



CCCHS REFLECTIONS PAST AND PRESENT

The relocation of CCCHS archives collection to Great Lakes Christian High School in Beamsville, provides an occasion for reflection and review of the archive creation and development in the past and the significance of its relationship to McPhee Hall.

The Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society was established in 1999 through the initiative taken by Claude Cox. Claude served as president of the CCCHS board through to 2004.

In 2004, under the coordination of Geoffrey Ellis (who had been president of GLCC for 23 years from 1961 to 1984) gathered historical information and began to process it.

A significant portion came initially from the files of Eugene Perry and his mother Grace Perry as well as Eugene's Gospel Herald records.

After discussions with Myrna Perry, a systematic indexing system was created and the information was to be divided into five sections: Churches, Persons, Institutions, Periodicals, and Legal. A book library was also established largely confined to Canadian publications. Geoffrey Ellis, assisted by Eileen Dale, began processing information. Divergence of information is remarkable. Currently, the number of files is approaching 4,000. When the collection first began it was housed in Geoffrey Ellis' basement in Waterloo.

Initially it had been anticipated that the CCCHS collection would be located at the archival facility at McMaster University. That option was withdrawn and it became obvious that a more spacious facility was required. In 2014, Ron Knight, a CCCHS board member, offered space on a no charge basis for a five year period at his company's storage premises in Meaford, Ontario.

In spite of its remote location, Meaford was considered an appropriate place for the archives because of its rich church history. Meaford Church of Christ, which began meeting about 1850, in addition to significant church growth, had been the birthplace of prominent pioneer preachers, some of whom migrated to Manitoba and Saskatchewan, preaching the gospel and establishing churches. Gospel meetings had been held in Meaford featuring prominent U.S.A. preachers and in 1884 the Harding-Wilkinson week long debate on "Baptism" was held in Meaford.

When the collection had to be moved before the end of 2019 the campus of GLCHS was suggested as a possibility because the Niagara area had a significant concentration of members of the Church of Christ and the files would be easily accessible for any would be researcher. As a result of visiting and assessing their available space and their willingness to incorporate CCCHS at Great Lakes Christian High School, the top floor of

McPhee Hall was selected. Extensive renovations were completed by Evan Whittington at a cost of \$27,500.00. The CCCHS executive sent out a fund raising appeal with a goal of \$30,000.00 that received a remarkable and successful response.

The collection was moved from Meaford in August 2019. Roy & Edythe Williams had been the managers of the collection in Meaford. Dave & Loraine Carruthers have now temporarily assumed this oversight. Dave had served two years for student recruiter for the high school, and subsequently served as principal for six years. Loraine performed secretarial duties for the Bible Department and the development office during this time.

There is great historical significance in the collection residing in McPhee Hall. The building was named after Gordon McPhee who was the first president of Great Lakes Christian College. This building, which had been a carriage house prior to GLCC acquiring the property in 1951 from Senator Gibson, and which had been used as a dining hall (ground floor) and teacher's residence (second floor), was renovated in 1981 and renamed "McPhee Hall" and dedicated to the Bible department.

Rick Pinzak also used some rooms for his Slavic studies. The Bible department of GLCC had been operating since the opening year (1952) and during the years 1952- 1954, 1959 – 1963, 1969-1993 and prominent preachers had instructed many students that qualified themselves as preachers, church leaders and dedicated Christians. The archives contain many sermons and records from prominent preachers such as: Geoffrey

Ellis, C.G. McPhee, Roy Merritt, to name a very few.

Ed Broadus, who had been a Bible department instructor for eight years and subsequently President of GLCC for six years, has in his retirement years, used the archives when researching material for his publications concerning the Churches of Christ in Ontario.

Currently, a software system is being developed that will assist in identifying and retrieving information from the files.

The countless hours spent, mainly by Geoffrey Ellis, is greatly appreciated by anyone who has been exposed to the files. The Archives is a treasure that needs to be publicized and utilized. Information for family history research may be found in some of the files.

The fresh setting, ample space, and accessible files of the CCCHS archives in McPhee Hall at GLCHS, Beamsville, provides an attractive setting for researchers in the coming years.

...**Roy & Edythe Williams**, Meaford, Ontario in consultation with Geoffrey Ellis

An Important Day for CCCHS

October 8, 2019 represents an important day of interest to Churches of Christ in Canada. It marks the date of the official opening of the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society Archives in Beamsville, Ontario. In celebration, we began the day with an open house and then shared in a specially prepared meal. To recognize the opening of the archives, Jerry Rushford from Pepperdine University presented an address on the early beginnings and sites

of the Restoration Movement in Great Britain. The title of his address : *From Mollington to Pepperdine, California*. To show our appreciation, Jerry was presented with a plaque to recognize his contributions and encouragement.

The archives are now located on the campus of Great Lakes Christian High School in McPhee Hall. It includes three spacious and newly renovated rooms, where journals, books and historical artifacts are stored. The move and the setting up of the archives in their new home represents a combination of the hard work of many people(those who renovated the space, those who moved and those set up the archives). We thank all of them for their work. We especially recognize the leadership of Dave and Loraine Carruthers and Roy and Edith Williams.

We reached the goal of raising \$30,000 to renovate and set up the space for the archives. Beyond all the work, this was in the end made possible by the generosity of many. Thank you! When we began this project it seemed impossible. One board member said, "God will provide." God has provided. We join in gratitude to Him.

...**Ben Wiebe**

THE DECLINING NUMBERS OF RURAL CHURCHES OF CHIRST IN ONTARIO

This past July Harold Ellis and I made our annual trip to see past and present church building with a Restoration heritage. This last excursion took us to the Georgian Bay area, from Owen Sound to Meaford to Collingwood and inland some distance from Georgian Bay. In the area back from the Bay there were once a half dozen or so rural

churches, most of which were established or assisted by the Meaford Church of Christ.

Three of them, Griersville, Heathcote, and Vandeleur were still meeting 50 years ago and continued doing so until recent years. Churches of Christ in Ontario and elsewhere have been richly blessed by men and women who became Christians in these places and later moved elsewhere.

Although churches no longer meet in these three places, Harold and I found their meeting houses still standing and beautifully renovated.. The Griersville building is now an attractive art studio, the one at Heathcote has been converted into a residence, and the Vandeleur building is a very modern bed and breakfast.

While we were pleased that these former places of worship that once meant much to those who met there week after week were not in a neglected condition and in danger of falling down, it was sad to know that Christians no longer meet there for worship.

This has caused me to reflect since then on the declining numbers of rural churches. At one time most Restoration churches, like Protestant churches of various kinds, were in rural areas. Some who read this may have childhood memories of attending some small country church. Among countless numbers of people there has been nostalgia for "the church in the wildwood."

There are several reasons why so many rural churches no longer meet. One is the change in where people live. In the 19th Century most people in Ontario

lived on farms. Now the vast majority are in towns and cities, and this urbanization is expected to continue.

Another reason is that most families are significantly smaller now than they were in the 19th Century. A few typical young families a century ago could easily fill a good portion of a small rural meeting house.

Rural roads are much better now than they were even in the first half of the 20th Century, to say nothing about what they were like before then. Mud in the spring and snow in the winter often hindered travel and made it desirable to have church buildings close at hand.

More than any other one factor, the automobile has changed the church-going habits of many of us. This is a factor, even in cities. Although Toronto had good public transportation by the end of the 19th century, street cars did not run on Sunday. One of the nobler reasons for this was that some did not want operators of these cars to be kept from going to church. A far different reason was that some Christians feared that if street cars ran on Sunday, many would go to the beach rather than to church. This meant that most city-dwellers needed to be able to go to church within walking distance, since not many of them had a horse and carriage.

As a result of all these changes, the number of rural churches declined throughout the 20th century. Some quit meeting entirely, while others moved into a nearby town. What became the Beamsville church actually moved into town in 1885, before the turn of the century, after meeting in the country for

more than 50 years. A few members did not make the move at first, but soon they followed the others.

One interesting argument for moving into town back then was that it was easier for the farmers to meet in town than for the townspeople to meet in the country, since the farmers owned horses and wagons, while few, if any, who lived in town owned them.

Another church that that moved into town in those early years was Erin Centre, which, along with Beamsville, Meaford, and Everton, was one of the four largest Restoration churches in Ontario around 1890. (The Everton and Erin churches went with the Disciples at the time of division). In 1907, after much advance planning and the construction of a brick meeting house, half the church moved into Hillsburgh. Five years later those who did not move in 1907 went either to Hillsburgh or to Erin Village.

We won't try here to trace all the other examples of churches that either quit meeting or else moved into town during the earlier part of the the 20th Century. After more than two-thirds of the century had passed, the *Gospel Herald*, In December 1969, listed nine churches that still met either in the country or in a very small hamlet or village.

Those listed were Griersville, Heathcote, Heron Bay South, Ice Lake, Omagh, Pine Orchard, Sheshequaning, Tintern, and Vandeleur. (Jordan was not listed, but when it is included, the total in 1969 was ten.)

Fifty years later only five of these rural churches still meet – Ice Lake, Jordan, Omagh, Pine Orchard, and Tintern.

Omagh is one of the oldest Churches of Christ in the province, founded in 1848, and its meeting house is nearly as old. Through the years it chose not to move into the nearby town of Milton, but now Milton, one of the fastest growing towns in Ontario, is coming to the edge of the Omagh property, and it will likely become a city church without moving.

Tintern and Jordan are in the populous Niagara region and, in the automobile age, neither church has to be in a town or city to gain new members. Indeed, Tintern, which meets a considerable distance from the village with the same name, has successfully defied all the factors that have led to the decline of rural churches and is now one of the largest Churches of Christ in the province. It has benefited from being in the populous Niagara Region where there are several other Churches of Christ and more members than most other parts of Ontario.

It should also be noted that Pine Orchard benefits from being on the eastern edge of the Greater Toronto Area, and will probably continue to gain members for this reason.

Ice Lake is in a unique situation, meeting on the world's largest fresh water island. There is no city into which to move, so as long as it continues it will be a rural church.

Rural churches have declined in number, seldom, if at all, because they failed, but because of factors beyond their control. Their memory should be honored, for the many years during which they kept the faith, led many to Christ, and helped

them mature into "the stature of the fullness of Christ."

... **Edwin Broadus**

Administrative Information for the Society

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

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

Donations

Donations are invited as there are many on-going projects that need funding. One of our aims is to find a part time manager for the Archives.

Both donations and membership fees are tax- exempt.

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

...Murray Hibbard

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