

History of the founding  
of  
King St. East United Church  
Formerly Methodist

Presented on the  
25th Anniversary  
of  
Rev. W. E. Wilson's Pastorate

OCTOBER 16th, 1938



**REV. W. E. WILSON**

**Pastorate 1913-1938**

**STILL SERVING**

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**PREFACE or INTRODUCTION**

*This short history of King Street East United Church, Toronto, has been compiled from "Toronto Methodist Churches" (Thos. E. Champion) and from what records that could be seen such as "Baptismal Certificates, Class Ticket, Quarterly Communion Cards, The Deed of the land and other reliable information.*

**COMPILED BY**

**A. W. Bannister**

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## KING STREET EAST UNITED CHURCH

King Street East owes its origin to the missionary efforts of the Primitive Methodists, whose zeal and endeavour in Toronto form an interesting feature of its religious history.

In the year of 1866 Rev. John Goodman, who was pastor of Parliament Street Church, preached upon the green at the South East corner of King and Sumach Streets. (A junk yard is now located there). It was in the forenoon of a beautiful day, a number of the residents gathered around as he preached the Gospel.

He anxiously desired to see a place of worship established in the locality, and shortly afterwards in company of William Smith (grandfather of present head of firm), who carried on business at the corner of Duke and Parliament Streets, made a tour of the district.

They rented a frame house on the north side of King Street, a little to the east of Sumach Street, from Mrs. Quiggley. It needed shingling—so they shingled it, its solitary partition they tore down and fitted the place up for worship. Here for the space of twelve months or more a small company of Christian people met to worship God. Once every Sunday they held a service and instituted a Sunday School. Charles Thompson became its first Superintendent.

Edward Davis, an attendant at Trinity Anglican Church, threw in his fortunes with the little cause. His duties were to play the melodeon, which he faithfully performed for many years.

The membership of the school would perhaps number twenty scholars at its beginning.

Class meetings were held on Tuesday evenings in the home of Isaac Hutchinson. He was a blacksmith by trade, doing business on Duke Street. He lived at this time at a place called Hookaway's Yard, in the second house of the first row on the right hand of Sumach Street.

For a short time Mr. Goodman attended to the Spiritual wants of the little congregation. It grew rapidly until the frame house could not contain the people. Mr. Goodman was succeeded by Rev. Geo. Lewis, then a young man lately ordained.

At this time a church had been built by the late John Bugg, and presented to the colored people of St. John's Ward. It stood on Terauley Street (now Bay Street) for some time, but as the conditions were unfulfilled, Mr. Bugg took back the building and presented it to the King Street Mission. Upon the reception of this gift a Trustee Board was formed with the following membership—Robert Walker (of the Golden Lion), John Bugg, James Murray, Isaac Hutchinson, Williamson Reid, James Green, Samuel Virgin and Robert Cherry.

The church was sawn in two and transported to the present site. It was placed upon trucks resting upon wide wheels, which in turn ran upon wider planks. The removal was done by Wardell Bros.

The marks where it was joined together were visible for many years.

When the building was ready for occupancy it was opened for Divine Worship in 1868. The Sunday School left its cramped quarters by a grand parade by way of King Street, River, Queen, Sumach and west on King Street to their more commodious premises. The Church now became a part of the same circuit as Parliament Street and the Don Mills Churches, which had been previously established.

The land at the South West corner of Bright Street and King Street was sold by Frank Helliwell of Scarborough, Trustee of the estate of Ellen Bright and William John Bright, for six hundred dollars to the Trustees named above on the twenty-ninth day of November, 1867 (from the deed of the land now in the Archives of the United Church).

The Rev. Geo. Lewis became its first pastor. A few months after his appointment, while on a visit to his own folks in Whitechurch Township, he and his brother David and two cousins contracted fever and died.

The Church itself was a frame building with seats for one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy-five people. A gallery ran across the southern end, here the choir was located.—Mr. T. Webster was their first leader, Ed. Davis was organist, among the first singers, Margaret and Fanny Quiggley, Jane Frame, Annie Fairbank, William Davis, William John Fraser and Samuel Virgin are still remembered. Abraham Harwood and Samuel Virgin passed the collection plates and Mr. G. White became a class Leader.

After Rev. Geo. Davis, the Rev. Henry Harris, the Superintendent of the Circuit, occupied the pulpit frequently.

The work prospered and in a short time the church became self-sustaining, and was set off as a separate charge.

During the pastorate of Rev. John F. Ockley, 1874-1877, the gallery was taken down. The congregation in the meantime worshiped in "Temperance Hall" on Queen East, west of Parliament Street. Mr. Ockley was assisted by Reuben Toy (a brother of Arthur), a student for the ministry, by lighting the fires in the box stoves.

We find it very difficult to place the following ministers who served this church under the Primitive Methodists:—Revs. Geo. Robinson, Albert Sims, J. Dobson, W. B. Booth, and John Lock. We have found that Rev. William Allen christened Emma Dunn (afterwards Mrs. A. Symons) on January 29th, 1871, also a class ticket signed by Rev. John Ockley, February, 1877.

It is most unfortunate that the records of the Primitive Methodists Church were removed to England some time after the Union in 1884, but we find that the last appointment made by the "Toronto Conference" in 1883 Rev. T. Sims to "Toronto 4th" to "Branch" Rev. John Bedford.—We presume King Street was included in "Toronto Fourth" as there was a John Bedford and a Rev. A. Sims attached to this church.

After the Union of the Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist, Bible Christians and the Methodist Episcopal churches in 1884, we find the records are more complete.

The first appointment by the Methodist Toronto Conference in 1884 to this church was the Rev. Kennedy Creighton, who was smitten down by paralysis while preaching in the pulpit. He was followed by Rev. W. S. Blackstock, and was replaced by Rev. J. McD. Kerr in 1887.

Under the efficient leadership of Mr. G. White, who served this church as Sunday School Superintendent for twenty-one years (1872-1893), the school collected sufficient funds to build a small schoolhouse at the rear of the church, then known as the "Pink Church." Here they laboured until 1888, when it was torn down to make way for an addition to the Church in the form of a "T". The small rooms at each end were used by the Primary classes and for meetings during the week. This addition was built

at a cost of about \$4,000.00, ensuring a seating capacity of about 400. The church was re-named "The People's Church," which gradually fell into disuse with succeeding pastors.

Mr. Kerr's work as a revivalist gave to the Church an impetus on which his successor, Rev. C. J. Dobson, built (1890-1893). He is remembered as a great teacher, having formed the first Adult Bible Class in this church.

While Rev. R. McKee was pastor (1893-1896), a class room was built under the western wing, the work being done by the members in their spare time, and was used by the Primary Department. Later on this room proved a factor in determining the building of the present Church.

During the pastorate of Rev. J. R. Aikenhead (1896-1899), conditions in the neighbourhood began to change, but not for the better! The extension of the Toronto Street Railway caused the removal of a number of the church members to the west end of the city. It was then the officials began to feel a financial stringency and the Trustees were worried on account of not being able to meet the interest on the \$2,000.00 mortgage. They were threatened with foreclosure.

All credit must be given to Rev. J. R. Aikenhead for saving the situation by calling upon his many friends, especially those belonging to Sherbourne Street Church. At last the amount was collected and as they were about to rejoice another account came in for the legal expenses of foreclosure and staying proceedings. Again the bicycle was brought into use and the amount was raised, but, at the cost of a pair of bicycle tires and almost the use of a pair of legs.

King Street Church owes a debt of gratitude to Rev. J. R. Aikenhead for creating the interest in the needs of this community, which culminated in the erection of the present building by their friends at Sherbourne Street Church and the Methodist Social Union and handing it over to the Trustees free of debt! The corner stone was well and truly laid by Chester D. Massey, Esq., in the presence of a representative crowd one Saturday afternoon.

During the building operations, services were held in the rear portion now used by the Primary Department and as a gymnasium during the week.

The Church was dedicated on May 3rd, 1903, by the Rev. Dr. A. Carman, Superintendent of the Methodist Church under the Pastorate of Rev. T. W. Neal. The opening services and celebrations occupied two Sundays and the week between. The preachers were Rev. Dr. John Potts (Chairman of International Lesson Committee), Rev. Dr. S. Cleaver, and the Rev. Dr. William Briggs (Book Steward). Among others taking part were C. D. Massey, Hon. N. W. Rowell, Richard Brown, H. H. Fudger and A. E. Kemp, M.P.

The Sunday School Anniversary followed on May 17th, when the Rev. Dr. A. C. Crews (General Secretary of Sunday School and Young People's work and Editor of the "Onward", preached at both services.

Rev. Gilbert Agar was in charge for one year, 1905-1906, and was followed by Rev. G. Sherlock Faircloth, who remained with the Church for seven years and was much beloved by his people. During his time a beautiful two-manual organ was installed, the gift of Mrs. Massey Treble; Arthur Blakeley (Organist of Sherbourne Street Church) gave a recital at the time of its Dedication.

For some reason or reasons, best known to themselves, the Conference stationed Rev. J. C. Cook, S.T.D., to this Church. Their friends at Sherbourne Street were very much disappointed and lodged a protest strong enough to start the machinery working to secure a more suitable minister. Through the efforts of Rev. C. W. Watch, then president of the Toronto Conference, Rev. W. E. Wilson was brought from the Steelton Charge and appointed to this church as "Supple." By this arrangement the friends at Sherbourne Street kindly paid the extra salary for the year.

Time has proven that the judgment of the committee was sound in securing Rev. W. E. Wilson as pastor of this Church by the fact that he has completed his twenty-fifth year with them.

Mr. Wilson threw himself heartily into the Social Service work of the church; distributing thousands of dollars worth of relief annually in the way of clothing, food, fuel and rent collected from many sources outside of the Church until the work became greater than his strength and more than one person could handle. With the help of a few outside friends, the Dixon Hall, on Sumach Street, was organized and opened on December 10th, 1927, as a community centre for this district.

It is given only to a rare few to have a monument erected to their memory during their lifetime. The name of W. E. Wilson and Dixon Hall, together with King Street East United Church, will always be associated.

Space will not permit to mention all those who have so faithfully striven to extend God's Kingdom in this district since the church was organized in 1867, nor of those who went out to work in other fields, nor of the many who have passed on to their eternal reward.

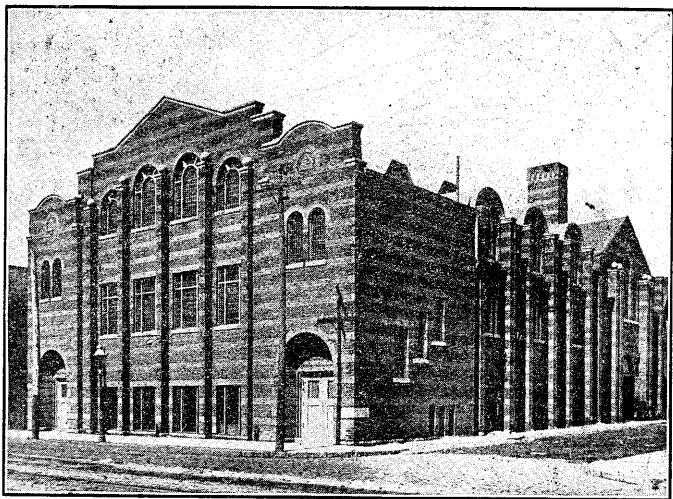
The Congregation enters upon the twenty-fifth Anniversary of its pastor in a spirit of gratitude to Almighty God, who has so graciously blessed, guided and used him through all these years, and in a spirit of consecration to the tasks and triumphs that await them in the years that lie ahead.

#### TORONTO, OCTOBER, 1938

Since the formation of the Methodist Church in Canada, the following ministers have faithfully served this Church to the Glory of God, and credit to themselves:—

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| 1884      | Rev. C. Kennedy, stricken in the pulpit. |
| 1885-1887 | Rev. W. S. Blackstock                    |
| 1887-1890 | Rev. J. McD. Kerr                        |
| 1890-1893 | Rev. C. J. Dobson                        |
| 1893-1896 | Rev. R. McKee                            |
| 1896-1899 | Rev. J. R. Aikenhead                     |
| 1899-1902 | Rev. G. Powell                           |
| 1902-1905 | Rev. T. W. Neal                          |
| 1905-1906 | Rev. G. Agar                             |
| 1906-1913 | Rev. G. S. Faircloth                     |
| 1913-1938 | Rev. W. E. Wilson, still serving.        |





KING STREET EAST UNITED CHURCH

