

Early Church History.

The following is part of an address delivered by Mr. John W. Bickle, at Wesley Church, on September 12th, 1891, in connection with the interesting Jubilee services of the church:

"On the last Sabbath of June, 1839, I was appointed teacher in the old King Street Methodist Sunday-school. From 1840 to 1850 I was connected with this Wesley Church Sunday-school, first as a teacher, then as librarian, and, finally, as secretary. In June, 1850, I was appointed to King Street Sunday-school as superintendent, and I remained there until 1861. I had the privilege of worshipping with you yesterday morning, and while seated here, how many memories came up before my mind! It seemed to me that no one present formed a part of that congregation which worshipped at the opening and dedication of this church in 1841. There are some, no doubt, in the city who were then present; but few will be the number. I should be pleased if your pastor would ask any present to rise who were at the dedicatory services fifty years ago. My old friend, Mr. Joseph Lister, will be one, but at the moment I do not recollect any other. Those who officially bore the burdens then, have since passed away; also the elect ladies, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Powell, and others I might mention, leaving a fragrant memory, and "their works do follow them."

It was on the first of November, 1840, that Wesley congregation was formed. Its formation took place in consequence of a division in the Methodist Church, some calling themselves British Methodists, others Canadian Methodists. The British Methodists—the pioneers of Wesley congregation—consisting of ninety adherents, removed from old King Street Church, leaving the Canadian Methodists in possession, and established themselves in the old American Presbyterian Church, on John Street, where Messrs. Gurney's foundry now stands. Steps were soon taken to erect a new place of worship, and before long, (in 1841) this was accomplished, under the superintendence of Rev. Ephriam Evans, who was the pastor. I do not recollect who dedicated this church, but I think it was Rev. Mathew Richy, one of the most eloquent preachers I ever heard. In 1847 the unhappy division in the Methodist Church was healed, and the two congregations, King Street and Wesley, united again. Galleries were now put in Wesley

Church to provide seating accommodation for the King Street people, who boarded up and left their own church, and worshipped here. This continued until the McNab Street Methodist Church was built, when a large portion of the congregation, consisting mainly of the King Street people, removed to it, remaining there until the Centenary Church was built.

It is the glory of our country that we are a law-abiding and church-going people. As towns and cities increase in number and in material prosperity, churches and schools keep pace and furnish religious and educational advantages. It may be interesting to look back, and compare Hamilton as it was in June, 1835, when I came to this city, and as it now is in 1891; it will show in a very vivid manner how Hamilton has changed. In 1839 there were no school-buildings. Schools there were, but kept in rooms utterly unfit for such a purpose. Even the Gore District Grammar School was sheltered in an upper room in the rear of the *Spectator* building. Compare with the noble buildings erected for the children of the present day! The schools of to-day stand as glorious monuments to the intelligence and patriotism of our citizens. If we look back upon the church accommodations of 1835, we shall see similar changes. If my memory is correct, when I came to Hamilton there was the old Kirk of the Presbyterian Church where St. Paul's Church now rears its beautiful spire. Then on Main Street, near Walnut, was a frame building occupied by what was termed the Canadian Methodist Church, an off-shoot of the larger body of Methodists founded by Elder Ryan, and which in after years became the New Connexion Methodist Church. Then on Hughson Street, corner of Cannon, there was the Congregational Church, also a frame building, of which the Rev. Mr. Dyer was pastor. Then on John Street, where Gurney's foundry now stands, was the American Presbyterian Church, under the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Durman, also a frame building. Then I complete the list with the old King Street Methodist Church—the first church built in Hamilton, erected in 1824. The Episcopalians worshipped in the Court House, and the Roman Catholics went to Dundas on Sundays to attend the services of their church. The King Street Church was just beyond the limits of the city, in fact in the country; the zigzag rail fences surrounded it as if it had been a hundred miles in the bush.

(To be continued.)