

A Condensed History of The B.M.E. Church of Canada

Colored Methodist dates away to October 4th, 1848 when land was sold in trust to William Hamilton Benjamin Harris, John Osburne, Henry James, Henry Logan, Thomas Wingate and George Winemiller, for the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Property for building at 275 Thames St. was originally thirty feet frontage by a hundred and ten feet deep. It was sold to trustees by William Clark, a carpenter who originally secured the land from the Crown on September 8th, 1848.

Witnesses to the sale agreement were: William Patrick, Hunter Murray, and W. C. U. Connor, a missionary of A.M.E. Church. Those who witnessed registration of the deed were: Mr. Murray and David Hughes. Afterwards Judge Hughes of St. Thomas. The original A.M.E. Church of London was known as the "Old Fugitive Slave Chapel on Thames Street" because it was found by slaves who made their way to London by means of the underground railway.

Eighteen years before 1848 an effort was made to establish a colony of former slaves near Lucan at a place called Wilberforce in honour of the British Statesman of that name who had done so much to free Negroes in British possessions. The

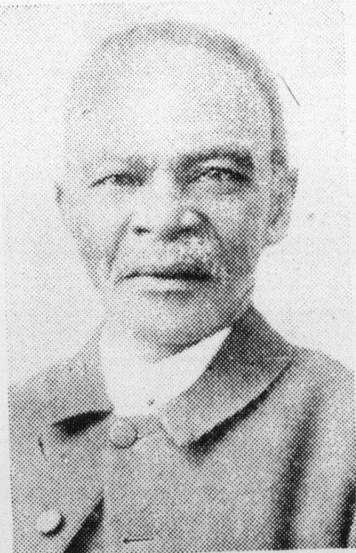
paper; Rev. Geo. Barclay, pastor of the chapel. James Worthington had a barber shop on the market. He lived at 446 Nelson St. Richard Smith resided at 66 William Street. George Duncan who was recognized



RT. REV. R. R. DISNEY
Bishop B.M.E. Church of Canada
1875-1886

as a physical marvel, lived on Maitland Street. He was employed for some years at Craig's Lumber Yard. He had two sons, Hodgen and Isca. Henry Logan lived on Pall Mall St. Mrs. Harper resided on Wellington Road South. Her son Alex Harper for years was city auditor of Chicago. Henry Moorehead, known as Professor Moorehead, along with A. B. and A. T. Jones, was mentioned in Drew's "North Side View of Slavery." William Berry lived over Clark's Bridge. He was a successful auctioneer and founded the City Chimney Sweep. He afterwards moved to Wharncliffe Road. His son, William Berry still owns and operates the City Chimney Sweep business. George Peters spent fifty years of his life on the river bank at the foot of Colborne Street. His son George held the middleweight pugilistic championship of Canada and Michigan for many years. A frequent visitor to the city was Stevens. He was a fiddler who had no fixed place. With three or four dogs on a string he wandered from city to city playing melodies of the old south.

On the 29th day of September, 1856 the Canadian Church of the African



RT. REV. W. HAWKINS
General Superintendent
B. M. E. Church of Canada
1886-1894
Died at Chatham, Ont., 1894

colony failed and the fugitives were scattered. The failure was due to our "old friend" racial prejudice. The Canada Company feared that a colored community would hinder their interest. The Canada Company refused to sell any more land to Negroes.

Archie Bremer stated in his book "Illustrated London," that John Brown the Negro liberator, spent days in London drawing up a constitution for his Free Slave Republic. The constitution was adopted at a meeting of abolitionists and colored men in Chatham, on May 12, 1858.

City residents of years ago claimed that Brown held a mass meeting of colored people in the little chapel on Thames St. in 1858. Only those who knew the password were admitted. It was reported that Brown was the chief speaker of the evening. He wanted the Negroes of the city to be drilled, and in time, join with others on a raid of slave holders.

One of the original pastors of the chapel was Rev. Benjamin Miller, a runaway slave. Old city directories show that in the early sixties Rev. J. Rawlings was pastor.

Former slaves who attended the Slave Chapel were: Isca Adams, resided on (Ottway Ave.) South St.; Big Buckley, who turned a handle of a press that printed a local news-

Street to the building on Grey Street. Thus came into being, on September 29th, 1856, the Bethemanuel Methodist Episcopal Church on Grey St. one of the oldest churches in the city.

Rt. Rev. Willis Nazery came to London from the U.S.A. to be the first Bishop to take charge of the new connexion. He was bishop of the B.M.E. connexion from 1856 to 1875 when he died in Shelburne, N.S. on August 22nd, 1875. Next to become head of the conference was Rt. Rev. R. R. Disney, from 1875 to 1886. During the years between 1856 and 1898 the title of Bishop changed to General Superintendent. In 1898 it was changed to Bishop again. It was changed back to General Superintendent in 1908 and has remained General Superintendent since.

In 1886 Rt. Rev. Walter Hawkins was General Superintendent of the B.M.E. Churches of Canada, until 1894. He died at Chatham in September, 1894. Rt. Rev. C. A. Washington took his turn as head of the connexion, as Bishop from 1894 to 1906.

After Rt. Rev. C. A. Washington, Rev. S. R. Drake was General Superintendent until he died, May 6th, 1927. Then Rev. H. D. Wright was our next Superintendent until his death in 1932.

Since 1932 Dr. T. H. Dawson has been our General Superintendent. Much sympathy was felt for Dr. Dawson when he lost his loving wife, Mrs. Dawson on January 7, 1948.



RT. REV. C. A. WASHINGTON
Bishop B.M.E. Church of Canada
1894-1906
Died at Woodstock, May, 1908

When the B.M.E. Church of London celebrated its 70th Anniversary, Rev. Wellington A. McClure was the pastor of the London Church. He was a former slave from the state of West Virginia, U.S.A. He came to London in 1913 from his former charge in North Buxton. Church trustees at the time were: Frederick Fountain, Michael DeGroat, Mrs. Caroline Stevens, Mrs. Rosetta Moorehead and C. H. Brown. The women took an active part in the church affairs and were sometimes licensed as local preachers.

The stewards were: C. H. Brown, preacher's steward; Lewis De Groat, recording steward and Albert Smith, poor steward.

Class leaders were A. Mackey and W. G. Taylor.

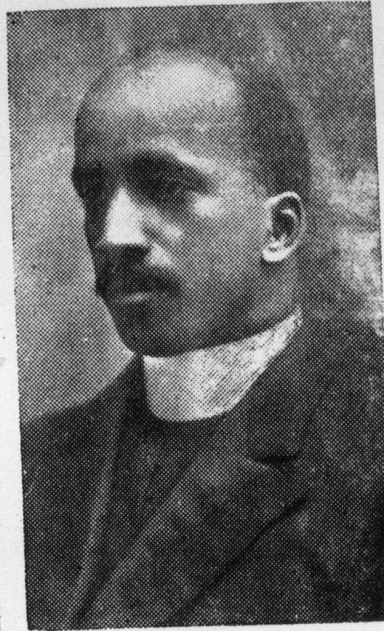
Stewardesses were: Mrs. Rosetta Moorehead, Mrs. Caroline Stevenson, Mrs. Albert Smith, Mrs. C. H. Brown, Mrs. Harris Duncan, Mrs. Rev. W. A. McClure, Mrs. Robert Harris and Mrs. Michael DeGroat.

Mrs. Michael DeGroat was church agent. Mrs. C. H. Brown was superintendent of the Sunday School. Wesley Fountain was the assistant superintendent of the Sunday School. Miss Alice Drake was secretary, and Mrs. C. Stevenson the treasurer. Lewis DeGroat and Stanley Drake were librarians. Teachers were Miss Elsie Walden, Mrs. C. Stevenson, Rev.

W. A. McClure and C. H. Brown.

There was also at this time a Women's Christian Temperance Union which was connected with the church. Meetings were held fortnightly. Mrs. S. R. Drake was president, Miss Mary Harris, secretary, and Mrs. Caroline Stevenson was the treasurer.

The majority of the members of the B.M.E. Church at this time were natives or descendants of natives of three U.S.A. states, West Virginia,



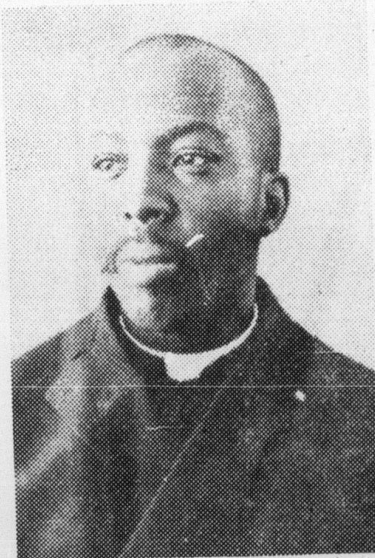
RT. REV. S. R. DRAKE
General Superintendent
B. M. E. Church of Canada
1906-1927
Died May 6th, 1927

Maryland and Kentucky. Former pastors of the B.M.E. Church in London, prior to Rev. W. A. McClure's time were Rev. J. M. Lawson, Rev. Herbert P. Wright, Rev. S. D. Smith, Rev. Mr. Ball and Rev. S. R. Drake.

In the same year that the B.M.E. Church was celebrating its seventieth anniversary the official board one Wednesday evening licensed as local preachers Mrs. Caroline Stevenson and Mr. Lewis DeGroat. Mr. DeGroat was then in his teens; a recording steward of the church and an officers of the Sunday School.

After Rev. W. A. McClure, pastors of the London Church were: Rev. Smith, Rev. F. O. Stewart, Rev. Woodcock, Rev. E. A. Richardson, Rev. T. H. Jackson, the late Rev. C. A. Johnson, Rev. Novie Cheney, Rev. C. S. Johnson and now once again Rev. E. A. Richardson.

In 1932 when Rev. T. H. Jackson came to London he worked hard in the five years that he was here to lift the heavy taxes which had hung over the church for years. He left London in 1937 to take up the charge in Windsor. The late Rev. C. A.



RT. REV. H. D. WRIGHT
General Superintendent
B. M. E. Church of Canada
1927-1932
Died in London, 1932

Jackson succeeded Rev. T. H. Jackson in 1937. Rev. C. A. Johnson before coming to London had the charge in North Buxton. It was he who is responsible for all the recent alterations and improvements made

in the church. And it was he who started the famous southern chicken dinners. The B.M.E. Church has become noted since for its famous southern chicken dinners. Each year one can see faithful workers like Mrs. Sarah Smith on Dundas and Richmond Streets selling tags for the church's annual tag day.

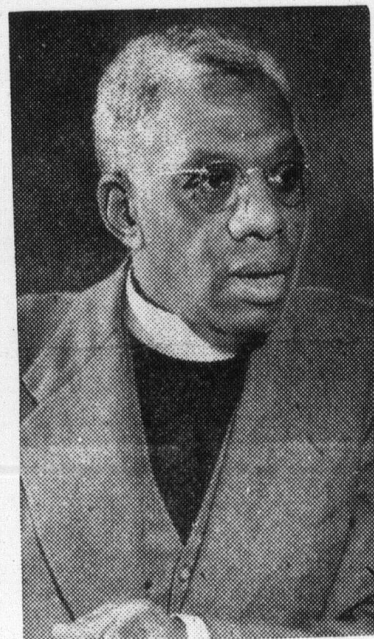
Now with the Rev. E. A. Richardson as pastor, the trustees are: Mr. Carl Kennedy, Mr. Paul Lewis and Mr. A. Brooks.

The stewards are: Mr. W. Fountain and Mr. Jas. Hill. The stewardesses are: Mrs. Jas. Hill, Mrs. A. Brooks, Mrs. M. Harris, Mrs. H. Johnson and Mrs. M. Drake. The clerk is Mrs. Jas. Hill. Mrs. C. S. Johnson is president of the Missionary Society.

Mrs. A. Brooks is president of the Willing Workers Society. The financial board consists of Mr. Jas. Brooks, Mrs. H. Johnson and Rev. E. A. Richardson.

When Rev. E. A. Richardson was here for four years in 1928 to 1932 he was successful during those depression years in not only clearing off the mortgage but in installing a new furnace.

Rev. E. A. Richardson, since he has once again returned to London says: "I am more interested in seeing in the future, our church filled, with not only members, friends and well wishers but with more spiritual minded, God loving young people, because," he goes on to say "the



REV. E. A. RICHARDSON
Present Pastor of London
B.M.E. Church of Canada

young people are the church of tomorrow, and they must be prepared for that day."

RELEASE OF NEGRO VETERAN FALSELY ACCUSED REQUESTED OF WAR DEPARTMENT

NEW YORK, N. Y. — The Adjutant General of the United States Army was today requested by the NAACP to release immediately Joseph R. Davis of New York, now serving a fifteen-year term in the Ft. Leavenworth Prison for alleged participation in a riot in Japan. Davis, a former member of the 3774th Quartermaster Truck Company, was convicted and sentenced by a General Court-Martial in February, 1946.

Franklin H. Williams, N.A.A.C.P. assistant special counsel, cited in his appeal for Davis, release the sworn statements of Cleveland Waters of Philadelphia, Pa., William B. Smith of Gary, Indiana, and Clarence Coates, of Washington, D.C., members of the same army unit, that Davis had not participated in the riot at all and was asleep in his barracks at the time of the alleged trouble. The Adjutant General was urged to submit the case immediately to the Clemency Board with the recommendation that Davis be released in time to return home for the Christmas holidays.

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