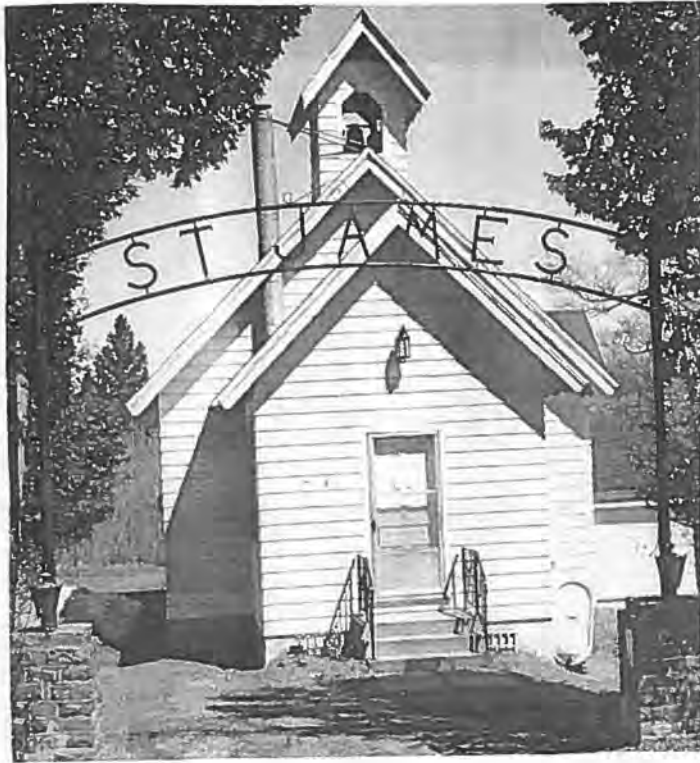
The construction of the original building (shown on the left) was begun in 1877 and finished

in 1885... Pine benches were given by the Governor-General of Canada at the time, Lord Dufferin, and several are still in use at the back of the present church." Unfortunately, on June 13, 1912, the Stratton House, a hotel next to the church, caught fire taking with it the English Church (the stained glass window was rescued and is in the present building). "The local Orange Lodge offered the Anglicans the use of their Hall for a year, rent free, until a new church could be built." The present St. James the Apostle was consecrated on Aug. 26, 1913.



St. James' of Port Cunnington

46.



Over the years the Anglicans of Port Cunnington and Fox Point worked and worshipped together in St. John's Church at Fox Point. But about 1930 the people of Port Cunnington began to aspire after a church of their own. This came about partly due to travelling distance and partly because of a desire to hold year round services.

Land was given by Mr. B.H. Cunnington for a site to build on which was beside the burying ground which he had already provided in 1912. Many people agreed to work on the project free of charge so the construction of St. James' went ahead in 1934-35. This was the second last Anglican Church (to date) to be built in Muskoka. The beautiful gateway leading into the church yard honors the memory of Mr. Cunnington who died on December 24, 1944 at the age of 90 years, 6 months.



Anglican Map of Muskoka

The approximate locations of most of Muskoka's known Anglican Churches are shown by a •. (Parry Sound)
[⊙ no longer exists or in use as an Anglican Church]



The S.S.J. E. Collegiate Church was in Bracebridge as was the Anglican Convent that served the S.S.M. and the S.S.J.D.

There are currently 33 Anglican Church buildings within Muskoka - with two in neighbouring Parry Sound District.

G.D. '96
Although just a handful keep the door open anymore due to vandalism and theft problems, these are some of Muskoka's most beautiful sites.



Enoch and Sarah Cox deeded land to the Diocese of Algoma for the use of the congregation of the Church of England... 'forever' on August 24, 1884. Almost to the day one year earlier the "ceremony to lay the foundation log of St. George's Church took place... Seventy-eight people attended this first service - local residents, cottagers and guests of the Prospect House." A great many volunteers worked together to raise the beautiful building that overlooks Lake Joseph. Although not consecrated until 1928, St. George's Church was used regularly for worship until 1975. In 1982 a fund raising campaign got underway to restore the building, resulting in the re-opening of the church on August 8th. Thus a tradition of annual services was begun - which are held on the Sunday of each Civic Holiday weekend. In 1983 a stained-glass window which portrays St. George (the patron saint of England and Greece) was dedicated in memory of Iden Orgill, a once faithful member who rowed to church regularly. The maintenance of this lovely church is made possible by many generous families.

Christ Church of Port Sydney



The oldest surviving Anglican Church building in Muskoka is Christ Church of Port Sydney. Nestled near the shore of Mary Lake, the property was donated by Sydney Smith, a man who gave fifty years of his life as church warden and Sunday School teacher. In 1933 a lych gate was erected in Smith's memory. The stone walkway

to the church building was put in by Jim Smith.

The desire on the part of the Anglican congregation to erect a place worthy of worship of Almighty God took root in the early 1870's. In July 1870, Rev. Thomas Ball of Bracebridge was accompanied by Mr. Smith to hold divine service in the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Ladell. In the following few years encouragement was received from the new diocese formed in 1873 and a missionary was appointed to Port Sydney. Rev. Edwin Cooper was also in charge of other Anglican outstations including Huntsville.

The building of the church was commenced in the summer of 1873 on the lovely promontory of land at the entrance to the Muskoka River (North Branch), commanding a view of the lake as well. By summer's end the building was sufficiently complete to enable services to be held. The Rev. E. Robert Clarke served as minister beginning in 1881, and it was he, due to his knowledge of wood-

carving, who hand-carved the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments on the chancel walls. 50.



An early view of Port Sydney with Christ Church on the left. Thank you to Victor Clarke for the photograph.



"The Mother Church of Northern Muskoka."

St. John the Baptist of Ravenscliffe

When Megan Williams wrote about the history of this yellow-bricked building in 1992, she said "... the story of St. John's is the story of... newly-arrived settlers determined to build their small community a church, and of the strength of those who followed." And so the

story of this church began in 1871 when the George Tipper and William Malkin families arrived in Muskoka from England and settled just north of Huntsville. The Bishop of Toronto appointed Mr. Tipper to be a lay reader and the earliest services began in John Tipper's log home. Feeling a need for a house of worship, a site was chosen in 1872, but the nearby community of Hoodstown was also looking to build a church. Since the latter village had a larger population it was given priority. In the meantime Mr. George



Tipper passed away in 1874 and was interred on the site chosen for the church. Mr. John Tipper was then appointed lay reader until the Rev. A. S. Sweet was appointed to the charge (which included

Hoodstown and Ilfracombe). He managed to obtain a good sum of money from England to build a board and batten type church. The people contributed liberally, giving all the lumber, shingles, and timber needed as well as 60 days work. The work was begun in 1883 during the summer and was first used for a service in June 1885.



Much time and care has gone into restoring the historic community church as this picture indicates.
courtesy of Harry Brown



About 75 worshippers can be seated in this little church with the beautiful cathedral ceiling.

Among the clergy who have served at Ravenscliffe Anglican Church is the Rev. Sinclair who came in 1892. During the next four decades he travelled by foot every weekend to his different missions - a total distance of about 100 miles. In the early 1930's members of the S.S.J.E. rode the train from Bracebridge to Huntsville and from there would bike out to St. John's.

Through the generosity and interest of Mr. Harry Brown the photographs and information for this section have been made available for use.



This little log church pictured here in winter, is located on the Fraserburg Road east of Bracebridge. It was once called Granny's Church and it was built by the S.S.J.E. An article in a 1945 edition of *The Canadian Churchman* tells the story.

"One snowy day fifteen years ago one of the Cowley Fathers was walking out to the Mission of Purbrook for the Sunday services. A kindly mail carrier picked him up about half way, and they drove into the yard of a tiny one-room shack. A dear old lady came to the door. The Father inquired who she was... and was told that she was Granny Bowers who had been burned out in Falkenburg..." So the S.S.J.E. began to minister to her and found out that she wished there was a church beside her shack, on the rock. As time went on, it was learned that Granny Bowers was very ill, as a matter of fact it looked like she was unconscious when the priest got to her. The article goes on - "Father Serson stood beside the bed and the old lady, though she could not speak, put one hand on top of the other, in the way people do to receive communion, to show that she was still conscious. (He) gave her communion which always meant so much to her, and a few minutes later she died." Even though it was the depression and money was scarce, people opened up and found a way to build that wished for church. An old log barn was found - other material was salvaged, and the little church became a reality.

The roofing material was the only item purchased. There were later additions such as a brick chimney, a hardwood floor, and a bell, but the original building cost little more than \$50. 54.

St. Peter's, Rocksborough is one of four churches in Muskoka District that shows openly its log construction.



Since the Bishop of Algoma at the time of the building of St. Peter's was The Right Reverend Rocksborough Remington Smith, the community was named in honor of him.

Church of the Redeemer at Rosseau

(Parry Sound District)

This church with the lancet headed windows was opened in September, 1873. In March of 1871, Dr. Newton presided over a vestry meeting that was to be the first step in the process - getting a piece of property on Oak St. from Mr. Pratt the proprietor of the Rosseau House hotel. The excellent, hand-printed history



1/2 CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER - ROSSEAU - 1873 1/2

HUGH T. REINAUD - 1990
1/2

of this church goes on to say "66 ...but the few determined souls were faced with the monumental task of amassing enough hard cash to commence serious activities toward the building of the church. In those days, the cash flow was almost less than a trickle... They had only their own ingenuity to survive. Cash was a rare possession. However, they had a series of community entertainments and the money... was put in to the building fund."

The cedar logs used in building the edifice came from Squire Ebenezer Sirett's farm in Humphrey Township. It was in 1883 that this same gentleman donated 2 acres of his farm for a church cemetery - an "island of peace, surrounded by spruce trees on one side and lush tumbling bush on the other."

Among many other faithful families at the Church of the Redeemer are the Ditchburns who became noted in this part of Ontario for their boat building skills.

"Northern Exposure" by Rev. Richard C. Warder gives us an accurate glimpse into the history of this isolated church. He says "Like many of the northern Ontario churches in Canada, Southwood church sprang from the determination of a handful of people from England who found themselves in a strange land, far from civilization and the church of their fathers; and who decided to do something about it. Two families were responsible for the church's beginnings... the Ernest Chapman and the Percy Tonge families..." In 1924 the first church of Our Lady was built, all by voluntary labor and it was agreed that the church was to be 'very High Church.'



Courtesy of M. Fry

Rev. Warder tells of his initial visit "It was humble enough in its outside appearance, walls of poplar logs chinked with moss from the swamp, a little bell turret of unstained boards, a real bell donated by the Canadian National Railways... There were two small windows. The bareness of the rough logs was relieved by the number of wild vines that had been planted by loving hands. The walls outside were only some five feet high and we had to step down into the church as it had been excavated several feet down. Inside this humble house of God all was beautiful and clean and well-kept, and all

57.

had been hand- or home-made with loving care... The Sanctus Bell was part of a car engine which had a rich deep sound... The whole building breathed an air of supernatural reverence and the words of the Bible came to my lips, 'Surely the Lord is in this place.'"



His description goes on to detail the use of white birch for the communion rails and baptismal font; the floor of tramped dry earth; the plank seats with no backs, etc. Although rustic, it did not take long for this building to show signs of decay as the logs were left unpeeled and water found its way in very easily as you can surmise. So Rev. Warder set

to work with these people who decided to rebuild the Church of Our Lady. "We found a stand of magnificent pines, just the kind of trees for a house of God. While the snow remained, we skidded and loaded the logs we required and drew them to the church site... Men, women and children worked on

the job... even our man of mystery, the mysterious Russian... suddenly appeared with an axe on his shoulder and set himself to peeling." All this and more went into the building of this unique Muskoka church in 1935 and 1936.



St. Paul's of Uffington

58.

An earlier log church had to be removed from the site so the new St. Paul's could be built in 1889. The consecration service occurred in January, 1890. The round window was a gift from the Bishop.



The Algoma Quarterly of March 1, 1876 says "The incumbent at Bracebridge then held regular Sunday morning services there... and Sunday afternoon services alternately at Gravenhurst and Uffington... the three stations being as it were at the angular points on an equilateral, with twelve-mile sides." Almost ten years later the writer poses this question - "Where is Uffington some one says?" And his knowledgeable answer was - "Why, away up in Muskoka, and if it is a village at all, it is all there, when we reckon two small stores, a blacksmiths shop, a post-office, an Anglican Church, two more belonging to other denominations, and a farm house, or two." It was at this time that the people were struggling to provide their clergyman with a place to reside. "There is not a house of any kind to be obtained at any price... they have made the frame of the house... they have done what they could... who has to find the money?... the Mission cannot possibly... contributions may be sent..."

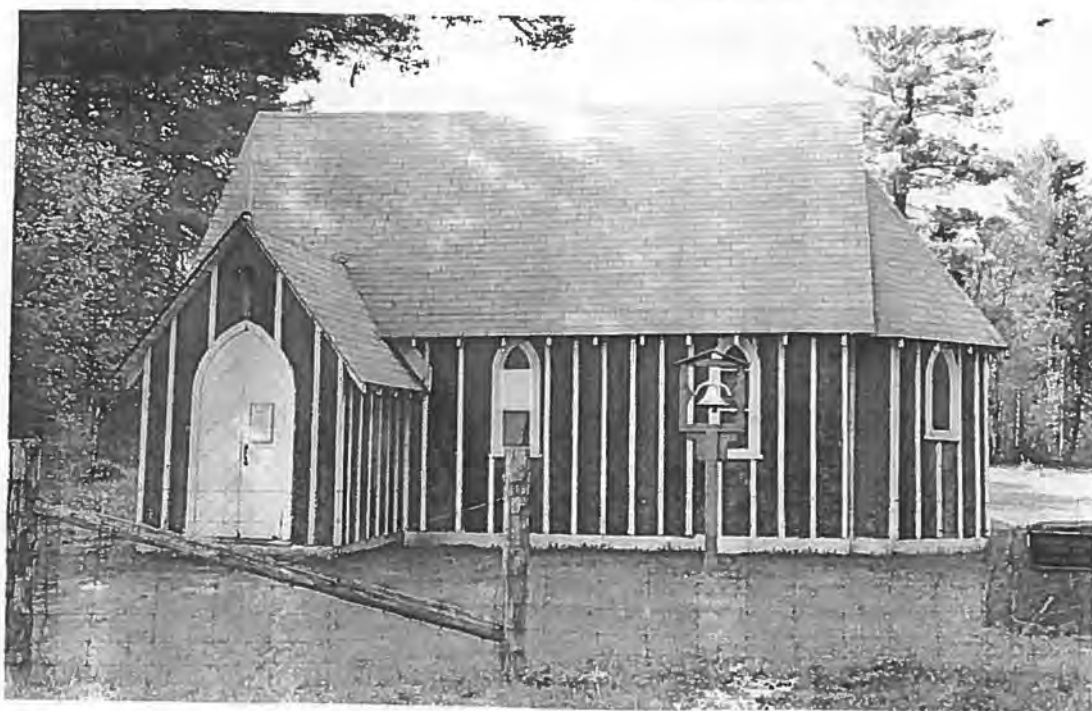
St. Thomas' of Ullswater

Ullswater Church with Bent River School in the upper right corner.

According to Hazel Kay who has researched the roots of this congregation, the property was obtained from the Richardson family on October 31, 1882. At the time of erecting the church (which is likely log) in the winter season, there was a membership of 40 family heads. But times were not easy then, so much so that when the organ fund was set up they were only

able to collect \$3.00!

Anglican services were held in the schoolhouses at Bent Riverdale and Ullswater before the church was built, in fact it wasn't until 1953 that the two congregations joined. The spacious churchyard contains a cemetery that was consecrated by Bishop Sullivan on January 21, 1888, where two former rectors have been laid to rest - Rev. Jethro Norman and Rev. W. T. Swainson. The latter person was the clergyman from 1929 to 1952, and during his time he had pine trees planted on the perimeter of the property, making an attractive addition to the site. As in the beginning, many church folk continue to give of their time and talents to make St. Thomas' Ullswater and Bent River a special place to worship God. Since 1891 it has been associated with the parish centred at Rosseau.



This quaint frame church was built on an acre of donated land chosen so that "no one needed to journey more than four miles to reach it." Anglicans first worshipped in homes, then began to meet in the log schoolhouse after it was opened in 1879. There was a desire among all the religious groups in that part of Oakley Township to have a house of worship so they took up a collection for that purpose. The community church building never materialized because the Baptist and Methodist families emigrated to Rainy River District, leaving their portions of the funds for the Anglicans and Presbyterians. St. Stephen's was built in 1890, most of the work being done voluntarily by mem-



bers of the congregation. It was consecrated on January 12, 1891 then furnished with an organ, pews, etc. by money raised in local lumber camps. The late Mrs. Bert Reid provided the photo of St. Stephen's at an earlier time.

61.

Christ Church of Windermere

"In 1889, the Rev. Charles Mockridge, D. D., Rector of Christ Church Cathedral, Hamilton, bought property near Windermere for a summer home. In due course he began to invite interested cottagers to his porch for Sunday Service. The collections gathered were set aside for the church which he envisioned for the village. The worshippers moved... to the Mechanic's Hall in Windermere and finally, in 1900, a sum of \$25 was paid for a piece of land on which to build the church. Dr. Mockridge's leadership was both spiritual and practical. He and his sons (four of whom were eventually ordained) worked with the builders on the frame church which was completed in 1904."

The pamphlet in the church from which the above is quoted, goes on to say "The pews... as well as the altar, the font, medallions, and the skilful arrangements of the shingles..." were the work of the builder, Charles Cox of Bracebridge. Also inside are unique wood designs of Muskoka done by two American cottagers. There is a clergy cottage on this property in which guest ministers and their families may reside.



Apostolic - Bethel

62.



In 1936 there came to Gravenhurst a group of Christian men from the Toronto area under the leadership of a former Salvation Army worker named Clifford Woodbury. These men lived at the Parish Hall (the former Lutheran Church) near the High School and with the help of a local meat market and bakery,

began a soup kitchen ministry to the many unemployed men who were travelling across Canada by freight train. For their gospel meetings they wore smart looking uniforms. Some of them, like Jack Ralston, were musicians and other such as Ernie Morgan, were preachers. Not only did they minister in Gravenhurst but they reached out to the surrounding communities as well with meetings at Orange Halls, schools, churches and homes. Quite a number of folk were helped in their spiritual walk and the spiritual foundation was laid for what later became the Apostolic Church in Gravenhurst. That work was founded by Mr. Gordon Doubleday in 1937, seen here with his gospel colleague,



Mr. Morgan (left) later held tent meetings at Falkenburg, was involved with the New Apostolic Church that once existed in Bracebridge, and currently has a religious program on Cable Television out of Gravenhurst.

Mr. Ernie Morgan. At first the congregation met in the Parish Hall, then moved to the Doubleday home in 1939 where meetings were held until 1950 when the basement of the present church was ready. Ten years later the upper storey was added which continues in use in the present day as the Full Gospel Tabernacle.

63.

Associated Gospel Church - Lake of Bays

The Associated Gospel Churches grew out of a swing toward liberal theology in the early 1900's. Large numbers of church members withdrew themselves from modernist congregations to form fundamentalist groups who still regarded the Bible as the inspired word of God. Four churches in the Toronto-Hamilton area banded together in 1922 to found a new denomination known as the Christian Workers' Church. Three years later the current name was adopted.



The Lake of Bays Mission Church is located east of Dwight on Highway 35, at Seabreeze Road. It began in 1980 as a non-denominational group under the leadership of Rev. Eric Sisel. By Thanksgiving Sunday of that same year they opened their new church building which is located on the well-wooded 43 acre property they own.

In July of 1988, the congregation decided to become part of the Associated Gospel Churches of Canada and they were welcomed by the then President of the group, Rev. William Sifft. During that service, Rev. Sifft ordained Eric Sisel—and he is still there as pastor. Rev. Sifft later retired, but we shall hear more about him in the community church section of this book.

The earliest Baptist churches in Canada were organized at Wolfville, Nova Scotia, and Sackville, New Brunswick in 1763 by ministers from Massachusetts. Although these were unsuccessful, the Baptist tradition did eventually work its way into Ontario where the first church was established in 1796 at Beamsville.

Today, in Muskoka, there are two main denominations of Baptist churches: Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec
: Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches

A. Baptist Convention Churches

In 1888 the Baptist Missionary Convention of Canada West united with the Canada Baptist Missionary Convention East to form this denomination. Currently there are two churches of this group in the district - Gravenhurst and Bracebridge.

Gravenhurst - Calvary

The Baptist Church here was officially organized on August 15, 1884 but it was not called Calvary Baptist until 1904. There were many struggles in the early days with the new church being built in 1885 and there being a heavy reliance on student ministers from M^cMaster University who could only serve the congregation during the summer months. In the latter 1880's



65.

the minister from Bracebridge took charge, often making his twelve mile trek to Gravenhurst along the railway track. The current Calvary Baptist Church was built in 1967.

Bracebridge - First



The First Baptist Church at Bracebridge was organized on June 18, 1885 at the home Mr. William White. Meeting at first in a rented hall, the people wanted to buy property and build a church, however in 1887 they purchased the frame Primitive Methodist building on Quebec Street which has been in use ever since. In 1892 the building was bricked and the addition at the back was put on in 1936. This church had the first baptistry in

Bracebridge, being installed during 1888 for \$26.64. The beautiful scene behind the baptistry was painted in 1946 by Mrs. Swan, a Baptist lady from Weston. The "Harvest Home Decorations" picture of the church's interior was found among the photos of Mr. W. C. Denniss, Sr., an early member of the church.



Other Baptist congregations no longer active, or part of this denomination, were located at Foot's Bay, Dwight, Huntsville, and Port Carling.

Foot's Bay - Mr. John MacLeod, with his wife and family, settled here in 1886. Mrs. MacLeod held Sunday School for her own family (and others who cared to join) at home because the nearest church was in Port Carling. Summer visitors began to join the villagers for services every Sunday on a piece of land on the Lake Joseph shore that came to be known as Gospel Point. Benches were made by putting planks on tree stumps. In the winter, services were held in the nearby schoolhouse with a layman, Joseph Wallis, coming from Port Carling to conduct them. In 1897, the local people and the tourists worked together to build a church on a piece of land donated by Mr. MacLeod. Although it was a Baptist congregation, the door was open to everyone regardless of their church affiliation. In due time a small Methodist Church was built at Staney Brae (see Foot's Bay United later on in this book) and since it was more convenient for the lake people to land their boats there, it thrived for a few years. But during the winter the Baptist Church continued to hold services. Writing in 1953 when the sale of this little church was being seriously contemplated, Ruby Hurd (one of John MacLeod's eleven children) said - "My father only lived to attend one service in the little church of his dream and was the third person to be laid to rest in the cemetery." The church was eventually sold to the United Church.

Dwight - This church is very closely connected with the Stewart family whose name it now perpetuates as a United Church (dealt with in that section of the book). Shown on the right as it appeared in 1907, the



courtesy of Gordon M. Stewart



was built in 1887, two years after the congregation was organized by Rev. Alexander Stewart (shown here on the left). His son, the Rev. J.W. A. Stewart, became the summer pastor at the same salary for which his father labored - nothing! Through 49 summers of his noble ministry settlers and tourists met in large numbers to enjoy times of worship and fellowship. In 1936 Rev. J.W. A. Stewart felt that the United Church should have the Baptist building. A very unique service was

held in September at which one of the original trustees, Mr. F. A. Emberson, made the formal presentation. Rev. A.C. Cochrane accepted the gift on behalf of the United Church of Canada saying: "This is a very gracious act, inspired by Dr. Stewart, and I hope its repercussions may be heard throughout the land."

Huntsville - It was in Brunel Township where the first meetings of worship took place among the Baptists. Mr. Gilmore of Southern Ontario came up in the summer of 1879 and held worship and prayer meetings in any of the cabins large enough and within walking distance for others of the Baptist persuasion. Progress was slow until the 1890's. They began to hold church at S.S.#5 Brunel schoolhouse on Brown's Road and looked to the Baptist Home Mission Board for more help and guidance. Finally in 1902 the Rev. Russell of Kingston arrived and set to work immediately to institute a Baptist Church. The Orange Hall was rented and on May 18, 1902 the first service in Huntsville occurred. They later moved over to Snyder's Hall and by November 20, 1902, the official paperwork was completed. Then came the desire to have their own building, so a lot was purchased on Main Street for \$200 in 1904 and plans to build got underway. With a loan of \$400, plank benches,



a borrowed organ, and a donated stove, First Baptist Church was opened on December 16, 1906. The Baptists of Brunel, who had assisted with the project, found attending the town church very difficult due to the road

conditions of the day. So, the pastor took meetings in homes and at the township hall until things improved. Eventually, however, another Baptist work did evolve in Brunel-that will be dealt with in the next section.

First Baptist Church of Huntsville is no longer part of the Convention Baptist denomination but now functions as an Independent Baptist Church. That change became effective on August 7th, 1984, Rev. Norman Strongman being the pastor during this transitional period.

Port Corling- A building that once served as one of this village's earlier schools also was used as a private Baptist Chapel for the Joseph Wallis family. He maintained the building for his family's worship after buying it from the school board in 1896.

B. Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches.

This denomination formed in 1953 with the merger of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches and the Fellowship of Independent Baptist Churches. Currently there are four congregations of FEBC Churches in Muskoka - two in the Huntsville area and one each at Bracebridge and Bala. The genesis of these churches goes back to the great depression and the founding of the Muskoka Baptist Conference (MBC). Besides tough economic times, Canadian Baptists were being despoiled and divided by theological liberalism. This whole story is well told by John F. Holliday in an excellent little book entitled "Muskoka Miracles." In essence, a 117-acre parcel of land on the east shore of Mary Lake was purchased for use as a Bible-based campsite by the Fundamentalist Baptist Young People's Association (FBYPA). Here services were first held in a large tent that can be seen to the right of this photo.

Although the place was rugged and rustic, it attracted many people young and old to its spiritually refreshing atmosphere.

The first camp in the Muskoka hills



was held in 1931 and "as young people, Fred Bell and his fiancée Maisie attended... they were married two years later, but in the meantime Fred had become the FBYPA missionary to Muskoka... (they) gave themselves without reservation... preaching in homes, schools, and halls... Mr. Bell taught courses in religious education in five Brunel Township public schools... (and) held regular services in logging camps and road camps." Here was a man of great faith and energy, but no wonder. His son Ken sent me this story of how God provided just when it was

needed most. Ken writes "Dad and a group of others 70.
were meeting at the campgrounds to close the deal to purchase the property from Andy Hood (hence Hood's Road of today that leads to MBC) when they found they were \$3000 short. At that juncture, dad (aged 29) walked into Huntsville to get the mail. There was one letter from a lawyer in Toronto, along with a bequest of \$3000!"



Rev. Alfred Bell was an indefatigable visitor. Here he's about to don his skis after the 1935 Studebaker froze up. He also tramped the roads and trails of Muskoka on his snowshoes.



The "mother church" of Muskoka's Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches - Britannia Road. It was organized on Oct. 4, 1942 by Fred Bell as a Regular Baptist Church.

Pictured above are Rev Fred and Mrs. Bell. Son Ken says "Up until his death in 1993, just 2 weeks before his 90th. birthday, his heart was in Muskoka... Mom was a tireless worker in all facets of dad's work. (I am deeply grateful to Ken and his sister Betty for allowing me to borrow their precious family keepsakes)

A. Riverside Baptist Church

Mr. Wilfred Lewis and his wife prayed in 1931 that God would send a missionary to their area so the people would have an opportunity of hearing the gospel and of attending worship regularly. No greater evidence of an answer to this prayer could have been given than the Britannia Road Baptist Church located on lot 24, concession 9 of Brunel that opened with twenty-one members on October 4, 1942. This church was the first fruit of the labor of Rev. Alfred Bell and it came at a time when Evangelist John Callery had just completed a very successful series of revival meetings. About one month later Rev. Bell led the church in communion, relying on Mr. Wilfred Lewis and Mr. Allan Reid to serve with him. Common egg cups were used for the wine.

By 1945 it was felt very keenly that the Locks was the place to centralize the work, so in June 1946 a small house was converted for use as a church, but two years later a building campaign was launched again. In 1949 Sydney Young, Clifford Farnsworth, and Rev. Jack Adams laid the cornerstone for a combination building—the front being the "Locks Baptist Church" and the back being the



pastor's living quarters. This arrangement was in use until the first Sunday in June of 1970 when Riverside Baptist Church opened its doors under the leadership of Pastor C. B. Hayden



Riverside Baptist Church as of May 1, 1996.

B. Faith Baptist Church

In 1952 a group of people seceded from the Locks Baptist Church and began to hold services in the home of Mrs. Wells on Brunel Road. Later on they met at Huntsville High School. With 17 charter members, Faith Baptist was organized on August 6, 1953 and a small church was built on West Street in town. Under the pastorship of Rev. Vic Cornish the congregation moved into a new edifice on West Road in 1977. Since Rev. Darrell Baker has come, the church building has been expanded once (in 1985) and is currently adding another section in 1996.



C. Pinegrove Baptist Church

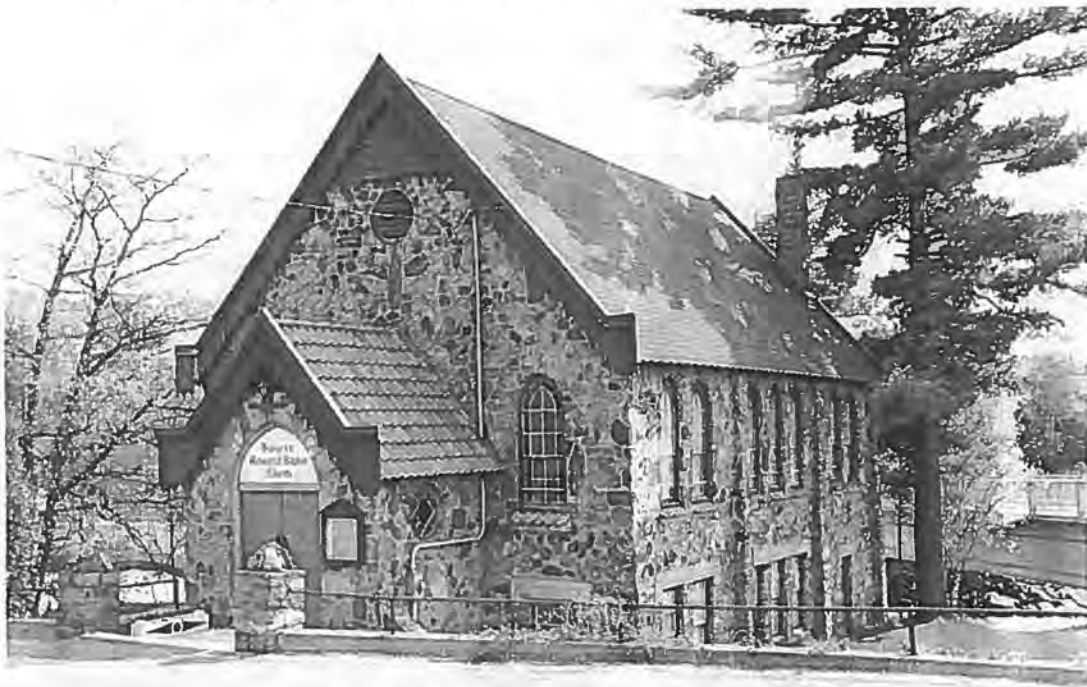
Pinegrove Baptist is located on the east side of Bracebridge. It was started back in the mid-1950's when the Rev. David Clarke of the Locks Baptist Church held cottage prayer meetings in the vicinity of Bracebridge. The end result was the opening of a church in the former Bardsville schoolhouse on Easter Sunday of 1955. As the work progressed, it was decided to build a house in the grove of pine trees beside what is now the church property. This building served as the church and pastor's living quarters until the basement of the original chapel was ready by early 1962. In April the sanctuary was completed and is shown on the left side of the picture below.



The church continued to grow. In 1967 the Bardsville congregation amalgamated with Pinegrove. An addition for Sunday School and offices was put on in 1969-70 but the largest building project came in 1989 when the new sanctuary was built. The congregation continues to grow and develop also ministering to several families from Gravenhurst. The Rev. Earl Cooper, the current pastor, came to Pinegrove from a church in southwestern Ontario. He has ministered here since August, 1983.

D. Burgess Memorial Baptist Church

74.



This beautiful stone church was built in Bala in 1926 as a Presbyterian Church and was used as such until the 1940's. After that it was mainly used during the summer seasons for activities such as Daily Vacation Bible School. It was in the early 1960's that a small Baptist work began to form at Burgess Memorial Church, in fact, Tom and Shirley Linke (she being a descendant of the church builder) purchased the building in order to ensure a place of meeting. Shirley (a lady who suffered long with multiple sclerosis) was the daughter of Douglas and Pansy Carr whose stalwart support of this church ended only recently with the August 1996 death of Mrs. Carr. Jack Hutton of Bala notes that Pansy was "the oldest Sunday School teacher in any Baptist Church across Canada" - she was 95 at her death! During the early 1960's, Pastor Michael Burns served the congregation, then, following his departure, Dr. Bert Harper and Margaret DeWasha arranged for speakers. In 1990, Bill and Julia Berry took up the work which by 1983 was strong enough to become a fully organized F.E.B.C. Church. The Berrys continue to serve this church on the island in picturesque Bala.

The Brethren

The Brethren movement began in 1828 when Anthony N. Groves, a student at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, brought together a group of people who were restless with the close connection of church and state and the stereotyped forms of worship in the Established Church. They adopted the name Brethren due to its Scriptural basis. Mr. Groves proposed that believers gathered in the Name of the Lord were entitled to celebrate the Lord's Supper without formal clerical direction. This was one main reason why the Brethren withdrew from the churches they belonged to and established, at Dublin, their first assembly in 1830.

John Nelson Darby gave up his priesthood in the Church of Ireland and soon became a leader in the new movement. He associated himself with an assembly in Plymouth, England that became large and influential, hence the name "Plymouth Brethren" arose. This never was an official designation. Mr. Darby's writings are still revered by many Brethren followers.

By the middle of the century a schism developed over views on the effects of unsound teaching in the Plymouth Assembly. As a result, even today, various Brethren groups are designated as Open or Closed assemblies, but they agree on many fundamental principles such as celebrating the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day, and there are no salaried ministers.

When immigration to Canada was strong in the mid-1800's, many Brethren came to the developing colony. By 1871, over 2200 were known to be in Canada, mainly in Ontario. Eventually workers made their way into Muskoka and established assemblies beginning in the 1880's. Although it is not always the case, older Brethren meeting places were generally called Gospel Halls.

We will begin our survey at Severn Bridge where a frame

building has served as a Brethren meeting place for well over a century, in fact there is some evidence that it was built in 1892. It exists in renovated form across from the Severn Bridge fairgrounds.



"no one remembers now... when the Gospel Church used by the Plymouth Brethren (was) built. The Gospel Church was on the hill across from the school (in West Gravenhurst)... When the church was built the ladies helped shingle the roof." - memories of Effie Grah Beiers as recorded in "The Light of other Days" (built circa 1900)

A wooden building painted grayish-blue served as the Gospel Hall in Bracebridge. It was located on the east side of Manitoba Street, a short distance north of Ann Street, where it originally served as an office building for the Ontario Lumber Company. The Brethren rented their building for use as a classroom on school days. Although long gone, there were Gospel Hall services advertised in the local papers up into the early 1950's. A room over Brooks' Drug Store was used for this purpose at that time.

Before leaving southern Muskoka we will visit one more

77.

Gospel Hall. It was built in 1925 as an Open Brethren assembly that was called "Ebenezer." The building is still in existence beside Muskoka Road 13 at Canning's Corners but it is no longer used as a meeting place.

Below: The Ebenezer Gospel Hall

There was Brethren work further north in Muskoka too. Mr. George Cottrill of the Locks recalls the history - "The year 1886 saw Alexander Marshall and Robert Telfer in Huntsville, visiting homes and labouring in a Gospel Tent with God's blessing upon His preached word



in conversions to Himself." These meetings were followed by cottage meetings in the Beswick home on the East Road. Later on they met on the second floor of the Calderwood store, now "Vanity Fair" - the Cottrill family travelled up the Muskoka River from the Locks by private steam boat to attend the meetings here. In 1913 the gathering in Huntsville moved to the present location at Main and Lorne Streets. The building was built by Mr. Fred Watson who was a member of the assembly and many improvements have been made over the years which includes the



addition of a gallery. An annual two day convention sees a large crowd gather in Huntsville to enjoy speakers and hospitality sponsored by this assembly - it is believed that this event was first held in 1910, and has occurred every year since.

This picture found its way into my hands through the generosity and thoughtfulness of Sheldon Sopher and his daughter Sylvia. After a bit of detective work I discovered it to be the former Calderwood Brothers Grocery Store in Huntsville. The building still exists in remodelled form and is occupied by a business known as "Vanity Fair." As you can see on the left side, there is a sign above a doorway that advertises the Gospel Hall meetings that were held in the upstairs portion of this building until 1913.



Outside of Huntsville evangelists such as Fred Watson, David Scott, J.J. Rouse,^{and} John Sylvester visited the smaller-Gospel Hall works at Emberson, Antioch, and Deer Lake. Mrs. Olive Kerr recalls "...that at one time they had a tent at the top of Deer Lake Hill. Interest in the area increased, and on land donated by John and Fanny Nickason, a Gospel Hall was built." This picture shows the original Deer Lake



The original Deer Lake Gospel Hall still exists as part of a residential building in the same locality as its origin.

Gospel Hall in the background with Mrs. Eva Orr (John and Fanny's daughter) and her family - Dorothy, Betty, Marion, and Myrl. Dorothy (Orr) Morgan writes - "As one of the many children who attended the Gospel Hall Sunday School in the 1930's,

and also the special meetings... I can say it was a light shining in that area for God. There we heard about Jesus coming to this earth and giving His life a ransom for us all. We heard the truth from the Bible." Dorothy's poem sums up her thoughts - The Gospel Hall (Deer Lake)

A little girl sat in the Gospel Hall
 She heard the story of the Saviour, that was all
 It took, to show her she was a "sinner"
 And Jesus came to save.
 The preachers came and went
 And they were Heaven sent
 They preached the word of God
 And prayed that sinners would repent.
 This little girl was "saved"
 As were many others
 And now they're in God's large family
 Making many more sisters and brothers and fathers
 and mothers.

Someday beyond the blue
 Where loved ones wait for me, for you,
 we'll meet the Lord who cared for us all -
 And met with some of us there at the Gospel Hall.

In the summer of 1977 the old Gospel Hall near the lake was sold. Construction on the new hall located closer to Port Sydney (in the field across from Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Huggins) was begun in July 1976 and full services as an assembly began on September 18, 1977. The Deer Lake Gospel Hall is shown below.



One of the more recent Brethren works in Muskoka is called the Port Sydney Bible Chapel. Leadership is given by Mr. Ted Heidman and Mr. George Budd. Since they started meeting in July 1990 the group has grown steadily. Until October, 1996, the facilities of Knox United Church were used, however, a change was made then to meeting in the V.K. Greer School. A ten acre portion of land has just been purchased with the intention of building on that site.

In Gravenhurst, the Boy Scout Hall is currently being used as an assembly place for a group of exclusive Brethren with meetings being conducted by Gary Woods, an official involved with the Beacon Bible Camp south of Torrance. Originally this assembly started in the home of Ted Becker.

The Christadelphians were founded by Dr. John Thomas (1805-1871) who came to the United States from England. At first he was associated with the Disciples of Christ but later left that group and organized a number of societies that taught the need of a return to primitive Christianity. Their doctrine of non-resistance forced the issue of adopting a name during the American Civil War. Christadelphians, or Brethren of Christ, was the name chosen.

Local organizations are not known as churches but are called Ecclesias. Generally speaking, Christadelphians meet in rented halls or schools and private homes. In Muskoka, the early meetings were held in cottages around Skeleton Lake. Eventually the group met in a school, then in the later 1980's began assembling in the Aspden Community Centre. Two early members of the Christadelphian Ecclesia in Huntsville who are still involved today are Pat Cooper and Netitis Austin. About 1987 a former Jehovah's Witnesses hall that was being used as a children's activity centre became available and has since served as the home of the Christadelphian Unamended Ecclesia. It is pictured below.



A second, but doctrinally different, Christadelphian group also meets in the Huntsville area in a private home. They are advertised as "Christadelphians of Muskoka."

Church of Christ

The Christian Churches and Churches of Christ are a by-product of the "restoration" movement in the United States in the early 1800's. This religious group desired to restore New Testament patterns and practices. Originally the Churches of Christ were part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) but separated in the early 1900's due to different viewpoints. The Churches of Christ have no general organization and each church in the fellowship is completely independent and dedicated to the restoration of the New Testament Church. One of the outstanding features of this group lies in their acceptance of the Bible as a true and completely adequate revelation. This leads to some of their more characteristic practices such as: weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, baptism by immersion, a cappella singing, a vigorous prayer life, voluntary giving, and a strong program of Bible teaching and preaching. Muskoka has one Church of Christ and it was established at Huntsville due to the faithful work of Mr. John Preston of Baysville. Shortly after his mother's death in 1947, he was baptised and began to hold several cottage meetings in the area around Huntsville. The group enlarged so they later met in the Oddfellow's Room, then the Orange Hall. In 1957 they built their own church on Hilltop Drive. For many years (ending in 1995) a Church of Christ also met in the Bracebridge Orange Hall.



This church is rooted in the visions of Joseph Smith who organized the movement in 1830 at Fayette, New York. According to Bernice Thompson's notes in the historical records at Bracebridge, "the first missionary that came to Bracebridge was Elder VanDyke and that was sometime prior to 1911." The only known Mormons in the area at that time was the McCoubrey family who lived on Taylor Line. But the Elders continued to visit and garnered converts from the Bentley, Barrick, McEown, Nicholson, Leeder and Hammond families, baptising them at such places as Sharp's Creek and High Falls. The



group photo was taken about 1922 showing the two Elders at the back. The next row shows Maude Stamp, Grace Leeder (McEown) with baby, ?, Ralph Nicholson and George Nicholson. The front row left side person is unknown;

the remaining people are Dorothy, Gladys (the little girl), Lloyd and Bill Nicholson.

The Latter-day Saints have met in a wide variety of locations as listed below-

- private homes
- in the theatre that used to be in the place next door to the former Muskoka Trading Store
- the Forrester's Hall
- a rented room at the front of the Albion Hotel, moving out in the early 1960's when that establishment obtained its liquor licence

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- the Boy Scout Hall on Main Street
- the Orange Hall on Maple Street from 1970 to 1975
- their own Bracebridge Chapel on Pine Street that was sold in April 1984 to the Muskoka District Children's Aid Society
- Macaulay Public School, 1984-85
- the new meetinghouse on the corner of Cedar Lane and Taylor Road where the first sacrament meeting was held on March 24, 1985.

Described as an outstanding contemporary facility, it includes a family history centre where individuals may go to trace their genealogical descent.

The Bracebridge Branch became a Ward on February 16, 1992 and as of May 5, 1996 was then part of the newly organized Sudbury Ontario Stake.



My appreciation goes to Grant Barrick for the help he provided in making available "The History of the Bracebridge ward 1910-1996." Unfortunately this reference was inadvertently missed in the bibliography.

This fairly new denomination hooks into the heritage of two older groups whose backgrounds are anchored in the American religious scene. Congregationalism had a profound and enduring conviction that Christians are best prepared and nurtured to do their work in a local congregation that is autonomous, indigenous, and belonging with other churches in free association. On the other hand, the distinctive mark of the Christian tradition was one of unity whereby denominational "walls" would not hinder fellowship with other followers of Jesus Christ. Both of these groups maintained a presence in Ontario from the early 1800's although it was never strong and had little impact on Muskoka until 1988.

First Muskoka Congregational Christian Church

It was in 1988 that the General Council of the United Church of Canada approved a resolution that, in effect, allowed the ordination of practising homosexual persons. In response to that, a conference was held in Niagara Falls, Ontario on September 13, 1988 that created a new fellowship of churches, called the Congregational Christian Church. It was soon learned that such a body already existed although it only had five churches, all of them in Ontario. Fruitful discussions resulted in the amalgamation of the new and old groups on December 4, 1989. The Congregational Christian Churches in Canada were incorporated as a national organization exactly one year to the day after Rev. Eric Hudson left the Port Carling-Bala Charge of the United Church and formed this congregation in the Glen Orchard Community Centre.

After meeting for over three years in the Glen Orchard Public School, the dream of their own church building became a reality on the day of dedication, July 5, 1992.



Above: First Muskoka Congregational Christian Church, where Rev. Bruce Aitken serves as its second pastor, is located just south of Glen Orchard Public School.

Living Water Congregational Christian Church

The nucleus of this church resulted when Rev. Janet Judd and two other families were disassociated from the First Congregational Christian Church at Glen Orchard in 1990. They began to meet in a private home and experienced a steady increase in numbers causing them to seek more adequate accomodation. An offer, in 1992, from St. Mark's Anglican Church in Milford Bay to share their building was accepted. This has been a positive arrangement for both the Anglicans and the Living Water congregation.

The Free Methodist Church sprang from the Methodist Episcopal Church, not as a radical off-shoot but because of expulsion. On August 23, 1860 at Pekin, New York, the new church was born with B. T. Roberts as the first General Superintendent. Originally it was a church that was very revivalistic and whose preachers had the Pentecostal fire and expounded on the doctrine of heart holiness. Roberts came to Canada with that message in 1873 and by 1876 there was a Free Methodist Church at Galt, Ontario. The pioneer that brought this church to Muskoka was Charles H. Sage when he held a revival in S.S.#1 Macaulay school-house east of Bracebridge in April 1879.

New Hope Free Methodist Church



The New Hope Free Methodist Church came about in February, 1995, when the Gravenhurst and Bracebridge churches amalgamated. In 1909, the Bracebridge congregation built this church, (as it appears in the photo taken in 1960) but two others preceded it. The original small frame church was built on the Taylor Line in 1880 and served the

fledgling congregation until it mysteriously caught fire a decade later. During this era services were also successfully conducted in the schoolhouse at Alport where the James Rusk family got converted. It was truthfully said of Mr. Rusk upon his death in 1924 that he was "a good man who earned the respect of everybody, who made the world richer, not only by building up Muskoka, but also by rearing a family of good people whose influence is for good in many parts of the world." And in Bracebridge the church he had attended on the corner of King Street and

Muskoka Road (opened in 1891 after the rural church burned) had pulsated with divine life, so much so that this part of town became known as "Free Methodist Hill." Among others, the Kirk, Shier, and Haley families helped take the Free Methodist message to many other parts of Canada and the world.

Mountainview Free Methodist Church

Until 1996 this church was known as the Huntsville Free Methodist. Its heritage goes back to 1880 when Rev. C.H. Sage held meetings in the Williamsport area, then sent for a young man named Wesley Walls to care for the converts.

"Shortly after beginning his labours... he had his Pentecost and received his power for service kneeling beside a huge Muskoka rock." Within a year he enrolled thirty-three probationers and had a little log church built (lot 31, concession 5, Chaffey). Another Free Methodist work was started at Silverdale in Stisted Township, east of Huntsville, which was one of the three appointments to which Miss Josie Rusk (teenage daughter of Bracebridge's James Rusk) walked on her circuit in 1890. Miss Marjorie Demaine wrote this to me - "I remember the Free Methodist Church at Silverdale. The railway track ran between it and U.S.S. #2 school. A sleighload of us young people attended a Christmas program there once. It later became a W.I. Hall then was torn down." The third part of her work was in the town itself - no wonder her uncle described hers as a "life filled with intense service."

When the Methodists in Huntsville decided to replace their 1877 church building, they put it on log rollers and moved it one block over to High Street and used it until their new brick church opened in October, 1897. Shortly after that the Free Methodists consolidated their work to that site, staying there until they moved to Brunel Road in 1960.



The High Street Church in 1950 era while Mr. Dalton Kirk was pastor. From left to right are: Irene Kirk, Gladys Ennest, Marion Woolman, Elva Wood, Wayne Carr, Mary Rawn, Donna Bright, Mabel Lyons, Wilfred Lyons with daughter Lois, several unknown, Austin Thaxter in the doorway with Mrs. Thaxter (holding Ila) in front. On the left is the 1960 church which now has a remodelled front.



courtesy of Osta Osmond

Ryde Centennial Free Methodist Church

Long known as Housey's Rapids Free Methodist, this work was started by two ladies in 1882 when meetings were held in Brook's schoolhouse (about a mile south of the present church) as well as in the village at Brace's General Store. At this time there were three congregations on the circuit - Severn Bridge, Barkway, and Housey's Rapids. Barkway's church was built in 1890 (and still exists there now as an Anglican Church) while the Housey's Rapids church was built in the summer of 1892 (pictured here as it was in 1972). The Muskoka District camp meetings before 1952 moved from place to place but the last location before going permanent at Severn Bridge was on the



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William Goheen farm in the area to the right of the old church. In 1978 under the pastorate of Rev. A.C. Queen, the new church was opened across the road from the former building. This congregation has successfully hosted a winter weekend for teenagers for many years. It is one of the few churches remaining in the district that still holds wood cutting bees. At the time of writing Rev. Sterling Cooper is the pastor and holds the record for the longest period of service in that capacity in this church's history.



The Ryde Centennial Free Methodist Church



Grandpa Benzinger and his daughter Edith Goheen on the church steps about 1940 - their testimony lives on today.

Cooper's Falls

In 1891-92 there were Free Methodist services held at Cooper's Falls, first in a rented hall from which the preachers were evicted, and then in McNab's Bar Room!



The bar owner and his family got converted and many more people came under the influence of the gospel. In 1894 a little frame church was built in close proximity to St. George's Anglican Church. There is one commemorative service each year now at the Cooper's Falls Free Methodist Church.

Other Free Methodist Churches

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Baysville - Mr. William Curran remembered, and church records confirm, the existence of a Free Methodist Church here. It was part of the Bracebridge circuit and was located near what is known today as Kokkas' Corners. It was active in the 1880's and 1890's.

Gravenhurst When Free Methodism came here in early 1900, this was a rough lumbering town. After several months of revival meetings a church was organized, meeting first in a store building, then at the West Gravenhurst Methodist Church just before they built a cement block church in town. In the early summer of that same year, 1903, a very successful camp meeting in town netted even more converts. The church retained its position in town until



an unfortunate fire destroyed the interior of the building in 1993. Although the group met in various places after that, in February 1995 the Gravenhurst Free Methodists amalgamated with Bracebridge forming New Hope Free Methodist Church with Rev. Peter Tursa as pastor. Shown on the left above is the 1903 church that contained much lumber in its structure from the former Severn Bridge Church. The lower photo is of Myola Schell and the Rev. Beth Hankinson who was pastor here from 1967 to 1972. Myola provided the pictures and lots of helpful information too!

Pine Lake - The Rev. F. A. Daw served his first pastorate in Gravenhurst from 1920 to 1923 but he began to walk out to the little community called Pine Lake, beyond West Gravenhurst. Mrs. Joyce Schell writes - "The Narrows people were mostly Free Methodists and held services in the homes and the Long Point school until they were able to build a little church in 1922 near Pine Lake not far from the school." This little white frame church under the pines was attended one summer by Lucy M. Montgomery and the setting was used in her book "The Blue Castle." The church,



shown here on the left, was closed about fifty years later but it was the scene of many well remembered services, including those of Mr. Horace Bradley. The picture on the right is of Lynn Schell (son of Myola Schell) and Lynda Cowan. She



later married John Kirk (son of Oscar and Doris who attended the Bracebridge Free Methodist Church) and they both became Free Methodist ministers. Lynda got her start at the Pine Lake Free Methodist Sunday School.

Severn Bridge Free Methodist - The earliest known Free Methodist District Camp Meetings were held at Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Huntsville in 1899, 1900, and 1901 (although these churches participated in camp meetings outside Muskoka beginning with Crown Hill in 1886). Housey's Rapids was added to the roster



of such meetings in 1928. In 1952 a 4-acre site at Severn Bridge was purchased, from which 100 logs were cut into lumber, planed, and used in the building of the tabernacle - which is still in use.

Charles Taze Russell was the founder of what is now Jehovah's Witnesses and the energetic administrator that oversaw its world-wide organization. The name Jehovah's Witnesses was taken in 1931 - up until that time they had been known as Millennial Dawnists, International Bible Students Association, and earlier still, Russellites. Raised as a Congregationalist, Russell early rejected the teaching on eternal punishment and at age eighteen organized a Bible class in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that eventually became Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society in 1884. In 1896 The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society became the focal point of the organization with its now familiar pieces of literature known as The Watchtower and Awake.

Until Russell died in 1916, his speeches swayed many as he denied many of the cardinal doctrines of the Scriptures, such as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, etc. Upon his death, the helm of leadership was manned by Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford whose blasts against Christendom reverberated over radio waves, and through books as well as phonograph recordings. The latter were used by Witnesses in homes that they gained entry to, bringing a portable record player with them.

Local congregations of Witnesses meet in Kingdom Halls to "publish" their faith, as well as give testimony through a remarkably comprehensive and well-rehearsed missionary effort where every member is a minister. Three Kingdom Halls exist in Muskoka, one in each main town.

The Algoma Missionary News of October, 1907, gives us an early glimpse of their presence in Muskoka around Uffington. The columnist had been travelling with the Anglican Bishop and reported "A rough ride over what seemed like more of a bush trail than a road and a kind welcome

94. at the house of friends who follow and strongly advocate the "Millennial Dawn" persuasion were features on August 13th. The country is overrun with 'persuasions' and 'notions' of all kinds, and the Church might well learn a lesson from the aggressiveness and earnest advocacy of those who hold erroneous views."

In Bracebridge their meetings were held in rented quarters on Manitoba Street (first in the I.B.S.A. Hall in the Sibbett Block, then the W.I. Rest Room building) until a Kingdom Hall was built on Spencer Street in the mid-1950's.



Gravenhurst Kingdom Hall was built in 1982. The congregation formerly shared the Bracebridge facility on Spencer Street.

Huntsville Kingdom Hall was opened on Thanksgiving weekend of 1986, replacing an older building that existed further north on Muskoka District Road #3.



Bracebridge Kingdom Hall was built on 4, 5, and 6th. in 1992 during the month of June. It is actually midway between the

town and the village of Falkenburg. One of the families long associated with this congregation was that of the Moores.

Originally, "Lutheran" was a term of derision used by the opponents of Martin Luther (1483-1546) in the days of the Protestant Reformation. Luther's teachings of justification by faith and the priesthood of all believers became the cornerstone of a whole new religious system that protested the teachings of the established Roman Catholic Church.

The first Lutherans to touch Canadian soil were Scandinavians. They were part of an expedition sent out from Denmark in 1619 to try and discover a "short route" to India. I have visited the site at the mouth of the Churchill River at Hudson Bay where the Lutheran pastor conducted a Christmas service for the ill-fated voyage. The first permanent Canadian Lutheran Church was established in Nova Scotia in 1755. St. John's of Morrisburg was Ontario's first. It was built in 1788.

In the early days of pioneering it was usual for the Lutheran people to form a separate settlement where they spoke their own language and sought to keep their own culture and traditions. This holds true in Muskoka (and Parry Sound) where Norwegian Lutherans organized a congregation at Parry Sound in 1876, German Lutherans erected a lovely log chapel at Germania in Draper Township, and Danish and Norwegian Lutherans built a church in Gravenhurst in the 1880's. But they didn't always do that either, because the Icelandic Lutherans at Hekkla went Methodist; the Morrison Township Lutherans went to the Sparrow Lake Presbyterian Church, and at Bardsville we learn this from the "Algoma Quarterly" of March 1, 1876 - "... a most hearty and encouraging... (service) was held at Bardsville. There, a knot of Germans have decided to unite with the English Churchmen... to attend a common service conducted partly in German by a German Lay-Reader, and partly in English

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by a Canadian, alternating the parts on alternate Sundays."

The Gravenhurst Lutheran Church was located on Sharpe Street on property beside what is now the high school. Although the Anglicans bought it in 1921 and used it as a parish hall, it survived after that as a Boy Scout Hall, then finally met its demise. Anna Myers once told me of its kitchen table pulpit and kitchen chairs that served as seats for males on one side of the room and females on the other.

The surviving Lutheran Church is in Germanica and it celebrated its centennial in 1977. Covered for years with a dull grey exterior reminiscent of rolled roofing, and mostly hidden by trees and brush, the visitor is now treated to a well-restored log building that is in plain view. The cemetery adjacent to the building gives silent testimony of the many German families that once populated this part of Muskoka. Services are still conducted in the church but the minister does not reside here in the community.



The initial Pentecostal awakening of the modern era stems from a revival held in an old, dilapidated Methodist Church on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California. The year was 1906. Shortly after that it entered Canada through the Hebden Mission in Toronto. Over the next few years this movement, with its emphasis on "speaking in tongues," spread throughout many parts of Ontario. A group of ministers representing various independent assemblies got together with the purpose of forming some type of affiliation whereby a form of church government could be established. A Dominion charter was granted on May 17, 1919, thus giving birth to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (P.A.O.C.), the largest of many Pentecostal denominations.

About a year before that event, the first Pentecostal meetings in Muskoka were held at Huntsville by Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Sharpe. For several years the group met in private homes until it became necessary to rent lodge halls, or rooms in renovated buildings, to hold the crowds.

Bethel Pentecostal Tabernacle (Huntsville)

So it wasn't until around 1937 that a Pentecostal church building of their own became a reality - and even then the money was scarce and the neighbors took up a petition against it! Rev. J. H. Blair, the district superintendent, dedicated this building on Caroline Street and its successor on West St. that opened in 1957. In 1978, the ambitious project that produced the current Bethel Tabernacle got underway on Silverwood Drive. It opened its doors in 1980.



George Bombay was 16 years old when he began to preach in the Herald Hall in Bracebridge during the early 1920's. He had heard the Pentecostal message at tent meetings in the area held by the J. E. Sharpes, and the mold of his life was set. Along with his brother Richard, he pastored what was first called the Latter-Rain Assembly group that eventually became known as Bethel Tabernacle, located on the site of the former Holiness Movement Chapel on Ontario Street. A new church was built here in 1945. Pictured in front of that building in 1956 are Mr. Joe Stevenson (a local policeman) and Rev. Marshall V. Shields, pastor from 1951 to 1956. Mr. Shields writes "On the occasion of the Coronation of our present Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, it fell to my lot to bring the address to a gathering of 1500 in the Bracebridge Arena... I could conform to formal occasions even to the extent of wearing a borrowed robe - ha ha." In 1973 the congregation built a new structure on Wellington Street and adopted another new name (for the third time) which is Wellington Street Pentecostal Church. It was dedicated on March 10, 1975



Mac Tier

Meetings were held in the Town Hall in this village by Rev. Manley Higgins and his wife in 1931. Many people gained an interest in the revival in two ways - for some it was a positive spiritual experience but for others, those Pentecostals were simply too noisy! Undaunted, a lot was obtained, logs were cut, lumber was sawed and by December, 1935, the church was done. It remains on the original site but the building has been enlarged, as the picture reveals. The minister from 1971-75 was Rev. Robin Cruickshank, shown here with his wife Carol, young daughter Chris and son Reg.

New Life Pentecostal Church

This is a very recent work, having begun in 1990. The building has a history of being a well-known restaurant called The Outpost, famous for its fried chicken and baked Alaska desserts (I washed saucepans here in 1961 as my first summer job). Now spiritual food is being served here, just south of Gravenhurst.



Presbyterian history is long and complex. Its roots go back to the 1500's to a man named John Calvin, whose theology placed great emphasis on the sovereignty of God. His teachings greatly influenced John Knox who became a powerful political and religious leader in Scotland. He led the Protestant Reformation there where the Presbyterian Church became the state religion in 1560. It is not surprising then that Presbyterianism came first to Canada through Nova Scotia (New Scotland) in the 1700's.

Presbyterians built a church and manse in Orillia in 1851 which eventually provided a base from which the frontier to the north could be evangelized. In those days the Presbyterians were a divided people. There were several Presbyterian denominations and they were antagonistic to one another, however, in 1875 they united and became the Presbyterian Church in Canada. But more than ten years before this a few Presbyterian families had been gathering for services in a store down river from North Falls (Bracebridge).

The two oldest Presbyterian Churches in Muskoka are shown below. On the left, Bracebridge - built on King St., circa 1865; on the right, Cairn's Church at Allensville - circa 1866, the site is identified now as the Mc Nichol Cemetery.



- The Presbyterian message went out in at least this many localities in Muskoka, and no doubt this list is incomplete. The dates indicate when churches were built, if known. The * means it is a currently active Presbyterian congregation.
- Allensville - Cairn's Church 1866; frame church near school later; gone ^{both}
- Aspdin - late 1870's (became United) - annual service
- Bala - original 1893 (later burned, but was then United)
- 1926 Burgess Memorial "spite church"; now Baptist
- Baysville - 1882 (became United) regular use
- Beatrice - 1870's; torn down many decades ago - cemetery remains
- *Bracebridge - 1865 frame; 1876 relocated then burned; 1932 current
- Brown's Brae - 1891 (became United) torn down in 1964
- Chaffey - 1878 (west of Novar) - torn down
- Dee Bank - 1870's; sold for a school in 1895; now a dwelling
- Deer Lake - 1880's no church but used an old school - long gone
- Dorset - 1894 (became United) regular use
- Dwight - 1889 (became United) torn down; named St. Peter's
- Etwell - moved from Hoodstown in the 1890's (became United); gone
- Fraserburg - 1884 (became United) summer use now
- *Gravenhurst - 1878 current
- *Huntsville - 1876 frame burned; relocated brick 1898; current
- Hoodstown - late 1870's (moved to Etwell, became United, closed 1950)
- Lake Joseph - 1904 (now a Community Church - summer only)
- Locks - 1893 (became United) regular use
- Muskoka Falls - 1871 (became United) regular use
- McIntosh - 1870's - a preaching place short-lived near Port Carling
- Norway Point - 1908 (collapsed in 1943); rebuilt. Summer/Community
- Novar - 1895 to replace Chaffey (became United) regular use
- Peninsula - circa 1882 (near Port Sandfield) now gone
- *Port Carling - 1876 - oldest Presbyterian Church in use in Muskoka
- Port Sydney - 1885 (became United) regular use
- Rosseau - 1878 (became United) regular use
- Raymond - 1890 (became United) torn down
- Sparrow Lake - 1886 (became United) summer use
- South Portage - 1902 (became United) now a dwelling
- Ten Mile Bay - 1885 - torn down at the time of union in 1925; St. Paul's
- *Torrance - 1916 "cottage church" still in regular use

Uffington - 1885 now gone ; was across from the Methodist church

Utterson - circa 1900 - became a manse before union; gone

* Vankoughnet - 1890 frame; later bricked; now enlarged; current

Whiteside - 1890; doubled as an Orange Hall; material used at Bannockburn

Windermere - 1890's near Anglican Church; torn down after union

Ziska - 1870's ; once called Monk (sic) Church; torn down; cairn in

Malta - Kilworthy area of Morrison Twp; closed in 1909. cemetery

The following resorts or summer hotels also accomodated Presbyterian services during the tourist season:

1. Beaumaris Hotel - in the music hall from 1892 until 1925 when the hotel burned

2. Killiecrankie - 1894 4. Craigie Lea House 1894

3. Staney Brae - 1894 5. Glenifer Braes 1896.

(When the Lake Joseph Presbyterian Church opened in 1904 it was possible to phase out services in the latter four summer tourist homes.)

It should be noted that "The Church of the Kettles" and Bannockburn Church also had Presbyterian students conduct services for them in their formative stages, as did Norway Point.



Rev. Allan Findlay

Rev. Findlay came to Muskoka in 1875 and served his church from Bracebridge, not only as pastor of Bracebridge, Ziska, and Muskoka Falls, but as mission superintendent. He had the oversight of at least 33 mission stations which he would endeavour to visit twice each year to help strengthen and build them up. For his effort and sacrifice he earned \$700 a year. He went on to become Supervisor of Missions for New Ontario

Bracebridge - Knox

The Rev. Jim Thomson, minister at Knox from 1968-1995, comments that the original (King Street) church was so drafty that it was "almost hazardous to one's health to visit it in the winter months!" By 1876 they were able to replace it with this frame structure that had a 79 foot tower and steeple. Located at the corner of Quebec and Mc-Murray Streets, it was here in 1925 that the vote for church union was a close call: 59 yes to 61 no. Although the building then contin-

ued as a Presbyterian Church, in January 1931 it was ravaged by fire. Despite economic depression, and the illness and subsequent death of their minister, the staunch Presbyterians dedicated their new brick church in October, 1932. Here traditional turkey suppers have been served for decades during the Thanksgiving season. Many will also recall the vibrant singing of the Candlelight Services near Christmas. Shown from the back row: P. Kirk, J. Harrington, O. Kirk, D. MacNaughton, D. McKinley / G. Dawkins, J. Thwaites, J. O'Brien, G. Vais / E. Kirk, C. Harrington, L. Scott, E. Dennis, J. Anderson / B. Parrott, B. Hammond, M. Jackson, J. Vincent, L. Hammond / E. VanHezewyk, M. Hines, V. Kirk (organist and choirmaster), M. White, Eileen Mason.



This old photo shows the Gravenhurst Presbyterian Church in the background during the 1915, May 24th. celebration of Queen Victoria's birthday. Although we may celebrate differently, that

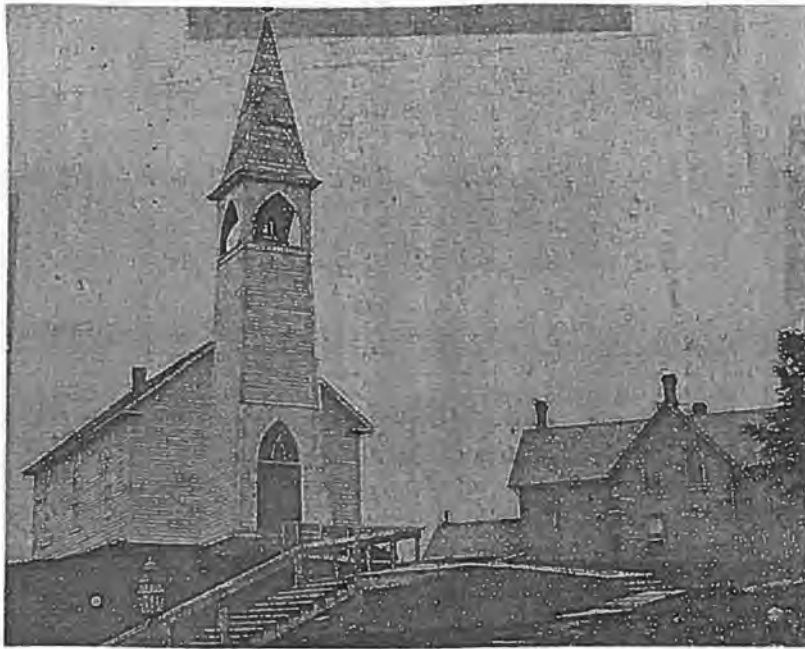


historic board and batten building is still there serving today's congregation. It was the energetic Rev. Allan Findlay who organized this church, doing so in 1875 shortly after he came to Muskoka. The building was erected in 1878, and, as shown below, does not appear much different now, other than the spire has been removed.

Knox congregation built a beautiful frame manse in 1880 on John Street. It became home to Rev. and Mrs. Malcolm N. Bethune - he being a one-time student minister in Muskoka when he helped to build the Presbyterian



Churches at Baysville and Fraserburg. The Bethunes came to Knox in 1889 and in 1891 their famous son, Norman, was born. (Later in this book under Gravenhurst United there are details of how this manse has become Bethune Memorial House in 1976.) From 1925-1935, after church union, this building was actually owned by the I.O.O.F. and it was they who removed the bell tower. The Presbyterians purchased their church back in 1935.

Huntsville - St. Andrew's

It was said by Colonel D.M. Grant (in 1932) that "In the early days of Huntsville it was almost wholly due to the efforts of Captain Hunt that religious services were started and continued... On the 6th. of June, 1869,... he opened the first Sabbath School..." Hunt's log cabin was open to preachers of any denom-

ination and in this way as well, settlers had the opportunity of devotional services. The first work on the Presbyterian lot for the church was done in November, 1869, by Captain Hunt but it "was in this year of grace 1876, that the erection of the church commenced with only \$19 to the credit of the building committee... the contract... was let to Richard May for the extravagant sum of \$13." And the records showed not a cent of debt owing on the building at year's end. (The Forester, May 14, 1889) This church burned in 1896 during the pastorate of Rev. James Sieveright, whose forte, ironically, was building churches! It was then that the congregation moved west of the river, first to Snyder's Hall, then to their new brick church in April, 1898. With little exterior change, it still serves there today. At the time of the vote on union in 1925, the Presbyterians were very decisive, polling 17 for and 63 against, a reflection no doubt of the scholarly, conscientious ministers that had graced the pulpit of St. Andrew's in the crucial years leading up to that point.



Port Carling-Knox

106.



Rev. Richard Topping was called to this pastoral charge (with Torrance) in 1993. He has kindly allowed me to use information from two brochures which, among other things, give highlights of history.

Knox Church had its humble beginnings in the Polar Star Hotel, circa 1872. At that time three

elders were ordained. A gift of property from the Bailey Estate was made to the congregation, and Knox Church was erected in 1876 (thus making it the oldest continually used Presbyterian Church in Muskoka at the present time). Donations of material and labor were made by the congregation. The summer people were also generous in giving money and materials, among them the bell and belfry. In 1927 the building was moved back twenty-five feet and placed on a basement. Fortunately the fire of 1931, which destroyed the business section of Port Carling, did not burn the church, however, all the early church records met their demise in that blaze.

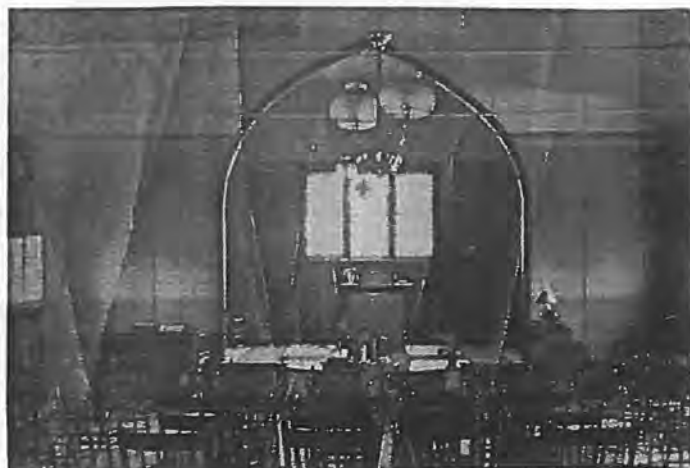
Difficult times came after seven years in the new church and Knox was forced to close its doors in 1883 due to lack of funds. Two years later it re-opened and Jonathan Goforth was assigned as student minister - a man who later spent 37 years in China as a missionary. Almost 300 students and ordained clergy have ministered here, including Rev. Shirley Jeffrey (appointed in 1972), the first woman to be ordained by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. In 1977 the church facilities were upgraded and plans are now being made for an addition to the building.

Torrance - Zion

The Presbyterian Church in Torrance began without any church building. Its beginnings are to be found in the log schoolhouse in which a Sunday School was started in 1875. Students from Knox College, coming to serve in Balaz, started Sunday morning services in the school too, moving to homes during the winter months. In 1915 a lot was acquired from William Jestin and a plan was procured to build the "cottage church." The entire community was canvassed to raise funds and in this the ladies of the area played no small part. So, in the fall of 1915, the work began. On Sunday, August 6th., 1916, Zion Church was dedicated.



A thorough spring housecleaning was the order of this day!



An earlier view of Zion's interior before modern furnishings were added.

Both pictures provided by Rev. Topping

Here in Vankoughnet in pioneer days
Presbyterians gathered to sing psalms of praise.
They wanted a church, so in God's great plan,
He 'nuded' David Gray to offer some land.
Their first good intention (and in this there's no shame),
Was to build out of logs, but, instead it was frame.
Before it was finished, 'tis quite sad to say,
They attended the funeral of Mr. Dave Gray.
And so in his honor, and as well of Welsh fame,
They decided the church was St. David's by name.
They all worked together to get the job done
And by eighteen ninety, the victory was won.



1890...



1911...

That neat little church amidst forest so thick
In nineteen eleven they decided to brick.
But then came the day
It was time to expand
On went an addition
To building and land.
That great August day
Nineteen eighty-four:
A century of worship-
And preparing for more.

Rev. A. Boyd is the
current minister at
St. David's.



1984...

Some Presbyterian Churches of the Past

Bala



Courtesy of Bob Petry

In response to the church at Bala becoming a United Church in 1925, a group of Presbyterian loyalists withdrew and built this stone edifice near the falls, midway between the United and Anglican churches. It later closed and is now a Baptist Church.

Brown's Brae



Courtesy of Bertha Robertson

Built in 1891, this church was closely associated with the John Robertson family from its inception. Known as "Gibson" Presbyterian Church, it was part of the Baysville-Dorset Circuit. Its history is also tied in with the Norway Point Church. "Gibson" church was torn down in 1964, but it had long been a

United Church before that.

Raymond

This church was built in 1890, but the earlier services were held at S.S.#1 Watt by the same student missionaries that served



Courtesy of Marjette O'Brien

Beatrice and Dee Bank churches. In 1925 it became United and continued to hold church for 40 more years. Early supporters were the Hamiltons, McNeese, Hammells, Codes, Nutts, Rawsons, Wilsons, and Frys.

Portage Church

The Portage Church was opened in 1902 and remained a Presbyterian appointment until 1918. After that it was under the Hillside Mission which ultimately became part of the United Church. The church was closed, then sold in 1968. It was located near the Lake of Bays near the southern terminus of the "Portage Railway." (Photo: Vern Campbell)



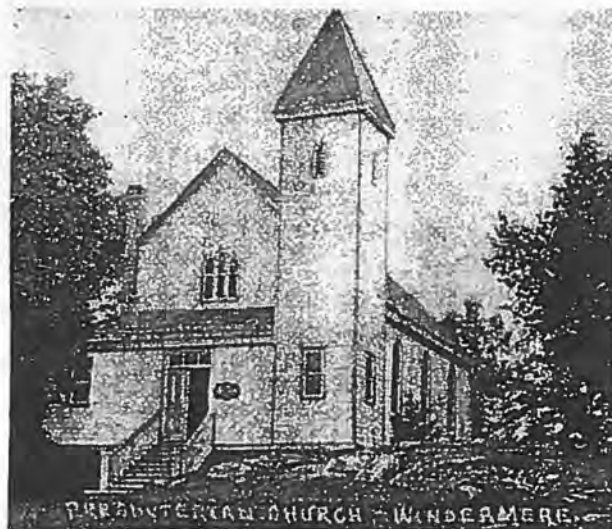
Uttersen

Of this church, Mrs. Enid Brown writes - "... built around 1900. It flourished for a number of years..." By 1918 the Methodists and Presbyterians decided to become one so this church became a manse. It was located south of

the current post office although it is no longer in existence.

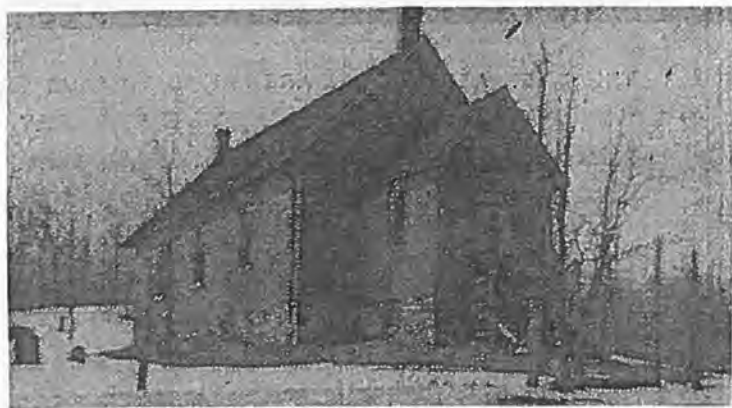
Windermere

The Dee Bank Presbyterian was sold to become a school in 1895. Mr. Henry Longhurst says "The Presbyterian congregation built their church at Windermere and carried on until church union." It was taken down after that time. The location was on a rise of land across from the Anglican Church. Courtesy of Ed. Paulette



III. Ziska

A stone cairn was erected on the property of the Ziska Presbyterian (later United) Church and cemetery to honor 24 pioneer families of this part of Monck Township. Mr. Harry Jackson of the Township Cemetery Board was assisted by Mr. Roy Oaten on this particular project. The cairn was built using the church foundation stones, as the building had been demolished. These events took place in 1975.



The Ziska congregation was a very early one in Muskoka's Presbyterian missions. One acre of land was donated for \$1.00 by John Thompson on November 20, 1873 to trustees John Speedie, Angus Black,

and James Killen. The first regular pastor was Rev. Allan Findlay. Services continued on a consistent basis up until the Second World War.



Back row: Jewel Skinner, Ernie Goltz, Mrs. Goltz, Charlie Kaye, Willie Ewing, ?, Mrs. Charlie Kaye, Mr. Laverty (minister) Front row: Alma Kaye with Helen Jean Goltz, Ethel Skinner with Audrey Kaye, Gertrude Kaye with Gweneth Kaye, Muriel Skinner, Jack Lee. (Photo: Audrey M^cNabb)

Mankind repeatedly goes through extraordinarily stirring times. The years from 1450 to 1650 constituted such a period in the history of Canada. The arrival of Jacques Cartier in 1534 hastened the rivalry between England and France to press claims for the newly found lands of the "New World." Although the motives for such explorations were certainly not religious, eventually "soldiers of the cross" made their way across the Atlantic and established the Roman Catholic Church in early Canada.

Samuel de Champlain first introduced the Order of Récollets in 1615 for the work of conversion and teaching by drawing natives into already settled communities. This did not work. Champlain's support then fell to the Jesuit Order whose method was to instruct the natives in their own familiar environment. Arriving in 1625, the Jesuits established a Huron Mission under the direction of Father Jean Brébeuf and a headquarters was eventually built called Ste. Marie (near present day Midland). A series of attacks in 1648-49 destroyed the more important centres and the saintly Brébeuf (and others) was slowly and horribly tortured to death. The Roman Catholics in Canada early had their own martyrs and highly revered relics, but the mission at Ste. Marie was torched and abandoned in 1649.

An early organizational point in Canadian Roman Catholic history came in 1659 when Laval was appointed Vicar Apostolic of the church in New France. In 1674 he became the official Bishop of Quebec. Until the Diocese of Kingston was erected in 1826, all priests were under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Quebec. The earliest Roman Catholic mission in what is now Ontario was established at Sandwich (near Windsor) in 1797. When the far-flung Diocese of Peterborough was erected in 1882, Bracebridge was the only parish in Muskoka and all others have subsequently stemmed from that source.

Parish of St. Joseph, Bracebridge



The inset photo of the old church is courtesy of Gerry Hitchcock.

The new St. Joseph's Church on Mc Murray Street was first used on the first Sunday of August in 1967. The old church was demolished the next day, a landmark that had been in Bracebridge since 1879. In the process of building the new church, the original two-storey combined chapel and rectory of 1876 was also done away with. It had been built about one year after Bishop Jamot moved his headquarters here from Sault Ste. Marie in 1875. Previous to that time Mass had been celebrated in private homes by priests from Orillia. It wasn't until the coming of Father Michael O'Leary in 1911 that Mass was offered every Sunday. His pastorate lasted until one Sunday morning in 1963 when he died in the church as he was preaching. At that time he was eighty-four. His name lives on with the presence of the Monsignor Michael O'Leary Separate School that was established at Bracebridge in 1987. It had been his dream to have a Separate School in the area but steps taken toward that goal while he was still alive were not in favor with the local parishioners, so the project was abandoned. St. Dominic's Catholic Secondary School was officially opened in temporary quarters on October 29, 1995.

St. Anne's is the oldest mission connected with the Brace-bridge Parish, beginning in 1885 when the priest visited families in the Bruce Lake - Fenn's Point - Port Carling area every three months or so. In 1899 Father Timothy Collins decided to build a small frame church and sacristy on a piece of land beside Lake Muskoka donated by Joseph Fenn. By 1923 the church became overcrowded so Father O' Leary decided it should be moved to make way for a larger church, but kept as a winter chapel. As you can see in the picture it appears as a small addition to the main church which was completely finished in 1926.

In 1942 the Dominion Government built a new wharf near the church which was an asset to those who came to church by boat. Over the years, however, problems arose structurally within the building, so much so that in 1993 the Township of Muskoka Lakes declared it closed. Even though the cost of restoring the building was high, the project went ahead as thousands



of dollars were raised.



of dollars were raised. Jack Fenn headed a group of people who have done a splendid job in renovating the church to modern standards yet retaining the historical characteristics that give it its charm. It truly is the little church that would not die.

Mission of St. John the Baptist, Morinus

High on a bluff overlooking Lake Rosseau a church with twin steeples was built in 1901. The site of the chapel had been donated in 1899 by William McNaughton, a Protestant. The lumber for the original frame section was brought in by boat, and the whole project had a cost of \$800. Today there is an extensive wharf along the shoreline but the first temporary wharf was donated in 1912. The church was enlarged in 1954 and provided with new pews made from Muskoka maple, handcrafted by men of the parish.

Mission of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Beaumaris

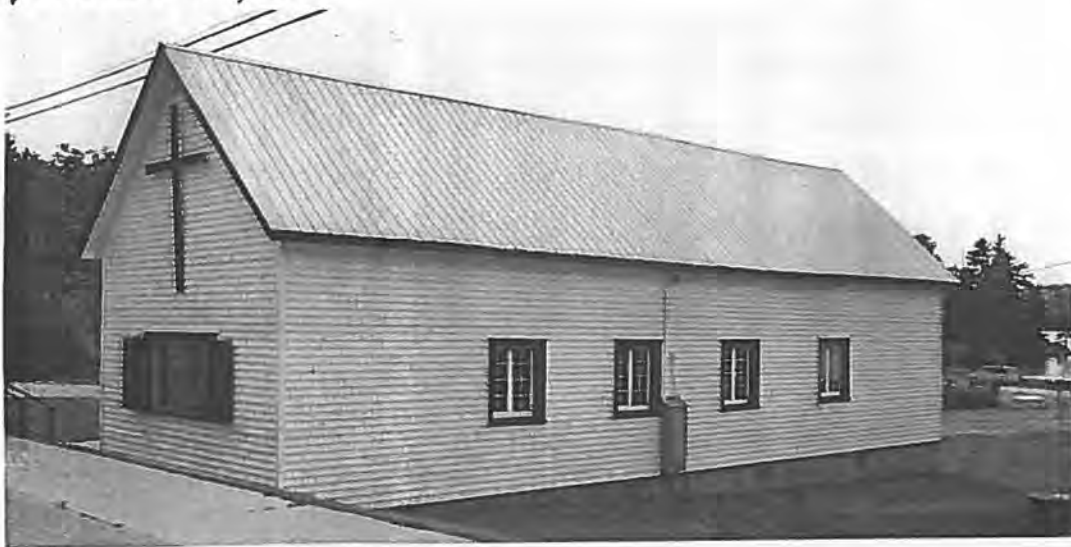
What one brother (Father Patrick O'Leary) started, the other (Father Michael O'Leary) brother finished with the help of donations from the Irish girls who worked for prominent Pittsburg families who vacationed at Beaumaris. The building was started in 1909, finished in 1912, moved in the 1920's, bricked in 1933, then was eventually closed after the 1945 Beaumaris Hotel fire.



Mission of St. Michael, Rosseau
(Parry Sound District)

116.

Before 1960, Mass was celebrated in the homes of the Bissonette and Lalonde families. It was Father John Hickey of Bracebridge who brought up the idea of a chapel in Rosseau so a site was found that was about a block from the main corners in the village, and it extended to the lake where docking facilities were located. Under the leadership of Eugene Bissonette the building located on the lot (a former butcher shop turned motel) was made ready as a chapel for dedication by the Bishop on June 1, 1961.

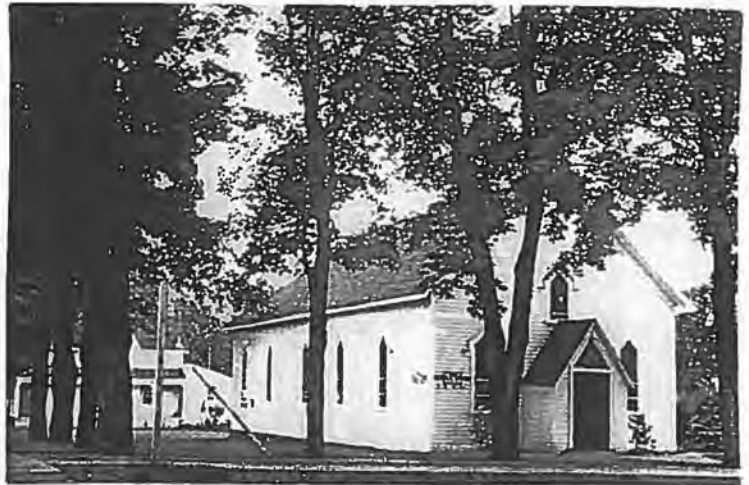


Mission of Our Lady of the Lake, Craigie Lea
(Parry Sound District)



Mass was said on Mondays in the home of Louis Lalonde as the early records reveal. It was in 1937 that authorization was given to build a church which was then started, later to be completed in 1940 and dedicated on June 7th. by the Bishop. This building is located quite close to Stanley House, a property owned by the Jesuit organization and it was from here that priests came to celebrate Mass in the summer

The original St. Paul's, here on the right, was built in 1877. It escaped destruction by the disastrous town fire of 1887. It was made larger in 1903 then renovated and redecorated in 1937. Besides ministering to regular and summer



parishioners, its clergy reached further afield as well to the sanatorium, prisoners of war camp, patients at the Ontario Hospital, and inmates at the Beaver Creek Correctional Camp. In 1945, St. Paul's was established as a parish with Sparrow Lake as a mission. By 1972 property south of the old church was ready for the construction of a new building "designed with simplicity and openness" that was in keeping with the Muskoka region. In August it was ready for use.



Father Joseph Michel, a French priest from Uptergrove, visited the area around Gravenhurst in 1864 and held Mass in various homes around Sparrow Lake, but especially the home of William Young. Although the main congregation was established at Gravenhurst, by 1918 Mass was being celebrated more regularly at Sparrow Lake so it was decided to erect a summer church. On the twelfth of July, 1922, the building was started then completed slowly as funds became available. Sacred Heart Church was finally dedicated on August 17, 1930. This mission was closed in the early 1970's.

Parish of St. Mary of the Assumption, Huntsville 118.

One of the earliest Catholic families to settle in the vicinity of Huntsville was that of Michael Brennan who homesteaded at Port Sydney about 1860. Despite the fact that regular visits by a priest didn't happen until 1875, this family, and others who followed, retained and practised their faith. Another station for Mass in the early days was at the Poirier home near Williamsport.

In Huntsville itself, Mass was first celebrated in 1885 in the home of William Whyte who had just arrived from Nova Scotia. Thirteen years later when the fieldstone church overlooking Hunter's Bay was opened, the mission only had twenty families. Interestingly enough, no special collections were taken and the church was built debt free. In 1923, Huntsville was elevated to a parish with Father Michael S. O'Brien as pastor. By then there were several hundred Italian people residing and working in Huntsville. Father O'Brien was a wise choice for priest because he had spent three years in Rome before his ordination (in 1916) and had acquired excellent usage of the Italian language. In the post-war era, the old church increasingly was unable to cope with the Sunday morning crowds so new property was sought. The new St. Mary's was opened on June 22, 1960. A rectory was added to this Centre Street church in 1971. The old church was sold in 1970 and finally was taken down.

St. Mary's Separate School was established in Huntsville in the 1980's, being part of the Nipissing District R.C. School Board.



Mission of St. George, Baysville

Before Father Jamot was transferred from Bracebridge to become the first Bishop of the Peterborough Diocese, he suggested, in 1881, that a church be built at Baysville. A committee, consisting entirely



of Smith family members, oversaw the completion of the small church (pictured on the left) in the fall of 1881 - the first of the three churches that sat nearby each other on lots donated by W.H.

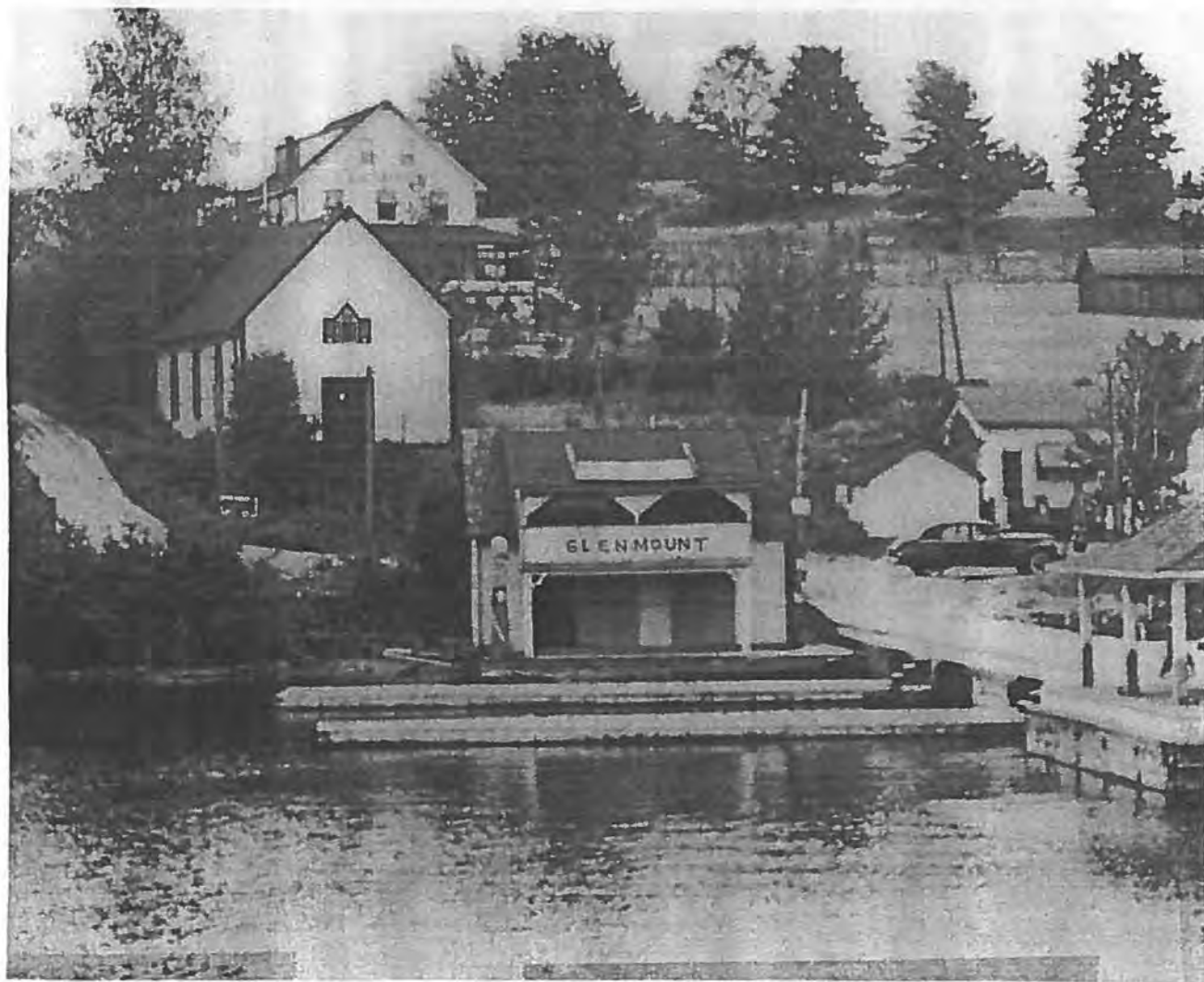
Brown, the founder of Baysville. Indeed it was the Smiths and the Kellys, who had settled around Brown's Falls in 1873 and 1871 respectively, that formed the backbone of the church for many years. The first Mass in Baysville was said at the Smith home in 1875. As the years progressed the church remained adequate for the permanent congregation but not the summer visitors. The mission at Glenmount relieved some of the problem but finally a move was made, first to the community centre, and then, in 1988 to the new church.



The scene below depicts the setting of St. Patrick's Church overlooking the Lake of Bays with the Glenmount Hotel behind it. The church was built in 1932 and was used as a summer church until it was closed in 1970. The building is now used as a base for water recreation activities. Its history is intertwined with

The Dorset Mission

Although no church was ever built in Dorset, Catholic families, such as the Dan McIlroys, were visited by priests from Huntsville. From 1893 to 1925 Dorset received Mass two or three times a year. In 1921 a summer mission opened at the Wa Wa Hotel. After it burned in 1923, services were transferred to "The Pavilion," a part of the hotel site that was used until the Glenmount Church opened in 1932.



Courtesy of Chris Karn

121.

Parish of Our Lady of Mercy, Honey Harbour
Mission of St. John the Baptist, Port Severn

This is a unique corner of Muskoka. There are two Roman Catholic Churches closer together here than anywhere else in the district.



The first church in Honey Harbour was built in 1909 and its construction only took five days. The above building was opened in September, 1950, but was started in September, 1944.



This church opened in 1956 replacing the original frame lumberman's church built at Port Severn in the 1860's. The old frame church burned in 1961.

Baxter Township, and specifically the Port Severn (once ^{122.} known as Severn Mills) area, was a bustling lumbering community in the 1850's and was almost exclusively English speaking. In 1869 the Dodge family of New York entered the scene and expanded the lumbering business, drawing in even more people. As was the custom, the Dodge Company had a church built at Port Severn that was shared by Methodists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians. In the 1860's the Catholic Diocese built what became known as the lumberman's church.

It was in the 1870's and 1880's that French-Canadian bush-workers began to migrate into this area to employ their skills in the logging business. They settled in and by 1909 opened their own francophone Separate School at Point aux Pins (about half way between Port Severn and Honey Harbour) where, at first, French was the only language of instruction. A second Separate School opened at Honey Harbour in 1928, where eventually all Catholic education was centralized in 1945 with the building of a cement block school.

Meanwhile, in 1896, the Georgian Bay Lumber Co. mill burned down leaving the community in economic depression. The English-speaking people moved out - taking their Protestant Church with them to Fesserton - leaving the francophone population pretty much in isolation and without work. It was the tourist industry that ultimately saved the day but that took time to develop.

The history of the mission began in 1878 with the arrival of the Tobey family. It was then that Jesuit priests began to visit the area, sometimes canoeing down from Manitoulin Island to say Mass. Beginning in 1917 the churches were cared for from Parry Sound until Honey Harbour was made a parish in 1943 with Father James Collins as pastor. Under his leadership a new school, a parish house, a Sisters' convent, and a new church were built before he left in 1956.

Mission of St. James the Apostle, MacTier

The original Catholic Church in MacTier was opened officially on July 25, 1915, not long after Bishop O'Brien toured the area and decided it was needful to have a church here. In May of 1950 the first church burned as the result of a neighboring rubbish fire. A newly completed church was blessed on October 15, 1950, and remains in use although it has been enlarged and renovated. MacTier is a mission within the parish of St. Peter at Parry Sound.

Summer Missions

At least two summer missions are held in Muskoka, but the congregations meet in facilities other than church buildings. Since the 1930's Mass has been celebrated at Bala, beginning at Dunn's Pavilion - and later The Kee to Bala. A summer mission is also held at Dwight.

Note: "From the Pioneers to the Seventies" by Edgar J. Boland, published in 1976, has been my main resource for this denomination. Mr. Boland's work covers the history of the Diocese of Peterborough (1882-1975) and beyond that in time to the formative years. It is an excellent resource.

Salvation Army

124.

Poverty, overcrowding, alcoholism, and child labor were all part of the price of the industrial revolution in Britain. The conditions so vividly portrayed in the writings of Charles Dickens were not being effectively addressed by the normal church activities. Among those who realized something must be done was a New Connexion Methodist minister named William Booth.

At the age of 26, Booth left his church and became an independent revivalist. In 1865, he founded a Christian Mission in London which he referred to as a "Volunteer Army." His son disliked the term "Volunteer" because of the stigma attached to it, so Booth stroked out the offending word and wrote "We are a Salvation Army." The thought of a disciplined army headed by a General appealed to Mr. Booth's imagination and the Salvation Army was launched. It was 1878.

Set up on the pattern of the British Army, it soon had uniforms, brass bands, military terminology and mighty bass drums! An innovative move was the inclusion of women officers of all ranks. Indeed, General Booth's wife, Catherine, was an outstanding preacher. Ridiculed and persecuted, the Salvation Army grew and gained respect for its spiritual integrity and comprehensive social programs.

Its flag symbolized the motivational spirit of what one British Prime Minister referred to as "one of our best exports to the rest of the world." The flag's colors are:

crimson - personal salvation through
the blood of Christ

blue - typifies holiness

yellow star - indicates the warmth, light,
and refining power of the
Holy Spirit.



The familiar shield
of the "Sally Ann."

The Bracebridge Corps



General Booth (pictured here in 1906, one year before he briefly stopped in Bracebridge) once said, "Some men's passion is art, some men's passion is fame, some men's passion is gold - my passion is the souls of men." And for that very reason his Army 'opened fire' here on December 11, 1884. The 'War Cry' reported the occasion using these phrases, "Glorious opening... enemy routed... devil defeated... four souls in the fountain..." James Cathcart

served as the first captain in Dufferin Hall, the old community gathering place built in 1874 that became the town's first Salvation Army barracks. Although the Corps was bustling in those days, the Muskoka Herald reported once that "the early days of the Army in this town were stormy ones and it required a great deal of courage and faith on the part of the officers and members to establish the work here. Frequently open-air services were interrupted and disturbances occurred at the barracks meetings. Many times it was necessary to call in the services of the law for protection..."



Eventually it became necessary to occupy a different building further along Ontario Street. That hall and the officer's quarters are pictured here as they were in 1931. This old Corps was condemned in the 1940's, so for

awhile tent meetings were held on Wellington Street - and the house was used for services too.

Using some materials from the old barracks in the process, a basement opened for services on March 17, 1951. Located now at the top of 'Salvation Army Hill,' the completed Citadel was officially dedicated on July 3, 1954. It remained 'home' for the Salvation Army until they relocated to a new location in 1990. On March 25th. of that year the officers and soldiers marched from Dominion Street to Toronto Street (now Taylor Road) where they 'opened fire' again with a series of rousing, spiritual meetings. The new church is shown below along with Captains Ivan and Pauline Budgell who have the distinction of being the longest serving officers in the Bracebridge Corps (1991 to 1996).



1951...



1954...



1990...



Ivan and Pauline Budgell on the evening of their farewell service →.

The Gravenhurst Corps

The work of the Salvation Army in Gravenhurst opened on January 17, 1885, under the leadership of Captain Robert Bell. The following year the familiar Citadel beside the Methodist (later United) Church was erected and within a year was pressed into service as a temporary classroom due to the town fire that destroyed the public school. It still occupies the site but is now a business venture following the decision to build a new church further north on Muskoka Road.

In the earlier days of the Salvation Army, short appointments were the norm, officers changing after staying for just a few months. Difficult times fell on the Corps and by 1910 regular services and work had to be discontinued due to insufficient funds. However, one Corps member, Jane Elizabeth Stickells, refused to capitulate. She faithfully held Sunday School and prayer meetings, made and sold quilts, and encouraged others to participate until the Corps reopened in 1922. Mrs. Stickells received The Order of the Founder for her sacrificial efforts - the first Canadian Salvationist to ever be so honored.

The Corps began to broadcast weekly services for patients at the sanatorium, beginning in December, 1947. Later on they held Sunday School for residents of the Muskoka Centre. In between times, December 1951 saw the first Christmas Cheer kettle on the main street of town to raise money for hampers for the needy. In 1956 a block-brick extension was added to the original building to provide, among other things, a storage place for used clothing. This evolved into a small thrift shop which, at first, was open every Friday for the convenience of the public. Although the old building received a new roof and siding in 1968, within a few years it was realized the ministry could function more effectively from a modern structure. To that end construction began in early 1996 on the new Corps, which opened October 5th.



The new Salvation Army Corps building was officially opened on October 5, 1996 after a march from the former barracks further down the street. The project began under the leadership of Major Sandra Lewis, now retired. Captain Karyn Kerr is the current Corps Officer. Shown below is the original Salvation Army Hall of 1886 as it appeared in the later 1960's. As of the printing of this book in late 1996, the new Salvation Army Hall is Muskoka's newest church edifice.



The Huntsville Corps

Built in 1898
by W.G.L.
Hunt, this
original hall
could seat
200 and was
leased from
Mr. Hunt for
\$8.50 per
month.



Official opening date:

August 28, 1886

First officer:

Captain Minnie Fraser

First barracks:

6 Mary Street East as
shown on the left

Officers who served:

26 women 42 men

Officer when the building was torn down in 1945: Capt. Reg Hollman

An interesting personality of this era: J. Frank Kelly who later
became Huntsville's mayor and Muskoka's M.P.P. - known for
his musical ability both in voice and with band instruments.

Second hall:

6 Mary Street East

Official opening:

March, 1946

Officer at the opening:

Captain Reg. Hollman

until June 30, 1948

Officers who served

1 woman 20 men

Officer when the building
was demolished in 1982:

Capt. David Patterson

An interesting personality: Mr. William George Lanford Hunt, who

at the time of his death on June 8, 1963
was the oldest living member of the Sal-
vation Army in Canada as well as Hunts-
ville's oldest resident. Born in 1867 at
Woodstock, he held the distinction of be-
ing the first musician to play with the
Salvation Army in Canada, starting with a
flute-type instrument; later he played a
cornet. His daughter Viola plays in the



current Corps band. Mr. Hunt came to Huntsville in 1892, the year of his marriage to Fanny Porter of Hamilton, and was prominent in the painting and decorating trade from 1896 on. He was 96 when he died, after an illness of only three days.

The Songster Brigade as it appeared in the late 1940's.

Back row:

Wilf Brown, Bob Carr, Ralph Ingleby, Bill Billingsley, George Bruce, Ivan Carr,

Emerson Cryderman. Middle: June Muir, Ethel Carr, Margaret Lane, Ruth Cryderman, Irene Cryderman, Vera Billingsley.

Front: Ivy Muir, Nona Brown, Captain Hewitt, Ivan Cryderman, Mrs. Hewitt, Mrs. Ingleby, Mrs. Gertie Hunt.



Third Citadel: Mary Street Official Opening: October 27, 1984,
 "for the glory of God and the salvation of the people."

Officers who have served: Capt. David Patterson (1981-85); Capt. Lorne Pritchett (1985-88); Lieut. Lloyd George (1988-93); Capt. (now Major) Roy Randell (1993-)



One of the prominent features of the newest Citadel in Huntsville is its large stained glass window, locally crafted by a firm in the town. Although stained glass is not often found in Salvation Army buildings, this particular one is considered as one of the largest in the denomination and portrays its famous motto.

Something else that is unique to this Corps, for this part of Ontario at least, is its cemetery. Located on lot 11, concession 3 of Chaffey Township, "These Our Ancestors Were" declares it was registered to General Evangeline Booth in 1910, and lists nearly thirty plots.



Camp Newport

In the early 1960's, the Ontario North Division of the Salvation Army purchased a 30-acre camp on the north shore of Skeleton Lake. Known as Newport Lodge, the property was originally owned by the well known Darling family of Stisted Township. With its beautiful sand beach, the site was ideally suited for summer fresh-air camps for children. However, the first group to take advantage of the facility was the Home League (with 52 ladies in attendance). Although the rustic Muskoka setting has been maintained, the buildings are modern and well-equipped to handle a wide variety of camps for men, women, children, music, families, etc. Camp Newport is located west of Aspden.

General Willian Booth was promoted to glory on August 20, 1912.

Adventism in general is a Christian faith based upon the tenet that the second advent of Christ is the sole hope of the world. It began as a religious movement in the 1830's when there was an unusual interest in Bible prophecy, particularly in the northeastern United States. One of the early influential leaders was a Baptist named William Miller, thus the group was regularly called the Millerites.

They came to believe that Christ would return sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. People among many denominations subscribed to this conjecture only to be greatly disappointed. Although many then withdrew from the Millerite teachings, some were "imbued with the desire to propagate their new religion." (J. Ernest Monteith, *The Lord is My Shepherd*, pg 24). Authors such as Ellen White fostered the idea regarding the seventh-day sabbath and by 1855 were strong enough to form a group now commonly known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

With zeal and earnestness they entered Canada via Quebec when the first company of Canadian seventh-day sabbath keepers was organized at Westbury by the Boudreau brothers in 1864. A similar group first organized in Ontario in Lampton County in 1876.

Walker's Point

Shortly after the turn of the century Mr. Morse and his family settled in this area and began to hold Seventh-day Adventist services. Unfortunately two of the three Morse boys lost their lives in a tragic drowning accident in the lake. Mr. and Mrs. Morse deemed it wise to move away from the Walker's Point community and begin life anew elsewhere, thus ending this earlier Seventh-day Adventist initiative.

Bracebridge

Although members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had lived in Muskoka for a number of years, they had no church so they met in homes or drove to either South River or Barrie where there were churches. In 1972 this group got together and started to hold services in the chapel at Gravenhurst's Trinity United Church. Meetings were continued and funds were collected with the idea in mind to obtain a church of their own. Finally a suitable property with a small building on it was found across from the Bracebridge O.P.P. office. In December 1980 the deal closed and the Bracebridge church was made ready for occupancy in 1981. After that mortgage was paid off, new fund raising efforts began to provide for a new church. On June 15, 1994, the official ground breaking ceremony was held with Mayor Jim Lang; Elder Bacchus of the SDA Ontario Conference; Gerald Cox, the architect; and Ernest Mueller, the builder. Actual work began on September 1, 1994 with the excavation of the site by P. Medley and Sons. The project was completed within a year, the first Sabbath service taking place on July 15, 1995. The pastor of the church from 1993 until the current time has been Rev. Fred Irish (not to be confused with the Rev. Fred Irish of the Free Methodist Church!)



The United Church of Canada



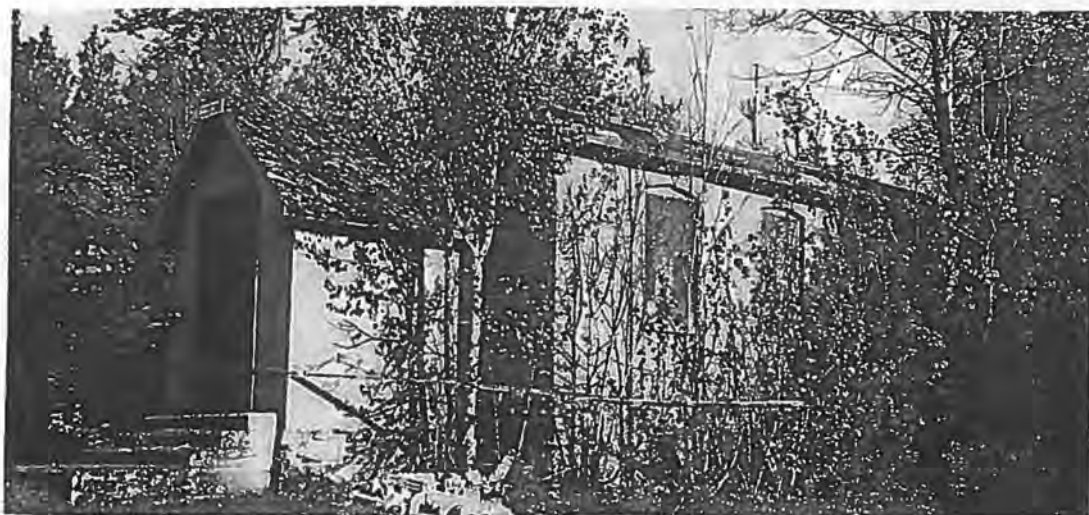
134.

The United Church came out of three united churches.

1. Presbyterian - formed one body in 1875
2. Methodist - joined forces in 1884
3. Congregational - union came about in 1906.

On June 10, 1925 the latter two, and two thirds of the Presbyterians, became the United Church of Canada. These historical roots are recognized in the church seal shown above - the burning bush (Presbyterian), the dove (Methodist), and the open Bible (Congregationalist). Muskoka did not have any Congregational churches. All of the existing Methodist churches became United and all but six of the Presbyterian churches joined the new denomination. Currently there are twenty-five (three more when we consider Rosseau, Novar, and Dorset) United Churches in Muskoka

The derelict building shown below is located west of Morrison Lake beside Muskoka Road 13. The grey-brick church was built in 1932-33 by people in the area who desired a place of worship. Expecting to have the services of the United Church minister at Gravenhurst, that did not happen. Until the end of World War II, Mr. Horace Bradley ministered in the summertime. Unfortunately the building became the target of vandals and pilferers as the years passed. In 1996 the roof caved in under a heavy snow load. The property, originally given by William A. Smith, contains a well kept cemetery.



The Methodists

The roots of the Methodist movement are usually traced to a group of divinity students at Oxford, England, who in 1729 formed the Holy Club. This group came under the leadership of John Wesley. The group was derisively referred to as "the Methodists" because of the strict habits maintained by its members in their daily lives. Although John Wesley lived and died an Anglican, his ministry led to the birth of a very large denomination, but that came after his death. Methodist Societies began to form in the American colonies in 1765 and were first brought to Ontario by various laymen a little more than a decade later. There was a system of travelling preachers that served various congregations (societies) or fledgling groups (classes) within a region or circuit. In between visits of the itinerant preacher key lay people were instrumental in keeping the religious life of the community going. They were known as class leaders, exhorters, and local preachers. Likely the first Methodist circuit rider in Muskoka was Rev. J. L. Kerr who ventured north of the Severn River in 1861 on behalf of the Wesleyan Methodists. Rounding Pattison came in 1863 for the Primitive Methodists, with Rev. Gillman Wilson coming as a Methodist Episcopal about the same time. A fourth Methodist group known as the New Connexion Methodist Church had a following in the Huntsville area under Rev. R. N. Hill by 1870-71.



The circuit rider shown here is Rev. Egerton Ryerson Young, taken at Gravenhurst circa 1912. My thanks to Barbara Paterson and Pioneer Memorial United Church for use of the picture. To give us an idea of what a circuit entailed, the following is a list of "The Wesleyan Methodist Plan for Preaching on the Musk-

oka Circuit for 1871." The preaching places were located at Bracebridge, Taylor's, Zimmerman's, Finch's, Falkenburg, Severn Bridge, Morrison's House, River Severn, Sparrow Lake, Draper, South Falls, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Brunel, Utterson, Three Mile Lake, and Port Carling. We can certainly appreciate the need for a good horse and lots of stamina!

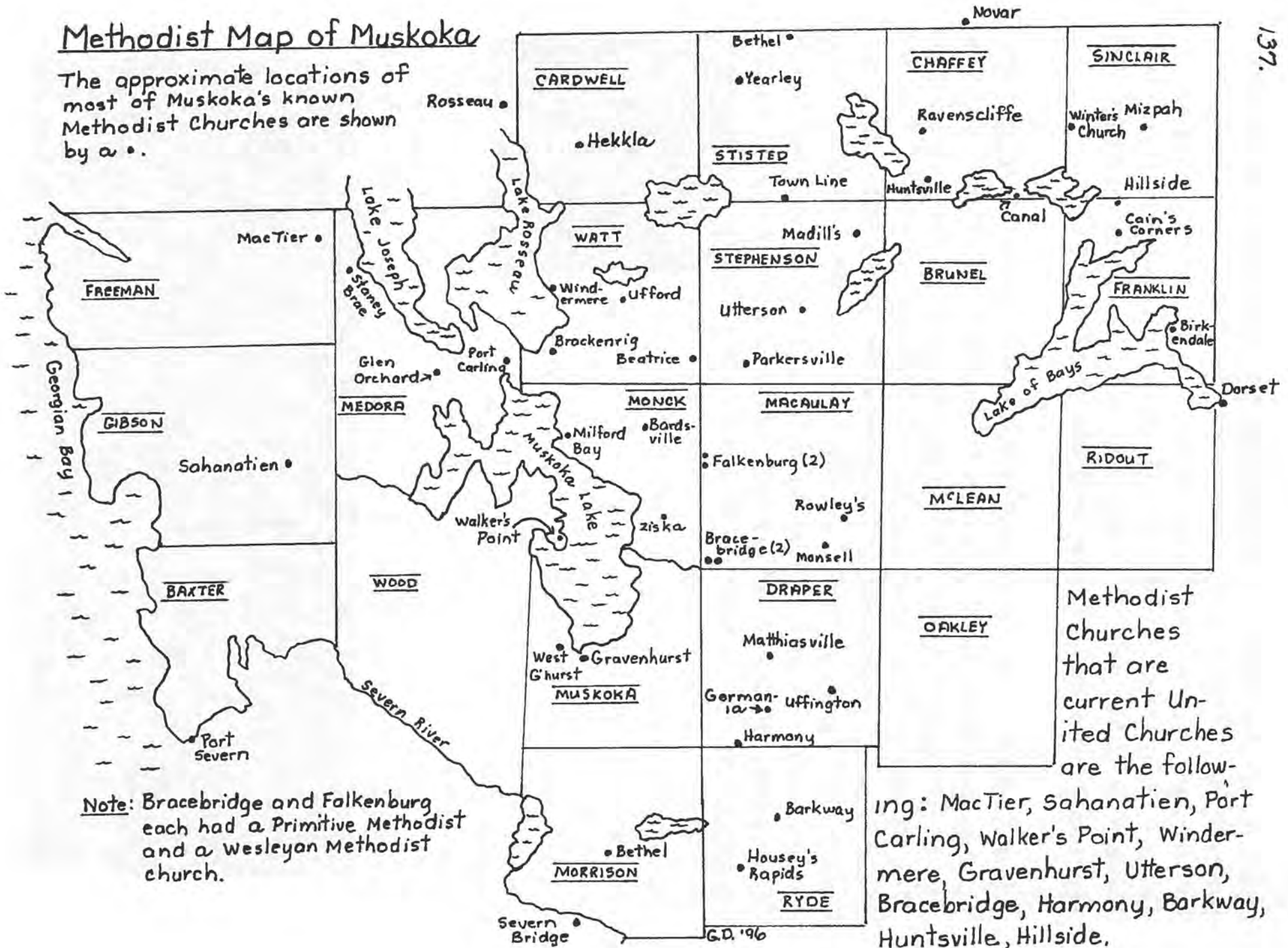
Ideally each "appointment" would eventually develop into a congregation large enough to warrant a church building. That, of course, wasn't always the case and on occasion the congregation was maintained but met in rented facilities. That is what happened with Zimmerman's noted above, a group that first gathered at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Zimmerman, then S.S. #4 Macaulay schoolhouse, and finally (until the 1960's) met at the Macaulay Town Hall (built in 1885, but pictured here as it was in 1947).

Mr. George Langford's Bible Class is shown here at a picnic, early in the 1900's. Left to right standing: Lou Langford, Dick Zimmerman, Bill Gohm, John Sloper, Frank T. Denniss, Ted Zimmerman, Ernie Kellett, Art Zimmerman, Bill Armstrong, Ernie Bruce, Mrs. Wm. Fisher and son Tom. Seated: Al McLeod, Annie Zimmerman, George Langford, Annie Sloper, Annie Cockburn, Kate Denniss, Miss Spence (teacher at S.S. #4 1900-01), George Zimmerman, Elsie MacGregor, Mary Zimmerman, Jennie Armstrong.



Methodist Map of Muskoka

The approximate locations of most of Muskoka's known Methodist Churches are shown by a •.



Note: Bracebridge and Falkenburg each had a Primitive Methodist and a Wesleyan Methodist church.

Methodist Churches that are current United Churches are the following: MacTier, Sahanatien, Port Carling, Walker's Point, Windermere, Gravenhurst, Utterson, Bracebridge, Harmony, Barkway, Huntsville, Hillside.



Bardsville: This old log church was dedicated in July, 1876, the same day as its counterpart at Point Kaye. Mrs. Thelma Matchett gave me this picture of the church as it appeared in Bardsville but it later was de-sided and sat at the Woodwinds Historical Museum of Mr. and Mrs. John W. Schell at Walker's Point. Photo: Thelma Matchett



Canal: This old church was once a bunkhouse for the workmen who dredged the connecting waterway between Fairy Lake and Peninsula Lake. It served the Methodist cause from 1890 until the 1960's, then was later torn down to make way for a new road and bridge.



Falkenburg: This small log church sat on ground that is part of the cemetery near St. George's Anglican Church. Built by the Primitive Methodists in 1863-64 it was one of three churches built by that group in Macaulay (the others being at Monsell and Bracebridge). Photo: United Church Archives



Mizpah: Called Nelson's Appointment in its earlier days due to that family's involvement, the frame church was built in 1895-96 "located on Park Road in the grove near the graveyard..." (which is now known as Muskoka Road 8, north of Highway 60). The church closed in 1907, but the material was re-used in Limberlost School built in 1933. A plaque marks the site Photo: Iris Robinson of the church at the cemetery.



Parkersville: Listed in 1871 as Finch's Appointement, a church is indicated on lot 9, concession 1 of Stephenson Township in the old Muskoka Atlas.

This building was sold to the S.S.J.E. in the early 1930's at which time it became an Anglican Church. In the picture the church is in the upper left corner with the Parkersville school more in the foreground. Photo: Luther Mills



Uffington: Built circa 1879, this church was once a beehive of Methodism, having 142 members shortly after its opening. The minister on this circuit in 1881-82 was James Woodsworth, father of the CCF Party's founder, J. S. Woodsworth. Both the manse (built in 1884) and church are still in existence in the village although long not used for their original purposes. Photo: Mary McCracken



Ufford: The first church in Watt Township was built on lot 15, concession 5, by the Primitive Methodists in the early 1870's. They first met in private homes, then in Jacob Bogart's Meeting House. Land for the first church was given by John Lily Shear. A new building was put up in 1892-94

that stood as a familiar landmark in the Ufford community until it was torn down in the spring of 1969. A bronze plaque was placed on a stone to commemorate this historic site but the best record of its past is found in "History of the Sheas and Birth of a Township" by Bert Shear. Photo of the second Ufford Methodist Church: Mary Billingsley.

Yearley: This a picture of the Methodist Church at Yearley as it appeared on July 1st., 1896 during a Dominion Day picnic, an annual community tradition held on the church grounds for many years. Although the acre of land for the church was deeded by Robert Yearley to William Quinn and other trustees in 1897, other



accounts indicate that the frame church was opened sometime in 1895. Of the church's history, my late friend Marjorie De-maine writes - "When the log school was no longer used... the church, on lot 10, concession 13, was used. This church used to sit in the graveyard and was moved to its present location... by Mr. Lorenzo Howell (an ingenious gentleman who died in 1929) and his team of oxen Buck and Bright. Two small boys, Leslie Yearley and Billy Howell had a ride in the church while it was being moved." With a change in the windows, the addition of a porch and red insulbrick siding, the building served as a school until 1951 and continued as a church and community hall after that - and continues to do so.

In the days of Rev. Alfred Laycock, Yearley was a summer church on his lengthy circuit in an area he said had "six months of winter and six months of bad sleighing." From his home beside Huntsville's west end "Archway", Rev. Laycock served churches at Aspdin, Madill's, and Etwell one Sunday and Canal, Melissa (at the schoolhouse) and the Locks the next Sunday - all for a salary of \$1200, half of which was paid by the Home Mission Board of the United Church. Jack Laycock (Rev. Laycock's son), remembers the introduction of the larger sized Canadian nickel in 1920 and his mother's comment that "the big nickel was made for church collections!" And how well she knew - at one church there often were just "5 nickels on the plate."

141.

Ziska: This former church sat on the southwest corner of lot 10, concession 5 of Monck Township, roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile south of the Ziska Presbyterian Church. As far as I can determine its short life as a Methodist Church ended in 1890 when it became the Monck Township Hall. I took this photo in 1968 but the building was by then in a derelict state. It no longer is in existence.



West Gravenhurst: A Methodist Church existed in this community reaching back to 1879 when a lot was purchased at the corner of Water and McPherson Street where a church was built. The congregation first met in a local carpentry shop. The Methodist work here met with a great deal of opposition but despite that, Mr. R.B. Scriven operated a Sunday School that attracted upwards of sixty children. The original church burned in the early 1920's but a replacement was built which served as a Union Church that eventually evolved into a Community Church. There is no church in West Gravenhurst anymore, and I, as yet, have not been successful in finding a photo of either of the above noted buildings.

Brackenrig: The small frame church pictured at the left below as built in 1885-86 on property donated by William Trout-



en. Eventually it became a United Church in 1925. Known as St. John's, this congregation used S.S.#4 Watt school after it closed in 1949. In 1960 Brackenrig United joined with Port Carling.



Thank you to Audrey Edwards for photos and information too.

Aspdin



Pictured here is Mr. Andrew Sproat who came to Canada as an orphaned boy of twelve. Born in Scotland in 1844, he eventually located on lot 15, concession 4 of Stisted Township in 1871, cleared some land then brought his bride to Muskoka where they labored against many hardships during the early pioneer days. On March 31, 1899, his wife died leaving a young family of two sons and six daughters. But despite the difficulties, Mr. Sproat took a keen interest in the affairs of his township.

He was assessor, collector, councillor, reeve and a Justice of the Peace. He gave wise counsel to many that came seeking a way out of their various troubles. In religion he was an active Presbyterian, being one of the founding trustees of the church at Aspdin (along with Samuel Summerville and John Darling), in 1878. His funeral was held on April 24, 1926 from his residence to the church which was filled to overflowing with friends and relatives. Three generations later there are still members of the Sproat family involved with this historic church which holds an anniversary service each year the first Sunday of August.

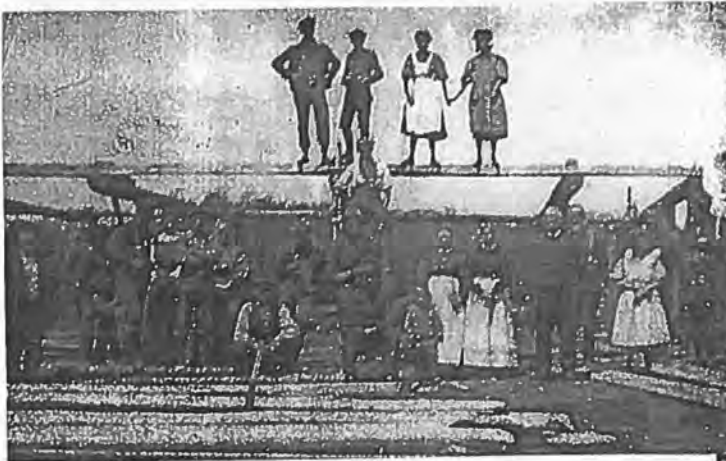


Aspdin Church-1940's

1. Rev. Tucker
2. Henry Sproat
3. Helen Sproat
4. George Darling
5. Nellie Boyes
6. Iona Koehler



Left to right: Susan Bahen, Lloyd Dennis, Mrs. Alf Dennis, Mrs. Waters, Helen Sproat, Janet Clarke, Mrs. Fred Earl, Mrs. Wellerman, ? , Mrs. Bahen, and Mrs. Richard Clarke. The ladies in this group made a quilt in 1929 to raise money for the church. Still in existence, it shows dozens of names of people who contributed.



Men and women both worked in August 1907 to build the drive shed.

Shingling the roof for a second time circa 1930. Rev. Wellerman's Ford Touring car appears on the right.

My thanks to Marilyn Sproat for the photos to the right and above, as well as the one of Mr. Sproat on pg 142.



Aspdin United Church as it looks in 1996. Although the sign says 1882, I believe the building is likely older than that as a church is shown on this site in the 1879 Atlas (which could have been a predecessor of this one).



Like many United Churches in Muskoka, the one at Bala has Presbyterian roots. The original church, pictured on the left, was built about 1892-93 on land donated by Thomas Burgess, the first pioneer to settle in Bala. Although Methodist services were held in the log school-house beginning in 1880,

a later agreement left Bala in care of the Presbyterians. This ecumenical spirit carried over to the church building itself as it was to be made available to other groups as well as the Presbyterians. Further still, the congregation voted to be the Union Church of Bala in 1921 and finally, in 1925, became a United Church. Not everyone agreed with this decision and a group of continuing Presbyterians withdrew and built their own stone church building nearby. On March 11, 1934 the pine lumber church burned forcing the congregation to rebuild on the site of the former edifice. The current buff colored brick church was dedicated in May 1935, its bell coming from the Old Commandant Church in Gibson Reserve.



Barkway

The United Church at Barkway has its roots in a Wesleyan Methodist mission that took in appointments (preaching places) at Housey's Rapids, Germana, Uffington, Harmony, and Muskoka Falls at one time. There is some evidence that a small log church was built at lot 15, concession 11 of Ryde Township in the mid 1870's. From a report in the Christian Guardian of April 1883 it is known that the frame church pictured above was dedicated on Friday, March 2nd. of 1883. As often happened, the church officials did not act upon getting a clear title to the property for some time. In this case at Barkway that issue wasn't resolved until June 24th., 1899! The register of church members for 1888 shows the following: Mr. and Mrs. William Merkley, John Rusk, Robert McWade, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rusk, Mr. and Mrs. Fielding, Mrs. J. Rebman, Annie W. Long, Annie S. Long, Mary Long, Wesley Ruttan, Mrs. H. Matz, and Mrs. Benn.

Baysville - Bethune

146.

The church was organized in 1876 by Rev. Allan Findlay with a roll of thirteen members. Rev. Findlay had come to Bracebridge from St. Mary's, Ontario. A family named Haw had just recently moved to McLean Township and Rev. Findlay came



to visit them, as one of the daughters had belonged to his church in St. Mary's. While on that visit he discovered several more Presbyterians so he decided to start a church. At first, services were held in the public school, but there was also a group of Methodists to contend with. Findlay persuaded them to withdraw and the "united" congregation decided to build a church. Impetus for this project came from a Knox College student by the name of Mr. Bethune (later to become the father of the noted Dr. Norman Bethune). Mr. W.H. Brown, a Baysville pioneer, gave the

lot on which the church was built - he also did this for the Anglicans and Roman Catholics of the village. The little frame edifice was formally dedicated on July 29, 1883. One of its special features was the archway at the front of the church handpainted by Mr. J. D. Smith (he was the village hardware merchant and a member of the Roman Catholic Church). The church



147.

was re-located on the lot and then remodelled in 1961-62 when the highway was re-routed at Baysville.



Miss Alberta Langford was church organist at Beth-

une for 53 years and keeper of its rich written and pictorial records. She tells of Peter Burley Bastedo and



his wife Marie who opened their newly built summer home "Burlmarie" for a garden party each summer to raise funds for the church. One such gathering is shown here on the left. It was Mr.

Bastedo who, in 1915, interviewed Mrs. George Wilkins of Baysville with the intention of purchasing her home as a manse for the Baysville-Brown's Brae-Dorset circuit.

The arrangements were completed satisfactorily. The meeting to make the final mortgage payment was held on November 11, 1918. No doubt their joy was especially great when the 'phone call came in that "peace" had been declared in Europe as well.



Bracebridge

148.

In 1961, this church celebrated the centenary of Christian worship in the community. At that time an excellent historical booklet was produced noting that a hundred years earlier Rev. J.L. Kerr, the Wesleyan Methodist minister at Orillia had ridden to North Falls on horseback to hold religious



services for a few families who had settled there. Eventually they met in the Orange Hall until their "beautiful little Gothic frame church" was opened on Dominion Street in December of 1870. Although it was enlarged in 1873, within a few years the need of a larger building was evident. In the meantime, many of the Methodist groups began to amalgamate, which in Bracebridge saw the Methodist Episcopal and the Primitive Methodists unite with the former Wesleyan Methodists. It was this new, one Methodist Church body that planned for and built the original part of the present brick structure in 1888-89. The former frame church was moved to an adjoining lot on Kimberley Avenue where it still exists in modified form. Over



the years major renovations and additions have enhanced the functioning capacity of the church. In 1925 the congregation was increased by over one hundred Presbyterian unionists who joined their Methodist neighbors to form the United Church. Pictured here are Rev. Douglas Muir with his wife Adah and children Cathie and Paul (taken in 1967). His pastorate has been the longest one at the church so far, running from 1957 to 1970.

Dorset - Knox (Haliburton County)

- The Presbyterian Church was
- built in 1894 on the south
- side of the Narrows, on the
- hill overlooking the water.
- Before that, worship services
- were conducted, in the summer months, in the schoolhouse at the head of "Johnnycake Bay."

Rev. Logie, of Fraserburg, not only preached at the school but in homes, at lumber camps, and in the Town Hall on 'Pill Hill' (so named due to the location of the drug store). In 1894 Angus Mackay built his sawmill and the first lumber sawn was donated for the new church. Carpenters on the project were John McLennan I, George Cole, and Eachern McEachern, and they built well. The pews in this church were made in 1914 by Rev. Basil Henry and Erastas Lockman. "The backs were made of black ash v-joint. The pew ends along the aisle were all made from a single yellow birch tree which Angus Mackay cut down, along the Paint Lake Road near the cemetery and school. It was then skidded to the "Tramway" and transported by water to his mill. It was the largest tree that was ever cut in the mill."

In 1923 the church was enlarged by putting an extension on the building to form a chancel. On the road side a bell tower was erected and the windows from beside the door were added to the sides of the building. Although a stone fence was built in 1925, it later was removed. During the church's centennial year of 1994 a new stone fence was made.



As early as 1912 there were serious discussions around the Lake of Bays at the common sense of having two ministers in one small place.

Their thinking was centred on this idea -

"While others having none must suffer for want of a watchful shepherd." The Methodist Church in Dorset (shown above) had been a village landmark for as far back as 1880 or earlier. It was located across the street from the Anglican Church. The end result for Dorset was that there was a form of union set up and working several years prior to the establishment of the United Church in 1925. The old Methodist Church was taken down in 1945.



This church is very fortunate to have a well compiled history of written and pictorial material done by Ruth McLennan in 1994.



Dwight-Stewart Memorial

The United Church at Dwight is located on a beautiful piece of property beside the Lake of Bays. It is an interesting church in that its roots are Baptist and Presbyterian. The building itself was first used on Sunday, August 21, 1887. In 1969 the Sunday School room at the back was first utilized.

In the 1870's, a few families moved to the area from Grey County and began to feel the need of pastoral care. They wrote to the Rev. Alexander Stewart of Durham and in 1883 he began a series of spring through fall annual visits that resulted in the organization of a Baptist Church. Rev. Stewart, who was seventy years old at the time, began to visit homes and preach, resulting in a baptismal service for twenty-six people in the water of the Lake of Bays in front of the present site of the church. Right from the start, the Baptist Church was basically a summer congregation whereas St. Peter's Presbyterian Church (built in 1889) held services regularly throughout the year. But the two churches were never in competition, in fact many Presbyterians knew and admired Rev. J.W.A. Stewart (son of Alexander) and often went to



hear him preach. He took summer services at the Baptist Church here for fifty years. And it was he who felt the time had come to secure the church's future. Most of the original Baptists had died or moved so he looked to the newly created United Church of which St. Peter's (pictured here on

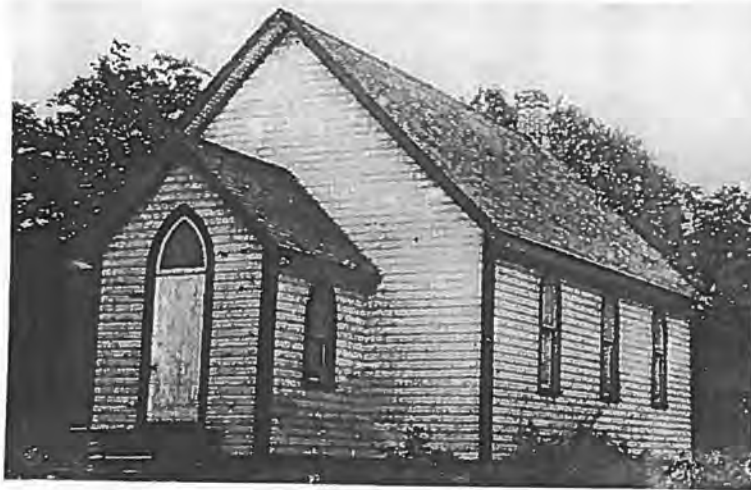
the left) had become a part in 1925. At a meeting on September 20, 1936 the property was transferred and at Mrs. Archie Gouldie's suggestion, the church was named Stewart Memorial in honor of its founder.

The two churches continued in use - Stewart Memorial in the summer and St. Peter's in the winter. In 1967-68 the final integration began. St. Peter's was sold and its windows were moved to the Sunday School room at the Stewart Memorial Church. The Memorial Bell from St. Peter's was erected in the Stewart Memorial Churchyard in June 1978.

The Foundation of Inner Peace

- ☛ Refusal to engage in self-pity when life seems to hand you a raw deal
- ☛ Cultivation of old-fashioned virtues—love, honor, compassion, and loyalty
- ☛ Establishment of reasonable goals, accompanied by realistic standards of self-expectation
- ☛ Belief in something bigger than yourself

- ☛ The absence of suspicion and resentment
- ☛ Refusal to live in the past and to be preoccupied with mistakes and failures
- ☛ Refusal to waste time and energy fighting conditions over which you have no control
- ☛ Determination to stay involved with the world around you and to resist the temptation to withdraw from life

Foot's Bay

Methodists were at work in this area in the early 1900's or sooner. They built this church at Stoney Brae - "The Church in the Wildwood" as it was known to the more poetically inclined members. It was a

very popular church with the summer people around Lake Joseph. At the last it was used as a summer church. It was demolished in 1956.

The building now used as a United Church at Foot's Bay was erected in 1897 as a Baptist Church. All of the basic construction and church furnishings were donated by people interested in seeing a Protestant Church established at Foot's Bay. The Baptist congregation was never very strong numerically and it eventually gave way to the Methodists who began to use the building as a winter church. In 1954 it was purchased from the Baptists with donated funds from Mr. John McClelland (the publisher, and a summer visitor). In 1996 Foot's Bay United Church became a summer only church.



Fraserburg

154.

The zealous efforts of Mr. Malcolm Bethune, the Presbyterian student minister, also bore fruit at Fraserburg where, under his guidance, a frame church was opened on July 5, 1885 (2 years following the Baysville one).



No doubt he was capitalizing on the thriving congregation of 44 people that were meeting fortnightly for service, but where? From the outset, Mr. Hugh Hamilton's home was used for services, and it was there the church was formally organized on September 22, 1877. Forty plus people in a pioneer-sized home would certainly give impetus to forming a trustee board (Wm. C. Fraser, Alex. McKay, and Hugh Hamilton), buying property (April 19, 1884), and building a church in a hurry - they began in



March and moved in in July (although there was still lots to finish). The Sabbath School was established in 1880 and a Ladies' Aid Society was organized in 1899. The picture on the right is how the interior looks at the present time.

Gravenhurst- Trinity

At Trinity United the visitor information packet explains in detail the stories behind three of this church's creative theological expressions of faith: the sculpture (on the church lawn), the dossal curtain, and the balcony tapestry.



Each of these art forms represent many hours of patient work which reminds us of the sacrifices and labor of those who have, down through the years, endeavoured to keep the church open as a special place of worship.

An old picture postcard (above) shows the portion of Trinity that opened on August 8, 1926. This, along with a major addition put on in 1959, is the church of today. But what about the past?

The 1871 "Wesleyan Methodist Plan for Preaching on the Muskoka Circuit" had Gravenhurst listed among its seventeen preaching places, although the congregation wasn't formally organized until 1872. The year after that, the fledgling group began to build a church, but

a downturn in the lumber business caused a serious setback to this plan. So the Methodist Church wasn't opened until 1877 under the leadership of Rev. John Pepper.



Despite the financial difficulties that dogged the early times, the church grew numerically so the building was enlarged. The



picture at the left shows part of the interior and the way it was decorated to pay tribute to Queen Victoria at the time of her death in 1901.

Photos courtesy the Gravenhurst United.

As church union grew as a discussion issue, the Presbyterians and Methodists in Gravenhurst form-

ed a Union Church and in the negotiations at that time, the Presbyterian Manse became the minister's residence.

The old gray frame house on John Street was built in 1880 and has become noted because it was the birthplace of Dr. Norman Bethune who is remembered largely for his heroic work in China. It is pictured here in 1967. Six



years later it was purchased by the Canadian government and is now Bethune Memorial House. I believe we should also commemorate the work of his father, Rev. Malcolm N. Bethune, who also influenced many lives for good.

The original frame church burned down on January 30, 1926 but 220 days later Trinity United Church rose from the ashes and still ministers to this small town today.

Hekkla

The little white frame church in Hekkla once sat at Ashdown Corners in Humphrey Township. It was dismantled and moved with sleighs and horses to its current one acre site, purchased from Jacob and Jouran Einarson in 1897 for \$12.00. The rebuilding project took place in 1900 by volunteer laborers. A box social was held to raise enough funds to purchase the paint and lumber to complete the ceiling. As in so many Muskoka communities, early services were held in various homes. By 1896, there was a strong desire to have a church and a cemetery - this was particularly needed as burials were being taken care of at special places on the farms. A driving shed was built at the back of the church in 1904 to house the horses of the minister and the members. It was also the scene of many Harvest Home suppers, when a table and woodstove were put in for the occasion. Until July 1, 1915, this congregation was Methodist, then it bore a Presbyterian designation until it became a United Church in 1925. Its pews and pulpit came from the Rosseau Methodist Church. Writing in 1975, Ella Godfrey noted with sadness the closing of the church in 1965 - except for an annual service each August. A walk among the monuments in the churchyard reveals the Icelandic heritage of this picturesque Cardwell Township community.



Harmony

158.



Harmony United Church is located on lot 6, concession 1 of Draper Township at the corner where the "town-line" road with Ryde Township meets the sideroad that travels north to McLean's Corners. The property was purchased from the Woollings family in 1894 for \$25.00. The stone foundation is still intact that supports the superstructure that was built in 1895. The register of church members in 1898 shows the following: Mr. and Mrs. William Stamp, Walter Tingey, Mrs. C. Tingey, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Woolling (from whom the property was purchased), Mrs. Workman, William Woollings, Daisy Woollings, James Woollings, and Mrs. Jesse White. In that list Mr. Stamp was noted as being the Local Preacher, which in Methodism meant he had a licence to preach in the local congregation if no ordained minister was available. Mr. Joseph Woollings is noted as a man of many talents - Class Leader (which we would now call a small group leader or facilitator), Steward (visitor of the sick or mourning etc), and Sunday School Superintendent (in charge of the group as a whole giving leadership in singing, teaching).



Few churches the size of Hillside United have such a comprehensive recorded history as that prepared on their behalf in 1992 by Barbara Paterson. It highlights the details of the life of the church's founder, Rev. Robert Norton Hill, a minister with the New Connexion Methodist Church and the first settler east of Huntsville. Described as a man of princely presence, an able speaker, and having an intelligent knowledge of theology, it is not surprising that Rev. Hill devoted much of his time with the "Vernon Mission", once saying "the hardest work of my life physically is the work of the mission but I have reason to regard it as my appointment from God..." In 1874 he built "Hillside Villa" (now at the Muskoka Pioneer Village) where four years later he operated a post office that he called Hillside. Meanwhile he and his neighbours were instrumental in establishing a school section with the resulting log schoolhouse (built in 1875) providing the venue for Rev. Hill to preach in until February 11, 1892 when the church building across the road was opened. Additions and improvements have been made to the church in 1953, 1975, and 1990.



In writing about the very early days of Methodism at Huntsville, Mr. Jack Laycock says- "Methodism was the first denomination to come ... when Rev. R.N. Hill conducted the first regular service in the home of Captain George Hunt." This occurred on

October 17, 1869. In time this place of meeting became too small and arrangements were then made to hold services in the Orange Hall. An account in the May 14, 1889 Forester reads- "In the early part of the seventies, Mr. Cann presented the church with a site and a "bee" was held to chop the timber standing on it. Mr. Allan Shay logged and cleared the land for the use of it, and a splendid crop of potatoes and turnips was grown on it that year. In 1874, T.W. Hall settled here... shortly after his arrival steps were taken to build a church... Mr. Hall left before the church was completed... and Rev. R. Toye... who was known in church circles as a pusher, was sent... and before a year he had it ready for opening." From that day to this a church has sat on this property in the heart of Huntsville. The present building was officially opened on October 3, 1897- and was partially rebuilt after fire raged through much of the interior on February 11, 1948.

"The floor rises as it goes to the back from the foot of the communion railing enabling all to see the preacher and who occupies the front pews, if the ladies wear ordinary hats." A Forester Reporter's astute observation - October 1897.

The Locks

On February 25, 1893, John Sampson Scarlett and his wife Emma Anne Scarlett of Powassan donated $\frac{3}{10}$ acre of land to the Brunel Locks Presbyterian Mission. On this property a church was built, the trustees being Daniel M^cEwan and Robert Goodwin (grandfather of the former Mayor of Huntsville, Norm Goodwin). The people of the community worked together diligently to provide this place of worship, shown here in the early 1950's. Although the church saw a period of being closed, it was reopened by Rev.



Fred Berner who came to the Aspden charge about 1918, and continues to function today as part of a three point charge. Mr. Berner is shown below in his non-preaching, but a-good-sport, mode! It is interesting to note that Stan Darling (former M.P. for Parry Sound/Muskoka) is a grandchild of this church's founder.



Thank you to Bernice Lovegrove for her help in providing material.

Madill Church

162.



On July 29, 1962, the provincial government recognized the Madill square-timbered church as one of the few remaining examples of its type in Ontario. An appropriate plaque was unveiled on that occasion by Mr. Archie Madill, son of John Madill after whom the church was named. The actual congregation was founded as early as 1862 when the Wesleyan Methodist missionary held services in the settlers' homes, but they all felt seriously the need of a place of worship. In time, a trustee board was formed and the work progressed as Rev. Alfred Laycock described at the Diamond Jubilee service on July 16, 1935. He wrote, "... to build a church... each family in the new community agreed to take out two rounds of logs... later to be hewn into timber for the new church by John H. Madill... There being many willing hearts and hands, the summer of 1873 saw the building in course of construction... the pioneers present at the raising were the Madills, Macdonalds, Brays, Proudfoots, C. Hogaboam, Scotts, Fetterlys, Spiers, Bradleys', Mawhinneys, Johnstons, W. Hanes and others not so well known."

Rev. Laycock's account goes on to tell of the death of Mrs. Charles Hogaboam, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Madill Sr., who was laid to rest in the new cemetery in May of that same year, "she being the first to sleep there." The project continued as the interior got lathed and plastered, then the windows and doors were put into place. The pulpit and other furnishings were added until the church was in readiness for a formal opening in 1875. Apparently the cost of building Madill Church was \$600. An annual service of commemoration is held here each year.

Madill's Church - 60th. Anniversary - June 16, 1935

Photo from Mr. Jack Laycock.



left to right:

Mrs. Ed. Armstrong, Rev. Berner, ? (partly hidden), Mrs. Madill, ?, Mrs. Joseph Spiers, ?, Mrs. Frank Bradley, William Hanes, Miss Fanny Bray, Wells Bray, Mrs. William Murison, Miss Janet McNichol, Allum Bray, Rev. Alfred Laycock.

I thank my former principal Mr. Jack Laycock for the above photo. His father pastored Aspdin, Madill's, Etwell, Canal, Melissa, and the Locks year round - adding Yearley in the summer!

MacTier

At the end of 1907 B. F. Tracey held services in a house at the south end of the C.P.R. yard in 'Muskoka Station' as MacTier was then called. In early 1908, Rev. Fox of Port Carling started holding church in the new store, later moving in May to the C.P.R. waiting room

under the leadership of Mr. A. J. Leece. With the first train arriving in June, 1908, more settlers started to inhabit the village. By 1910 there was a pressing need for a school and a church. Three women (Mrs. Nobel Sheldon, Mrs. Isaac Boon, and Mrs. William Gostick) started the ball rolling by holding a box social and bake sale. With additional funds raised, the opening of a combined church and school was a welcome addition to the fast growing village. Rev. James Leach was the first Methodist minister to preach here. The Methodists later withdrew and met at Mrs. George Faught's home until their new church was opened in August of 1911. That church is shown on the left in the above photo with the parsonage located to the right. The first official resident minister was Rev. Quair. Rev. James Aikenhead served as pastor here from 1923 until, the new church



was opened nearby in 1925. He stayed for 3 more years. In December, 1995 MacTier United Church amalgamated with Foot's Bay. My grateful thanks to Joy Lee for her help in word and deed.

Milford Bay - Wesley

Wesley Church at its original location.

The Wesley Methodist Church was originally built in 1875 at Point Kaye (now Milford Bay) and was used up until 1969 (as a United Church from 1925 on). The site, with a burial ground at the back, was given to the Society (like an official board) by a Mr. Stocker, who met a premature death by a gun accident before the church was completed. Fifty-nine saw logs were taken to the mill in Port Carling for use in the construction of the "balloon frame" structure. Nine thousand cedar shingles were required to do the roof.

In July of 1876 the Wesley Church was dedicated to the glory of God. Over 200 people congregated at the site where a public tea was served at 4 p.m. in the beautiful grove adjoining the church. This was one of the churches on the Port Carling Circuit.

Wesley Church was moved to the Muskoka Pioneer Village at Huntsville in 1975. It was restored and dedicated on June 19, 1977 and occupies a prominent place on the hillside. The Friends of the Muskoka Pioneer Village provided the financial support to refurbish the church in 1992. It is available for weddings and other appropriate church activities.

Muskoka Falls

166.

Back in the early 1860's when the Presbyterians established their Muskoka Mission, the work at Muskoka Falls was described as being "the most prosperous station." Although that may have been true spiritually, it didn't apply economically because the church building effort initiated in 1868 by Rev. Walter Wright took almost four years to complete. The Muskoka Falls Presbyterian Church wasn't dedicated until Christmas Eve, 1871. No other church congregation in Muskoka has a longer record of worshipping in the same facility.



The church's historical booklet (1969) draws attention to the fact that this church originally occupied a site "at the junction of two colonization roads" those being named the Muskoka and the Peterson Roads. Although many changes have been made to improve the structure of the building, and two additions have provided more space, the reversible pews are still intact and are a unique feature to this church only within Muskoka District. This church's longevity is due, in part, to the community spirit of cooperation and sharing evident from the beginning.

167.

Novar - St. Andrew's

(Perry Sound District)



Both a Presbyterian and a Methodist Church operated in Novar at the time of union in 1925. It was decided then to continue services in St. Andrew's Church and use the Methodist building as a church hall. It was later sold to Perry Township and subsequently was demolished. The earliest services in the area were held west of the village in the log schoolhouse that sat beside the road leading to Cyprus, about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles south of the district boundary line. Here both denominations held services in 1877, then some dissension arose. Ed. Hooey gave land on the south side of Boundary Road, $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles north of the school, where a small Presbyterian Church was built in 1878. It fell in three years later due to a heavy snow load. By 1883 the building was replaced and kept in use for a dozen years. By that time Novar became prominent, so the decision was made to relocate the church. In 1894 a site was procured where the current hemlock lumber church was built, then opened for services in October, 1895. For over seventy years Mrs. Effie Hodgson has been involved at this church as the organist - one of many people throughout Muskoka who have been faithful in giving many decades of service in this way.

Port Carling

168.



Thank you to Elva Wilson

The picture on the left was taken prior to the June 1912 fire that destroyed the Stratton House and the first Anglican Church as shown towards the left of the photo. The other two buildings are the driveshed and church of the

Wesleyan Methodists. This group first met in homes (from 1869) then used the newly-built Orange Hall for a few years (from 1871). Although property was obtained in 1872, it was six more years before a completed church was opened at the corner of Maple and Medora Streets. The Christian Education area was added during the tenure of Rev. Phyllis Sykes (1959-1967), the only woman pastor of the church to date. She was ordained here in 1966.

A mission was formed at Port Carling about 1875 and a circuit of churches was formed that included Port Carling, Bardsville, Milford Bay (Wesley), Brackenrig, Glen Orchard and Foot's Bay. In 1917, when Walker's Point became a mission on the circuit, a disappearing propeller motor boat was purchased for the minister's use and a boathouse was built for its keeping (in what is now Hanna Park).

The original parsonage sat near the water across from the church (on the east side). During the pastorate of J. Wesley Fox (1906-1910), Mrs. Fox died of typhoid fever which was believed to have been caused by inadequate sewage facilities of the two hotels in the immediate area.

Financial Statement.

of the

PORT CARLING MISSION, METHODIST CHURCH,

for the year ending May 15th, 1901.



AMOUNTS RAISED FOR MINISTERIAL SUPPORT.

PORT CARLING.

W. Hanna	...	\$ 10 00
Asa Casselman	...	20 00
W. F. Hanna	...	11 00
Robt. Bailey	...	2 00
W. K. Foreman	...	6 00
John Trouten and wife	...	4 00
Geo. Carr	...	2 00
Wm. Harris	...	2 00
Collections	...	61 00
		<hr/>
		\$ 151 00

WESLEY.

Robt Stroud	...	\$ 8 00
Thos. Mears	...	8 00
Mrs. W. W. Skilleter	...	8 00
E. Prowse	...	10 00
J. H. Willmott	...	4 00
Fred. Mills	...	5 00
Miss Taggart	...	2 00
H. J. Sawyer	...	1 00
Mrs. F. Stroud	...	1 00
Collections	...	5 00
		<hr/>
		\$ 52 00

GLEN ORCHARD.

L. Love	...	\$ 15 80
N. Orchard	...	10 00
John Nixon	...	9 00
Wm. Hall	...	1 00
Collections	...	15 85
		<hr/>
		\$ 51 15

BRACKENRIG.

John Foukes	...	\$ 10 00
Wm. Trouten	...	8 50
Thos W. Knight	...	5 50
Geo. Terry	...	3 00
		<hr/>
		\$ 27 00

FOOTE'S BAY.

Robt. Fawcett	...	\$ 18 00
N. O. Roberts	...	3 00
Collections	...	9 25
		<hr/>
		\$ 25 25

Summer supply C. B. Jeffrey	...	\$ 37 75
Missionary grant	...	221 00
Parsonage improvement	...	107 15

Quarterly Coll^{ns} 32.85

For Connexional Funds.

Missionary	...	\$ 170 85
Superannuation	...	20 00
Educational	...	6 00
Contingent	...	2 50
Union Church Relief	...	1 00
General Conference	...	3 49
Sunday School Aid	...	2 00
Sustentation	...	5 00

W. HANNA,

Recording Steward.

PORT CARLING METHODIST



Alfred Kay's notes about the history of this church refer to the winter of 1869-70 when a few settlers would gather in the Kay's log house and "Father would read the scriptures and



they would all sing the good old psalms and hymns..." It wasn't until 1873 that a Presbyterian student minister heard of "our little community, came and gave us a weekday service once a month," but a place of worship was still more than a decade away. Mr. Sydney Smith donated lot 33 at the corner of Vernon Street for a building site (earlier he had donated land to the Anglicans). The real driving force that energized the congregation to build was the Rev. J. Sieveright. He came in August 1884 and people were soon busy hauling stone, cutting timber and doing the many tasks it takes to initiate a new



structure. The 10" by 10" hand-hewn beams around the perimeter are still doing their job today. By February 1885 the church was used for a wedding, and in remodelled form is still serving the village of Port Sydney as a religious centre-for two congregations, its own and the Bible Chapel (until October 1996).

Rosseau - St. Andrew's
(Parry Sound District)



St. Andrew's has been used continuously for church services since it opened in 1878. Records reveal that Presbyterian folks gathered in the home of Mr. J. B. Reid as early as May, 1877. Under the direction of Rev. Allen Findlay, the group was encouraged to form a building committee and proceed with plans to make a house of worship. This resourceful committee raised funds through holding many social events - and even obtained money from their Member of Parliament! In 1880 they decided to lath and plaster the interior. Five hundred lath strips were donated to the cause, the "same being teamed from Parry Sound by Messrs A. Meisenheimer and T. M^cWilliams, who each received \$1.00 for their work." This congregation purchased a manse in 1903 for \$400. Six decades later it was sold for \$5800 and the proceeds were used to renovate the church in 1964.

There is Methodist heritage at St. Andrew's as well. That denomination agreed to withdraw their minister in 1915. The Methodist Church was sold in 1922 and the congregation officially (but not unanimously) became part of the United Church in 1925.

Seabreeze Community Church

172.



Built in 1896-97, Seabreeze Community Church was originally an austere Methodist box of a building whose only ecclesiastical touch was the Victorian pump organ with its "gingerbread" mouldings and false pipes. With the exodus of most permanent residents from the area with the departure of the lumber companies, the church had to suspend year-round services and was kept open in the summer only through the growing popularity of the Lake of Bays as a vacationland. Known as Lakeside Methodist initially, it was joined by the congregation of St. Paul's Presbyterian at the time of union in 1925. St. Paul's was the first church in the Birkendale area, having been built in 1885 on the west side of Ten Mile Bay near Ronville Lodge.

It was in the early 1960's that the United Church recommended that summer churches such as Seabreeze be closed in an effort to strengthen nearby permanent congregations. This came at a crucial period of renovations to the old building being done by interested cottagers such as the Emerson family. Undaunted, they collected funds and proceeded with the project, which included the oak woodwork from Deer Park United Church in Toronto being transformed into a rich new interior for this pioneer place of quiet worship.

173.

Sparrow Lake - St. Paul's
'The Little Church that Refused to Die'

The church at Severn Bridge was closed and torn down. Sparrow Lake was destined to follow suit, that is, until a group of community-spirited people with a mind for spiritual heritage got together. In 1976 they obtained a vacationing minister from Kentucky, Rev. George M. Miller, and set to work to save the church. And they were successful as Rev. Miller's little "logo" recorded above implies.

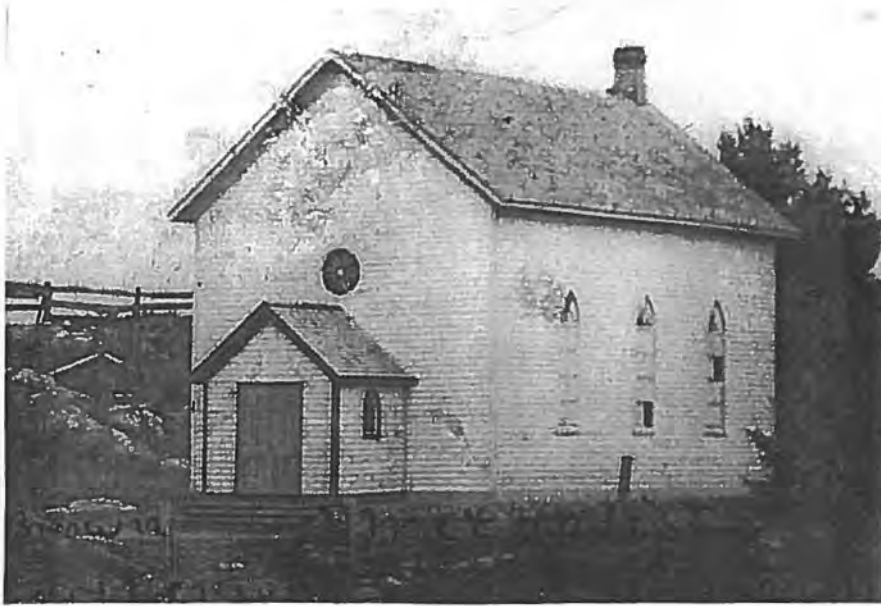


The church has its roots in Presbyterianism for it was of that persuasion from the time it was built in 1886 until it became "United" in 1925. One of the first sermons Oswald J. Smith (founder of the Peoples' Church in Toronto) ever preached was heard in this building while he was a fledgling student minister. It was to this church that one faithful grandmother used to bring a buggy load of children to Sunday School - the means of conveyance being nicknamed the "Gospel Chariot."

The beautiful church site at Utterson was obtained from Mr. Erastus Hanes. It later saw the erection of a frame church 24' by 40' about 1875 at a cost of \$900. Mrs. Edith Weir states that "It wasn't an easy task to lay out a building lot in those days... if you stop to think of all the virgin timber they were confronted with... they often had to have huge bonfires and burn a lot of timber to get room to work, plus clearing a lot for logs and lumber." This effort transpired on behalf of the Methodist cause, but the building put up was only roughly finished both inside and out. Mrs. Enid Brown relates the story of G.W. Lankin who came to the village in the early 1890's, saw the primitive condition of the church and was "so disgusted... that he had a carpenter come from Hamilton and... the plaster... was put on the walls... rounded windows were placed at the top... and the building was made to look more like a church."

Utterson also had a Presbyterian Church built about 1900. By the end of World War I they decided to become one so the Presbyterian Church was converted to a manse.





Utterson Methodist Church in its more pristine stage. (Photo courtesy D. Chatillon)



This is a picture of Emily Vesta (Forsyth) Hampson, as a young woman. Although born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan in 1914, she spent most of her life in the village of Utterson where she lived with Walter, her husband for 51 years, and raised four children: Harold, Keith, Diane and Cynthia. Among her many other involvements, Vesta was a driving force in the Utterson United Church where for forty years she was organist and treasurer along with a lot of other jobs - including the highly successful annual turkey suppers.

On August 6, 1996, Vesta died, but her funeral, just as her life, was a time of rejoicing - a true celebration of a life lived!!



In 1925 the church on the Gibson Reserve became a United Church. The ensuing years have brought about many changes in ministry philosophy. The United Church of Canada believes and supports "that native congregations should be pastored by native people... with native content in worship... native languages and hymns, etc." To that end an All Native Circle Conference was established which the Wahta United Church joined in 1992. Starting on January 1, 1993, Mr. Peter Franks became the lay supply pastor - following in the tradition of his great grandfather, Isaiah Sahanatien. When Mr. Sahanatien died on June 29, 1970, he was the last of the original group who arrived at Wahta Gibson Reserve from Oka, Quebec, in November 1881. Being a young lad at the time, no doubt he watched with interest as his elders picked out the church site on lot 13, concession 6 of Gibson Township and set to work to build a little log church in 1882. A few years later he and his bride were the first people to be married there.

Many missionary teachers and preachers came to carry

on the work of Methodism among the Iroquois, but often when there was no one else to lead in worship, Mr. Sah-anatien would preach, in the Indian tongue, a message of deep sincerity. He was indeed a revered man of God who had learned to appreciate the Protestant beliefs that had caused his people to come to Wahta. At his funeral, Mr. Pirie, the lay minister who served the Reserve at the time, thoughtfully used the English translation of the Indian 23rd. Psalm, which goes as follows-



The Great Father is a Shepherd Chief: I am His and with Him I want not.

He throws out to me a rope, and the name of the rope is love, and He draws me to where the grass is green, and the water is good, and I eat and lie down satisfied.

Sometimes my heart is weak and falls down, but He lifts it up again, and draws me into a good road. His name is Wonderful.

Sometime, it may be soon, it may be longer, it may be a long, long time, He will draw me into a place between mountains. It is dark there, but I'll not draw back.

I'll be afraid not, for it is there between these mountains that the Shepherd Chief will meet me and the hunger I have felt in my heart all through this life will be satisfied. Sometimes He makes the rope into a whip, and afterwards He gives me a staff to lean on.

He spreads a table before me with all kinds of food. He puts His hand on my head and all the "tired" is gone. My

cup He fills until it runs over.

What I tell you is true. I lie not. These roads that are away ahead will stay with me through this life and afterwards I will go to the Big Teepee and sit down with the Shepherd Chief forever.



The above picture was likely taken in 1909 when the new church was opened on lot 10, concession 5, the current location of the building. A new bell was installed in the belfry with the following inscription: "Ring out the False, Ring in the True."



This view of the Wahta Church was taken by Mr. H. R. Scovell on one of his school inspection jaunts sometime between 1907 and 1922 while he was in office. The picture was provided to me by Mr. Robert Petry of Bracebridge.

Walker's Point - Lakeside

The former S.S. #2 Wood Township schoolhouse serves as the church building for this congregation whose roots go back to 1895. Mr. and Mrs. Horace Bradley settled at Walker's Point that year and began to hold worship services and Sunday School in their home. The Bradleys had Salvation Army background. He was serving as Corps Officer at Coldwater when he met and fell in love with a sweet young soldier from the Orillia Corps. Their subsequent marriage meant that he could no longer serve as a Corps Officer, as husband and wife must be officers together. Consequently they moved to Muskoka where they carried on worship services in the Methodist tradition later moving to the school-



house until the first church was built beside Lake Muskoka in 1920. Mr. Bradley is seen here seated with a group that met outdoors

at the Narrows - near Pine Lake. Harvey Bradley, his grandson, recalls that his grandfather received no remuneration for his preaching. Winter services at the school required a three mile walk on which Mr. Bradley not only carried his Bible, but enough wood necessary to heat the building while church was conducted.

The original church (virtually unchanged on the exterior as you can see) located in a lovely wooded setting near the lake (made available by Mr. W. Emmett Pratt) eventually became part of the United Church in 1925. Changing conditions caused the congregation



to purchase and renovate the brick school across the road from the former Community Centre where winter services were held. Although this building was located inland, the name Lakeside was retained to reflect its heritage. It is interesting to note that the current minister, Robert Knighton, is a former Salvation Army

Officer.

Before 1895, there were no regularly held religious services on Walker's Point. On occasion a travelling missionary would perform special ceremonies for the settlers but by and large, as Joyce Schell put it, "people met in various homes for simple services among themselves." Although that is no longer the case, there were many years when Horace J. Bradley (son of Horace Sr.) faithfully held house meetings

181.

throughout the community to provide spiritual nurture for friends and neighbors. In fact he also went further afield to churches at Pine Lake, Kilworthy, and Morrison Lake as well. Mr. and Mrs. Horace J. Bradley are



shown in the back row with a group of children at Walker's Point who had just received their Sunday School certificates. Family names represented are: Schell, Smith, Gillan, Kirkhouse and Bradley.



Mr. Harvey Bradley is pictured here beside the stained glass window in the Walker's Point Church that is a memorial to his grandfather Horace (1862-1938) and father Horace J. (1902-1986).

I wish to thank Harvey for the time and effort he spent on my behalf in order to complete this section accurately and with pictorial records.

Windermere

182.



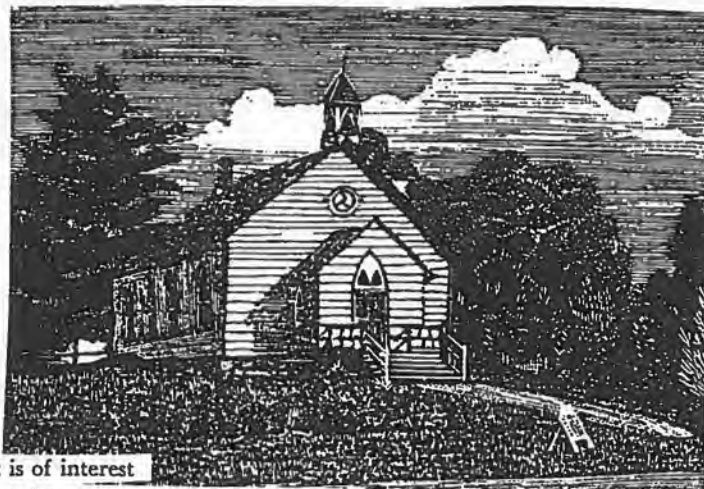
The enduring beauty of natural stone (quarried on site), the trained eye of an architect, and the skills of local craftsmen were combined to create the lovely Windermere United Church in 1950 (the last church of this denomination to be built in Muskoka to date). Interestingly enough, there have been three church buildings on this same property. The Primitive Methodist missionary visited this fledgling Lake Rosseau settlement in the mid 1860's. Early supporters of the work were members of such families as the Forges, Fifes, and Aitkens. It was David Fife that gave the land that the original church sat on, which likely wasn't finished until the 1880's. By then Windermere was developing more rapidly, so the little church became the Sunday School room when the second church was built in 1894. Both finally gave way to the stone structure that so prominently



occupies the site today. Like many churches in Muskoka, this church also enjoys the support of many summer

residents.

Mr. Thomas Aitken built his home at Windermere in 1869, naming the community after a lake in northern England. Besides being a contributor to the founding of the church, he instigated a business that eventually became a landmark in Muskoka - Windermere House. Although he died in 1919, his summer resort lived on - lived on until February 1996 when it was tragically devastated by fire. It was appropriate then that more than 170 people crowded into Windermere United Church in March to work through their feelings and pay a loving farewell to "The Lady of the Lake."



(It is of interest that the reproduction above is from a wood-cut made by the Reverend R. Edis Fairbairn, minister of the Church from 1940 until his retirement in 1948.)

United Pentecostal

184.

This is a postwar denomination that is the product of a union between the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ and the Pentecostal Church. These two churches united at St. Louis, Missouri, in 1945, where its headquarters remain.

This group originally came to Muskoka in the early 1980's when meetings were held in a home in Lakewood Park at Huntsville. As time went on the congregation first moved to the Town Hall then later the Orange Hall, both these locations being in Huntsville. The first pastor came in 1983 and he was Rev. Randy McCrae. Four years later he was joined by an assistant, Rev. Rick Merkel who has remained as pastor since the McCrae's moved to Beaverton in 1990.



Since 1990 the United Pentecostal Church has met in this building at Port Sydney. A room has been prepared here in which the Sunday services are held - a true house church!

Muskoka has a few churches that do not operate under any denominational hierarchy, although some of them began that way. It isn't always easy to determine with community churches if the former denominational ties have been completely severed. Generally speaking they are summer churches, but that is not always the case.

Bannockburn

Their bulletin says "The little Church beside the lake - Beneath the trees-" and this cottage look-alike church near Acton Island in Lake Muskoka is just that. The name came from the donor of the land, Albert E. Gordon, near whose home this church was built in 1921. When the Presbyterian student came in 1922 to hold services, many of the congregation came by boat, especially to the popular Sunday evening sing songs. Since 1938 Bannockburn has been a non-denominational church served by a variety of interesting clergy. The main sanctuary of the church once sat at Whiteside where it served as an Orange Hall and Presbyterian Church. It sat vacant for several years after the church closed in 1912. Subsequently the home of Samuel White on Acton Island was offered for services where people often gathered on the porch and lawn for worship. Then, in 1921, the material was re-located to its current site, and Bannockburn was born.



Church of the Kettles



Nestled among fragrant pine trees on the tip of a peninsula jutting into Lake Muskoka, the Church of the Kettles was dedicated as a non-denominational chapel in 1900 to serve the summer community. Located across from Mortimer's Point, the church is accessible only by water. For many years before the present church was built, cottagers in the neighborhood of "The Kettles" met for worship services at the cot-

tage of Robert Shaw. It was at such a Sunday afternoon service on August 4, 1885, that the worshippers decided to call themselves a "Kettles Congregation." A visiting minister from Toronto, Rev. C. O. Johnston, fell in love with Muskoka about this time and bought a parcel of Crown Land in the vicinity, from which he set aside $\frac{1}{10}$ of an acre for church purposes. It was a day of great rejoicing and praise on August 5, 1900, when at 3 p.m. the well-known evangelists, Crossley and Hunter conducted the dedication service, along with Rev. Johnston.

By 1929 the chapel proved to be too small so it was thoroughly renovated and extended 16 feet in length. New casement windows all around allowed a clear view of the trees and sky. It was lined with fir and 100 comfortable folding chairs were provided. It is a simple and beautiful place to worship in the midst of God's creative handiwork. A first time visitor can't help but be impressed with the ample wharving - no asphalt parking lot here!



This church derives its unusual name from the rock formations in the area, which, according to native folklore, serve as hiding places for sacramental vessels. I took this picture of The Church of the Kettles in early July, 1996, when my principal, Don Allison, took me on a tour via his boat. The lower picture shows the interior with its seating and unusual pulpit (donated by two former residents of Buffalo).



Cognashene

There is a long tradition of summer services at the Cognashene Community "Church-on-the rocks," a unique congregation of well over one hundred that meets at an outdoor chapel beside the waters of Georgian Bay. Not having a building requires quite a dedicated effort of many willing volunteers who help dock boats, set up chairs and put out hymnbooks, serve lemonade, put all the chairs and books away, maintain the storage buildings, etc. for every service. The actual congregation formed at the turn of the century when it first met in cottages. It wasn't until the 1950's that the property now used was made available from the Breithaupt family. The accompanying sketch was taken from the Cognashene Cottager magazine of 1988.



First Baptist Independent Baptist

As you read earlier, this church had its roots in the Baptist movement in Brunel Township south of Huntsville. After many decades of association with the Convention Baptist Churches, the congregation and pastor, Rev. Norm Strongman, voted to become independent of that parent body in 1984.

Glenwood Chapel was a name suggested by Harvey and Joy Donald when this work opened on May 17, 1970, using the former United Church building at Glen Orchard. Built in 1891 as a Methodist Church, it became United until it closed in 1968. Soon after that, Harold Smith and others who were involved with a children's ministry, learned there was a need of a place to meet for worship and fellowship. This led to the renting and eventual buying of the vacant church, and the rest is history. By 1990 year-round services were launched and the church continued to grow - and outgrow its facilities! In 1991 the congregation invited Dr. William Sifft (who had been a frequent speaker in the summer season) to become their pastor. New facilities were needed, and in 1993 a ten acre parcel of land was purchased - in 1994 the plans were drawn - in 1995 the building was begun and on a beautiful sunny day in June, 1996, the new Glenwood Chapel was dedicated. Debt free! The full story of its roots can be found in an excellent historical booklet written by Patricia Carr in 1991 entitled "Through 100 Years In a Country Church at Glen Orchard, Muskoka, Ontario."



The beautiful new church facility of Glenwood Chapel stands in contrast to the former church. I attended the opening ceremonies for the new church at the invitation of Inez Calvert.

Honey Harbour

This is a special area of Muskoka where the way of life is very much dependent upon the beautiful waterways and islands that attract so many recreational enthusiasts. It was here in July, 1996, that I met lifelong residents of the area, Tom and Edna Hewitt. Through them I was able to learn how the history of the Honey Harbour Community Church is intertwined with the first public school for children at Honey Harbour. Tom and Edna are pictured below.

Although a Roman Catholic separate school existed in the vicinity, there was no school for families who wanted a public school education. In 1923 that situation was rectified when Col. Duff of Toronto gave part of lot 34, concession 12 as a school site. People in the community built the school and hired Mr. Thomas Jones,



a native from Cape Croker, as the first teacher. Edna says that one of his first pupils was a man 40 years old who had never had the opportunity to attend school. It wasn't long until two ladies decided that this was an ideal spot to hold Sunday School at, so in the 1930's the Misses Smith (whose family owned Smith Transports) held religious training classes each summer for local and visiting children. They even got to endure two little boys who had an encounter with a skunk on the way to Sunday School.

Then came the time when a group of people in 1948 felt a need for weekly meditation, worship, and fellowship in the beautiful outdoors of Georgian Bay. They organized a committee and began holding services on a weekly basis

in 1949 in members' homes. Later they moved to the "Old School House" property which had not been used as a classroom since 1943. In 1961, when the new two-roomed school was built in the village, the Honey Harbour Association purchased the old building for church use and maintains it as such to this day for services in July and August.



The Honey Harbour Community Church is the most westerly church building in Muskoka. Used since 1950, it is not unusual for over 200 people to gather on this lovely site near Pleasant Point to worship God. Below is a picture of the Hewitt's school boat (the one on the left) that is used to transport children to Honey Harbour's two schools. The church can only be reached by water, so I had the privilege of doing so in this unique boat.



Lake Joseph

This well maintained church sits high above Lake Joseph on a typically-Muskoka piece of property that was purchased in 1902 in the name of "The Lake Joseph Presbyterian Church." The church building, with its beautiful interior woodwork, was constructed by the Mackenzie Brothers of Staney Brae. Over 250 people attended the first worship service which took place on August 9, 1903. The pulpit was earlier occupied by fledgling student ministers out of Knox College, but today's 10-week summer roster advertises clergy of longstanding from several denominations. Following the church union of 1925, Lake Joseph Presbyterian Church became a functioning community church. It wasn't until 1967 that the church became accessible by car from the Peninsula Road near Gregory. A few of the interesting features of this church are:

- its own hymnbook of 66 meaningful selections
- a large stone patio for coffee hour after church
- a new Sunday School/Vestry added in 1992
- a gazebo for outdoor Sunday School was built in 1995
- new docks-will accomodate 20 boats
- the parking lot - large enough to hold 120 cars
- the will to operate free of debt-and do it successfully!

Madawaska Club

193.

In 1898 the Madawaska Club began its occupation of the rocks and islands of Go Home Bay. The first cottages were plain, inartistic, and inexpensive - built of undressed pine lumber for sheeting and covered with shingles on all sides and the roof. To these humble abodes in this remote region of Muskoka came university professors and other well-educated individuals who sought a respite from the crowded cities and taxing professional duties that brought them together in this unique environment. For the first few years they gathered for Sunday services in the grove beside the Pavilion on Madawaska Island, then in the evening the boats and canoes - often 20 or 30 in number - would congregate in the bay for a rousing service of praise. Those traditions gradually gave way to meeting in one of the larger cottages for services.

Norway Point Church



This beautifully located and appointed church at Norway Point was first used on July 16, 1944. It has always been a summer church, serving the cottagers and tourists along the south shore of the Lake of Bays. It was to this area that Rev. J. A. Brown, a Presbyterian minister, came in 1899 to spend a vacation at Grove Park Lodge, a boarding house located 3 miles east of Norway Point. He enjoyed

194.

the area so much, that he purchased lakeshore property and persuaded seven other of his colleagues to do the same, creating what has been jokingly referred to as the "Clergy Reserves" of Norway Point. Although a little Presbyterian Church had existed since 1891 at nearby Brown's Brae, the distance from the lake made it inconvenient for boat-travelling summer church-goers. For that reason, summer services only were begun at Rev. D. M. Hamilton's "Grove" beside the lake. Eventually the idea of a church building evolved and in 1908 the original Norway Point Church was built.

Due to an unusually heavy accumulation of snow in the winter of 1942-43, the church building collapsed on March 24th., leaving the congregation without a place to worship for that summer. A gracious offer by Father Frith of the S.S.J. E. was made for use of St. Mary's Anglican Church a short distance west of the Norway Point Church. That offer was accepted and acted upon until the new church opened on July 16, 1944. Its interior was left unadorned to expose the natural beauty of the wood; the cathedral windows not only add a gracious touch to the design but allow worshippers to enjoy the natural beauty that once attracted the Rev. J. A. Brown to this part of "God's Country." Other historical highlights of this site are:



1944 - the repaired pulpit given by Muskoka's famous Indian tenor soloist Oskenton is placed for use in the new church

1969 - the memorial cairn with the original church bell is dedicated

1981 - the building is extended to provide additional space and seating

1983 - the Norway Point Church history book by Dr. Wilfred C. Lockhart is published

Built Presbyterian; still United; always Community, its official title is Norway Point Church - the only surviving member of the four churches in this vicinity.

Global Church of God

This group is an offshoot of the Worldwide Church of God. They meet one Saturday per month in a private home in the Bracebridge area and are overseen by a denominational elder from the Kingston area.

Muskoka Christian Fellowship (Mennonite Brethren)

David and Linette Boyes first held meetings for this group beginning on June 5, 1994, using homes as a focal point of the ministry. That emphasis continues along with a general gathering of the congregation every two weeks held at Riverside Inn at Bracebridge. A growing youth group is helping to meet the needs of the teenagers in the community. A similar Christian Fellowship group now operates at Parry Sound - both congregations being part of the Mennonite Brethren Church. This denomination is Russian in background going back to 1860 in the Ukraine when a small group withdrew from the Mennonite Church to give closer attention to prayer and Bible study. It incorporated in Canada in 1945 but came to this country via the United States much earlier than that. A summer conference grounds is maintained at Torrance. The accompanying picture shows the chapel at Camp Crossroads, located not far past the Torrance cemetery.



196.

Christian Science - This group dates from 1866 in Massachusetts where Mary Baker Eddy began to communicate and demonstrate her findings. The Christian Science Church (the Church of Christ, Scientist) was founded in 1879 in Boston. It came to Canada in 1886 when Christian Science healings took place at St. Stephens, N.B., Montreal, and Toronto. For many years Christian Science Services have been held each summer at Monck Public School in Bracebridge.

Two by Two - A small group that works in the Huntsville area. They do visitation in groups of two.

Wellspring - This evangelical, charismatic fellowship meets at Huntsville in a former dance studio. It is associated with the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship and was organized by Danny Vanderveer. Leadership is given by Ian McLean of the North Bay Wellspring Church.

In 1955, Santa's Village was opened for business near Bracebridge. Among the many buildings constructed among the trees on this site was a lovely little log chapel. It remains there in improved form today and is likely the most visited chapel site in Muskoka given that about 100 000 people or more come to Santa's Village each season. The box outside contains a nativity scene, reminding old and young of the humble circumstances of the birth of Jesus.



Other Community Churches

197.



This is the home of Henry and Elizabeth Heidman as it appeared in 1889. Located on lot 30, concession 10 of Morrison Township (just north of Soph-er's Landing Road), it became a summer church in the 1920's. Hazel Schell of Canning's Corners

well remembers going there as a Sunday School girl and has the Bible she received from Eva Watson for perfectly memor-izing the 25th. chapter of Matthew. (Take a look at that in your Bible!) This building is long gone.

Another Community Church was built on lot 29, concession 12 beside Reg. Schell Road by Mr. and Mrs. Ed. Armstrong. Mr. Horace Bradley was one of the main preachers at this church. Although it still exists, it is no longer used for church services and is on private property. It was originally constructed in the 1960's.



Although there are likely other religious groups that once had churches in Muskoka, I will deal with the few I know about.

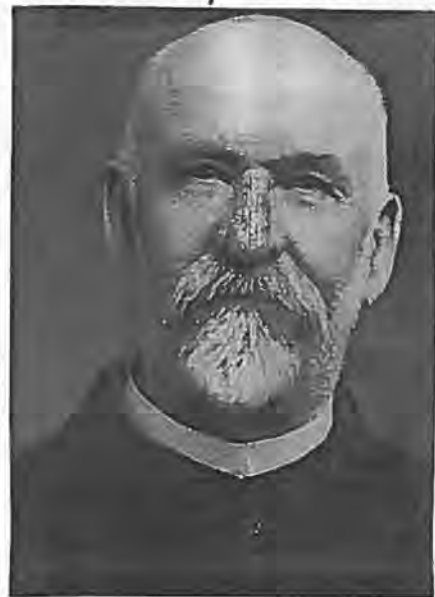
The Disciples of Christ

The early beginnings of this group in Canada appear to have been at Cross Roads, Prince Edward Island, in 1810. Within a decade there were groups of members in Elgin and Wellington Counties in Ontario and by 1843 an organization was formed called the Cooperation of Disciples of Christ in Ontario. An all-Canada convention was held in 1922 that gave national leadership and continuing relationship with the movement in the United States, where it originated. Besides the above name it is also known as The Christian Church or Churches of Christ (Disciples).

This church sought to reach the unchurched in Muskoka through William M. Crewson of Erin, Ontario, who came upon the invitation of Mr. Palmer who was already leading two small groups in McLean and Ridout Townships. In March of 1885 Mr. Crewson began his work in earnest and was willing "whether or not I am paid for my labors." By October a new chapel was opened in Baysville where Asa and Hezekiah Harp and W. J. Tackaberry were "overseers." That same year two other workers held meetings at S.S.#1 Macaulay schoolhouse and formed a church of 24 members, including the Tom Sterritts and the John Kirks. Although the "Disciples" met at Brunel and Huntsville as well, it was at Bracebridge where the greatest influence was felt. By 1897 they were meeting at the Town Hall when Miss Emma Ennis received her impulse to offer herself as a missionary, a call she fulfilled for 33 years in India at the Bilaspur Girls' School.



This former denomination (which merged with the Free Methodists in 1959) was, according to its Discipline, "raised up... to spread Scriptural holiness over the land." It was started up by preacher, author, and evangelist Ralph Cecil Horner (1854-1921). At first he was a Methodist minister, but his persistent emphasis upon evangelism ultimately caused his rejection from that group. The new church he started was originally confined to the Ottawa Valley, beginning in 1895, but enthusiastic laymen and ministers soon carried it further afield. In Muskoka there were Hornerite followings in Fraserburg, Bracebridge, and Ufford and in each place small frame chapels were built.



Their official organ, "The Holiness Era" of August 27, 1902, reports the opening of the Fraserburg Chapel in language that exemplifies their ways—"Once again the cloud of glory descended and rested over Fraserburg at the dedication of the new chapel, July 12th. and 13th. inst. All the preachers and evangelists of the district were present, accompanied by their people. Many drove long distance over rough roads, but were amply repaid for the sacrifice. The presence of the Lord was very manifest



throughout in saving, sanctifying, and baptizing power. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered... and while the saints commemorated His dying love, the sobs of joy and shouts of praise mingled in beautiful harmony. In the afternoon the majesty of God was visible: some fell to the floor... strong men sat with tears coursing down their cheeks..." Many of the stalwarts of this work later moved out west. The church became a community hall and in recent times has succumbed to a heavy snow load and now is gone.

The Holiness Movement Chapel in Bracebridge was also opened in 1902, its location being on Ontario Street. Redmond Thomas remembered it as a

"metal-clad wooden building painted either black or very dark maroon..." He further comments that it was in the early 1920's when the church last had a minister. It was torn down in 1947 to make way for a brick church built by another denomination.

Two elderly sisters, Eva and Annie Booker, were likely the last surviving members of the old Holiness Chapel. Miss

Eva, pictured here, like all church members adhered to a dress code as outlined in the Discipline. It said "... by being clean and dressing neatly, being transformed by the renewing of their minds; wearing no gold, feathers, flowers, lace, costly or showy silks, or showy colors, regulating and not following the fashions."



Eva Booker

This brings us to the third known Holiness Movement Church in the District. It sat on the west corner of lot 12, concession 4 of Watt Township just before the road takes its "s-curve" through Ufford. Bill Matchett tells me that there were two Matchett families "quite active in that church." - Isaac and Mary (his grandparents) and John and Lizzy (Bill White's great grandparents.) These families lived along Doherty Road. Also involved were the John Sheas and some of the Kirbysons (it



was Sheila Kirbyson who provided this photograph on the left), Veitches, Kays, and Longhursts. To this day Clara Watson of Port Sydney still fondly recalls the sincere and memorable Sunday School training

she received in this church as a young girl... "it was vibrant!" Bert Shea once related to me the kind of impact that Hornerite preaching made on Ufford. "Borrowed" tools, wood, and other items were suddenly returned; restitution was made; old wrongs were made right in response to the soul-searching messages heard from the pulpit in that simple little chapel.

Although all three churches were long closed when the Holiness Movement merged with the Free Methodists in 1959, there are still people today serving God in Canada and the United States whose religious roots go back to these old-fashioned holiness churches of long ago that are part of Muskoka's heritage.

United Brethren

This denomination developed among the Germans in parts of the eastern United States. It was strongly Methodistic in polity, doctrine, and practice.

Two classes (or churches) were organized in Muskoka, one at Novar and the other at Williamsport - that church is pictured on the right. At Novar the Orangemen bought the United Brethren church in 1901 and used it as a lodge hall for 75 years.



All that remains is the United Brethren Cemetery at Williamsport that was deeded by the Crown in 1895 to the trustees of the East River Class of the Novar Mission.

Spiritualist Church

One of the earliest known Spiritualist circles in Canada was started by Emma H. Britten in downtown Toronto in 1896. Growth continued well from that point until 1921 when a period of consolidation took place forming the Spiritualist National Union in 1929. Another resurgence of interest in the messages given by mediums took place during World War II and included the Prime Minister of Canada who quietly, yet frequently, sought this type of 'contact.' Just before the war ended the Springdale Park Spiritualist Association was chartered and a mile of riverfront property between High Falls and Duck Chutes was purchased and subdivided into cottage lots. From July, 1938, Mr. William C. Partridge gave leadership, as cobblestone gates were erected at the entrance on the Baysville Road, and then a small frame church was built about 1940. In the summer of 1996 the sign was removed from the church where services had not taken place for many years.



The former Springdale Park Church built about 1940 where Spiritualist members and others gathered on summer Sunday afternoons for services. The dream of developing a camp similar to that of Lilydale, New York, ultimately did not materialize. The Adam G. McIntyre gates were a familiar Baysville Road site until road construction in the early 1970's saw them destroyed. Their columnar replacements lack imagination and character.



For sixteen years beginning in 1953, a summer post office and store provided services of this nature for the Springdale cottagers. There is a Spiritualist Church in Toronto called Springdale whose founder was also the originator of Springdale Park.

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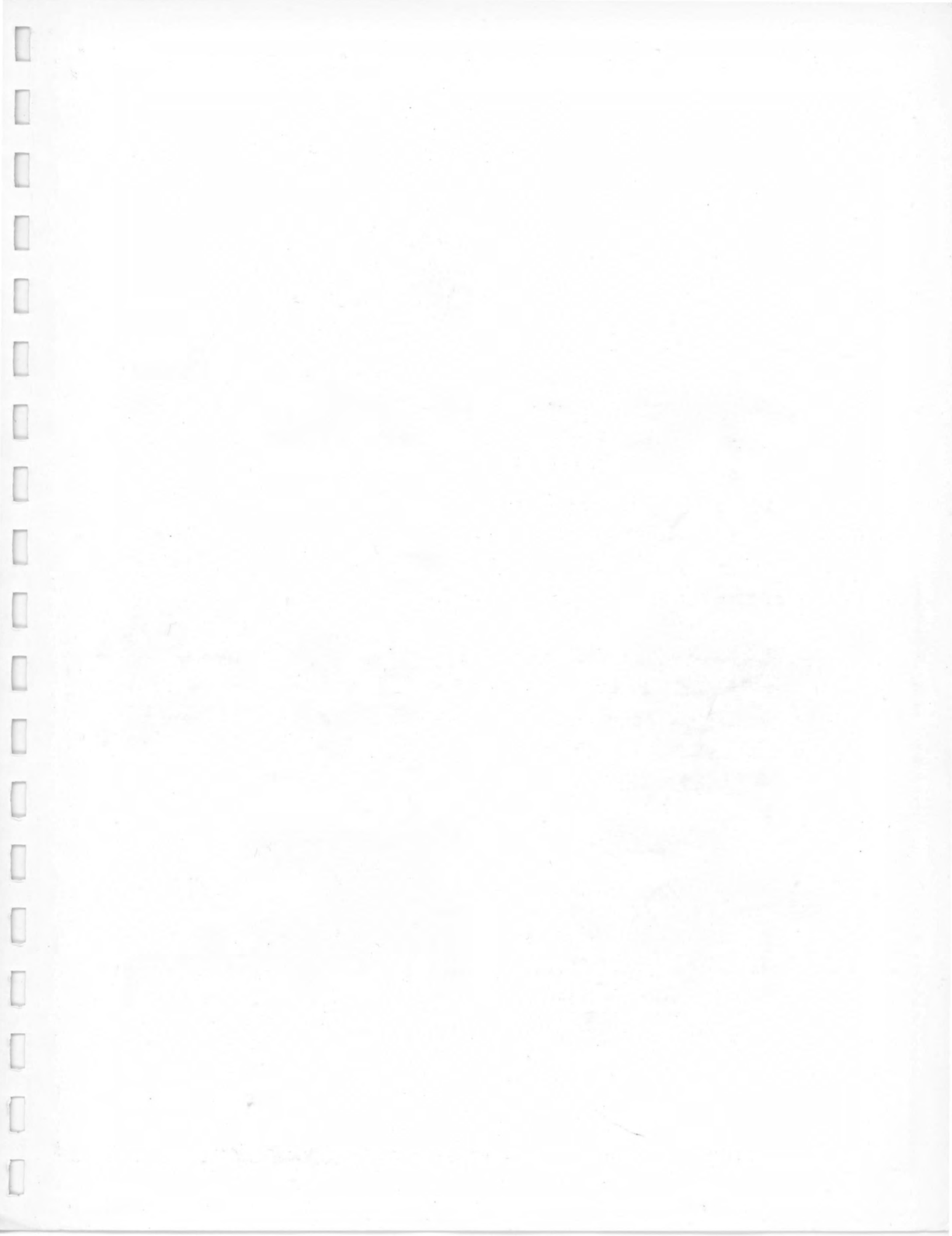
Other Resources

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This book contains the answers... and much more!

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#2



Township of Muskoka Lakes

#3



Town of Huntsville

#4



Town of Bracebridge

#5



Town of Gravenhurst

#6



Township of Lake of Bays