

History Briden United Church

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HISTORY

Brigden United Church

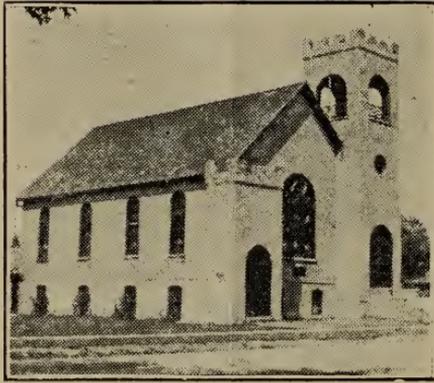


The former Presbyterian Church: opened for worship March, 1881, now the Brigden United Church.

Hours of Worship: 10.30 a. m. and 7.30 p. m.

Sunday School: 11.30 a. m.

REV. J. D. BANNATYNE, Pastor.



The former Methodist Church, erected in 1877 and rebuilt in 1910. Now used by the Presbyterians as a place of worship.

The history of the Brigden United Church dates back to the early seventies. With the completion of the railroad and the growth of the community known as Brigden, it was natural that religious services would be organized and the erection of churches undertaken in the near future. The Methodists and Presbyterians were both active in establishing their respective churches in Brigden which continued to minister to their congregations for nearly a half century. In 1925 these two churches were united to form the Brigden United Church, which now shares the sacrifices and services of those early pioneers in those two fine christian congregations.

The Former Methodist Church

The history of the Methodist Church in Brigden dates back to 1877, a few years after the village was started. Meetings were first held in a hall over Wynn's Drug Store, but in July, 1877 two lots were purchased on Boswell Street. These are known as lots 55 and 56 of the Boswell survey. The former was purchased from Mr. Frank Tye for \$40. and the latter from Mr. T. R. Clark for \$100. This property was deeded to the Trustees of Brigden Congregation of the Methodist Church of Canada in trust. The trustees were Messrs. Geo. Jackson and Joseph Booth of Enniskillen Township, John Richards, Reuben Booth and Wm. Pottinger, of Sombra Township and John Hewer, J. W. Wheeler, John Hays and Andrew Harkness, of Moore Township. The erection of the new red brick veneer church was begun at once and completed the same year during the pastorate of the first minister Rev. T. R. Clark.

Rev. T. R. Clark was succeeded by Rev. Jasper Wilson and during his pastorate the parsonage adjacent to the church was built in 1881. Previously the minister lived in a house on a site on the east side of Main Street just north of where the Balmoral Hotel stands, It was burned in one of Brigden's big fires.

Rev. Geo. J. Kerr succeeded Rev. Jasper Wilson. During his pastorate a great revival swept the community under the leadership of Mr. Savage and his Hallelujah Band. There was a great ingathering of souls and the congregation grew and prospered.

Rev. C. W. Vollick followed as minister from 1885 to 1888. The Brigden circuit at this time consisted of five congregations, Brigden, Bradshaw, Waubuno, Town Hall and Zion. These were supplied by the minister and a student. During Mr. Kerr's term, Mr. Crintland assisted for a season; and associated with Rev. Vollick for two years was Rev. J. Husser and late Rev. Locke, both as student preachers.

In 1888 Rev. William Quance was stationed at Brigden, and during his pastorate three students in turn assisted, J. Morrison, Mr. Down and Mr. Jerome. About this time the Town Hall congregation built the Sixth Line Methodist Church and it was added to the Corunna circuit. Providence congregation of the 10th concession of Moore was now added to Brigden.

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John Macpinn

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Rev. Peter Myers came to Bridgen circuit about 1891. No Student was assigned to assist him, but the work was carried on with the able assistance of Mr. Stewart Johnston of Bridgen, and Mr. Archie Kellan, a teacher at Bradshaw who became an ordained minister later. About this time Providence and Zion were joined with Marthaville to make a new circuit, and no more student assistants were sent to Bridgen.

From 1893 to 1896 Rev. Richard Whiting was the minister. Rev. T. R. McNair followed from 1896 to 1898. After him came Rev. R. H. Barnby, who served until 1902. Rev. G. H. Thompson followed but before the following spring was appointed to Maraviantown Indian Reserve and the balance of the year was taken by Rev. Geo. W. Rivers. Rev. Byron Snell was the minister from 1903 to 1905. In 1905 Rev. John Henderson was sent to Bridgen. Those were the years of the strenuous campaigns for local option. Mr. Henderson took a most active interest in the cause of temperance.

The congregation now began to feel the need of more room for the church work. The building had been erected about 30 years, during which time the membership had increased and a flourishing Sunday School had grown up. Plans were drawn up for the construction of a basement under the church, which made it necessary to remove the brick and raise the building. After much deliberation this was undertaken in 1910 during the pastorate of the Rev. Amos J. Thomas, who had come to Bridgen in 1907. The cost of the work was over \$5000. of which \$2000. was paid that year and a mortgage of \$3000. placed on the property. Mr. Stewart Johnston supervised the construction which was completed by local labor, most of it hired by the day. Much credit is due Rev. Thomas for his consummation of this undertaking.

Rev. Frances Swann succeeded Rev. Thomas, but after a year's term he was stationed on Indian work in British Columbia. Rev. Fred S. O'Kell followed Rev. Swann during the next four years. In 1915 Rev. J. M. Keys began a four year pastorate. During his term, the church was cleared of debt and the mortgage burned. Rev. S. V. R. Pentland followed Rev. Keys in 1919 and remained as minister for two years. In 1921 Rev. William G. Colgrove was appointed minister remaining until June, 1925 when the congregation entered the United Church of Canada as part of the Bridgen United Church.

The amount of the mortgage in 1910 on the church was \$3000. This was reduced during the ensuing years until it stood at \$1200. in 1916. In that year the Ladies' Aid paid \$175. and the Trustee Board \$125. In 1919 a canvas of the congregation was made and through their liberality the balance of \$900. and interest was paid off. The mortgage was burnt at the District Meeting which was held in Bridgen Church May 20, 1919.

The following men have served at some time as officers of the church. Geo. Jackson, Joseph Boothe, John Richards, Reuben Booth, William Pottinger, John Hewer, J. W. Wheeler, John Hays, Andrew Harkness, Thomas Hayne, Chas. Lymburner, Fred Parr, Thos. Leacock, Jacob Smith, John Smith, Albert Fisher, William Smith, William Hartwell, John W. Humphrey, M. B. Johnston, John Cunningham, Luke Hagel, George Cannon, Stewart Johnston, John Johnston, W. J. Faucett, John Hayne, E. Duffy, A. McCatty, Thomas Poland, C. Leaper, William Wells, Thos. Rogers, John Sykes, Robert Colborne, William Boyington, Richard Osborne, James Gray, W. J. Brownlee, Geo. Litchfield and W. E. Jarrott.

The Former Presbyterian Church

In the early seventies the Presbyterians in and around the village of Brigden worshipped at Bear Creek, where the Rev. Peter McDermid was the preacher. When the Methodists began holding services in the hall over Wynn's Drug Store, it was attended by many Presbyterians who assisted with the service, also frequent services were held in the school house conducted by Rev. Peter McDermid of Bear Creek. In 1877 the Methodist Church was built and the Presbyterians were granted permission to hold their service in the afternoon with Rev. McDermid as the minister. This accommodation served the congregation for three years.

In 1880 the Presbyterians began their own church building. Three sites were considered by the congregation. Peter Brown offered the land and a contribution of one hundred dollars toward the erection of the church on the north side of the 4th line west of Main Street. Charles Duncan offered a site on the east side of Main Street near the present school property. This would have placed the church at the northern approach to the village with a commanding view. These sites were rejected in favor of the property donated by Lucas and Leacock on Jane Street where the church was built.

John Livingston and William Morwick from Watford had the contract for the brick work. Duncan McPhail from Alvinston was engaged for the carpenter work. Workmen being scarce it was difficult to complete the contract within the specified time.

The corner stone was laid in 1880 by Rev. Dr. George A. McKay of Formosa, and on the second Sunday in March, 1881, the church was opened for worship with Rev. John A. McDonald as minister. The elders were Peter Brown, John McKenzie, Charles Duncan and Dr. Ross. At this time the Brigden Church was joined with the Bear Creek Church as sister charges with their own minister.

The ministers of the Brigden Presbyterian Church were as follows: Rev. John A. McDonald who resigned in August, 1890. Rev. J. C. McKee who was inducted July 21st, 1891, and who resigned August 4th, 1904; Rev. W. Reid who was inducted March 27th, 1905 and who resigned. Rev. Thomas Oswald, inducted in 1910 and resigned in 1912. Rev. Wm. Rice inducted 1913 and resigned in 1915. Rev. John Richardson inducted in 1915 and resigned in 1922. Rev. J. D. Bannatyne inducted, 1923 and who went with the church into Union on June 10, 1925.

The elders who held office from 1881 to 1925 are as follows: Peter Brown, John McKenzie, Charles Duncan, Dr. Ross, Roderick McKinnon, John Gibson, John M. Brown, Alex. Watson, David McDonald, Peter Rattray, Robert Brown, D. P. Shaw, Samuel Harkness, Peter Gauld, James Gibson, John Sheppard and Alexander McDonald.

The United Church

The Brigden United Church was formed in 1925 by the union of the former Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. Rev. J. D. Bannatyne minister of the former Presbyterian Church was chosen as the minister of the newly organized United congregation. Under his fine leadership the membership of the church has increased until today 257 names are on the Church Membership Roll. The former Presbyterian Church building was chosen as the place of worship. It was enlarged in 1928 at a cost of \$3000. by the addition of new class rooms and kitchen to accommodate the growing needs of Sunday School and church services.

On October 25th, 1931 the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the present building as a place of worship was observed, with impressive services conducted by Rev. Neil Leckie, D. D., President of London Conference. Choir gown were worn by members of the choir for the first time. On Christmas Day the minister was presented with a pulpit gown by the congregation, as a mark of appreciation of his services.

The present officers of the Brigden United Church are: Session—John Beaton, William Boyington, Chas. Capes, Stephen Lambkin, Geo. Litchfield, John L. McBean, Peter A. McBean, James Piggott, Thomas Poland, John Sheppard, William Williamson and D. P. Shaw, (Clerk).

Stewards—Roy McDonald, Thomas Piggott, Alvin Blacklock, Alex. Smith, Wesley Carter, Samuel Staples, Sherman Parr, Charles Bruton, William Shaw, Peter McBean, Thomas Holmes, (Chairman) and W. E. Jarrott, (Secretary).

Trustees—William South, Joseph Potter, George Piggott, J. L. McBean, Joseph Sheppard, Thomas Poland, and William J. Brownlee, (Secretary).

Recording Secretary—W. E. Jarrott.

Financial Secretary—Mrs. Ethel Gibson.

Missionary Treasurer—William Shaw.

Organist—Mrs. A. D. Armstrong.

Choir Leader—J. L. McBean.

Superintendent of Sunday School—H. McDonald.

Caretaker—George Rogers.

Such is a brief history of the Brigden Presbyterian and Methodist Churches from their organization to 1925. What a record of fine christian service to the community. Their pulpits were filled by many brilliant preachers who have gone out to become leaders in their respective bodies. Several of these have passed into rest from their labours, and to a blessed reward. Among the laity were many devout men and women, whose fine christian characters contributed much to the service of the kingdom in our community. The memory of their splendid christian example and influence will be an inspiration to those who are carrying on. What a heritage has been handed on by these God-fearing pioneers. An invisible audience, a cloud of witnesses attend our way in the Brigden United Church.

