

HISTORICAL SKETCH  
NELSON UNITED CHURCH

1962

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HISTORICAL SKETCH

Facts concerning the early history of the Nelson Congregation are hard to come by, but the earliest records indicate that an early burial in the cemetery was a Mrs. McLaren who died while her husband was absent at the war of 1812 - 1814. There is a tombstone in Palermo cemetery dating back to 1812 so it may be assumed that the Nelson Cemetery was begun about the same time. There is also a stone in the cemetery to the memory of a Miss Bastedo dating back to 1817. The first service was held at Palermo in 1812 and no doubt the services began at Nelson at about the same time.

Elder Case, a famous Saddle Bag Preacher, appears to be the first minister. His circuit ran from the Thames River (now London) along the Government Road to Dundas and then along Dundas Street to Muddy York (now Toronto) and thence up Yonge Street to Lake Simcoe. Prior to 1828 the records make mention of a circuit composed of Munro's School, Palermo, Proudfoot's Hollow, Nelson, Trafalgar and Milton. This would indicate that the Saddle Bag Preachers were beginning to disappear and a more settled Ministry had begun.

In 1880 a deed of land for one acre was given by Moses McCay to the Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and there must have been a further acquisition of land, since the present Church and Cemetery occupy about two acres of land. The United Church Archives indicate that a deed of land was recorded in 1829 and another in 1830 for a Church and Cemetery at Palermo, so it would appear that about that time deeds of land began to be registered in Halton County. Post Offices also came into being about that time. The first Post Office in Halton was at Posts Corners about four miles east of Palermo in 1820. The second Post Office in Halton County was called Hannahville after the wife of Caleb Hopkins, M.P.

The Trustees of the new Church property were David Pitcher, Isaac Van-Norman, John Bastedo, David Griffin, Moses McCay, C. Griffin and Justin W. Williams. There were two congregations of Methodists in the area. The Episcopal Church, where the present Church now stands, and a New Connection Church had a stone Church at Tuck's Corners near the foot of the hill. The two congregations eventually joined forces, probably at the time of the Methodist Union in 1884.

The first Church was a frame building which stood on what is now the parking lot to the east of the present Church. Nothing seems to be known about when it was built or what eventually became of it. The present Church was built in 1859, and so has been in constant use for well over 100 years. They built well in those days, for the old church seems to be just about as good as ever.

The Nelson Church was served for many years from Waterdown and for a few years from Burlington until in 1923 it was united with Appleby to form a charge. Then in 1959 it was joined with Palermo to form the Nelson-Palermo charge.

Some of the ministers who served the Church in earlier days were G.L. Poole, R.A. Facey, J.G. Foote, T.L. Wilkinson, J.E. Hockey, J.H. Collins, Geo. Ferguson, Geo. Richardson, Wm. Hawke, Robert Burns, J.W. Holmes, W.C. Watson, Mr. Gray, John Scott, Mr. Jaffries, Mr. McAllister. Some who served as probationers were W.E. Pescott, Solomon Cleaver, Mr. White, W.E. Scott, Mr. Wright, John E. Hunter, Samuel Edwards, Mr. Smith, Mr. Maitart. After 1923 when Nelson was joined to Appleby the ministers were R.R. Elliott, R.H. Somerville, J.F. Clugston, R.F. Mercer and E.W. Brearley. After Nelson-Palermo became a charge in 1959, the minister was Rev. H.T. West until his untimely death in 1961, and since that time Rev. E.J. Aiken.

No one can measure the love, loyalty and devotion that has gone into the services of this Church during the last 150 years - but it will be largely lost if we fail to build upon the foundations which have been laid for us.

In 1959 the Christian Education Building was built and dedicated. Thus we equip ourselves for up to date service in the Kingdom of God.