

Codrington United Church by Dan Buchanan

One of my favourite childhood memories growing up in Codrington is working at Potluck Dinners held in the basement of the Codrington United Church. Other than the fun I had at the local ball diamonds, I recall this experience most fondly. It was in the mid-1960`s when I was a young teenager living on the farm on the north side of Codrington. Our family were very active in the Church and I had attended many of these dinners as a satisfied patron but I figured that helping the Women`s Institute put on the event would be a great thing to do. Many of the other kids were doing it and there was a bit of peer pressure involved. Mother agreed and I was recruited.

There were many events held in Codrington United Church. In my home we took it for granted that there would be Sunday Church Services as well as Sunday School every week. The rhythms of seasonal farm work and school attendance were anchored by the weekly visits to the Church. Special events were always anticipated including vacation schools in the summer, Christmas concerts, wedding receptions and, of course, the occasional funeral. For those of us who served in the choir, there was Thursday night choir practice. Also, many weekday evenings found the church basement occupied by clusters of folks holding meetings for one or more of the various organizations in the area. The Church was our community centre.

As important as the Church was in our lives at the time, the fact remains that this particular Church had a relatively short life. It was built in 1929, closed in 1968 and torn down in 1970. That amounts to only 39 years of service. As a kid, the building seemed to be as permanent as Marsh Creek that flowed by it and Cramahe Hill to the west. As an adult, it was a bit surprising to learn about the short life of my church, which is why I wanted to study its history.

In order to understand the history of the churches in the area of Codrington, we must look back to the earlier settlers in the area and learn about their religious affiliations. This is not the place for a history of the Methodist Church of Canada but we should know something about how the different denominations developed over the last two hundred years in Ontario. It`s complicated, but, very briefly, here goes.

The Methodist Episcopal Church (ME) began in the U.S.A. in 1784 and came to Upper Canada in 1791 when Rev. William Losee settled in Adolphustown to carry on a very successful saddlebag ministry. We can see his Memorial at Hay Bay Church, Adolphustown which is where he lived amongst the many United Empire Loyalists and ex-soldiers who had settled in the area beginning in 1783. From there he travelled across the land, bringing his message to the willing pioneers.

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The Wesleyan Methodist Church had its beginnings in 1766 when followers of John Wesley came to Newfoundland and began spreading the word through the Maritimes, Lower Canada (Quebec) and Upper Canada (Ontario). There were many mergers along the way but in 1884, the Wesleyan and Episcopal Churches joined together, along with the Bible Christian Church and the Primitive Methodist Church to form the Methodist Church of Canada. We can see lots of evidence of these changes in documents such as census records and registrations of births, deaths and marriages. During the 1830's to 1870's there are many of both ME and WM shown under the "Religion" column but through the 1880's and beyond we see mostly WM.

The first settler in the area we now call Mount Olivet was David Orser; thus the early name "Orser Neighbourhood". David Orser was a member of a large United Empire Loyalist family that had settled in Hallowell Township, near Picton. David himself was born in Kingston in 1797, several years after his father, Gilbert Orser, had been forced to leave the family homestead in Westchester County, New York due to their support for the British during the War of Independence. David Orser appears for the first time in Murray Township in the 1823 Census with a wife and one son. We must remember that before Brighton Township was formed in 1850, Mount Olivet was part of Murray Township.

David Orser's twin sons, Philander Smith and William Steward Orser are shown to have been born in Hallowell Township in 1824 but from the birth of daughter Elizabeth Ann Orser in 1827, the children are all shown by records to have been born in Murray Township. David's first wife died and he married Elizabeth McConnell in 1849 and they had one son, David Hulbert Orser, born in 1854, who is the David Orser that many local residents may recall.

The Orser family belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church and the first M.E. Church in the area was built at the south end of their farm, on the north side of the road along Concession 8 which would later be called Goodfellow Road. This property is in Lot 32 of Concession 8, immediately east of the current Clitherow farm. It was in the Orser family until David H. Orser sold it to Clarence Woof in 1932. Clarence's grandfather, James Woof, had moved to Lot 31 in the 1860's, adding another M.E. family to the area.

Another Episcopal Methodist group that joined in worship at this church were the Valleau's. Three Valleau brothers moved from Hillier Township to The Orser Neighbourhood, the earliest being Jesse Potter Valleau who appears in the 1851 Census in Hillier but we see that his daughter Lucy Emily Valleau was born in Brighton Township in 1852. Another brother, William Andrew Valleau, moved to Percy Township in the late 1850's and then over to Orser Neighbourhood in the 1860's. Another brother, Cornelius Valleau lived most of his life in Brighton Village.

William A. (Bill) Goodfellow describes what he learned from his father regarding the religious situation in his piece on local church history which he wrote for "The Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington" in 1975. He says "I can recall my Dad relating to me that David Orser was the first permanent settler in the neighbourhood, having taken out his deed in 1846. He was followed

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shortly thereafter by the Ames' and the Valleau's as well as some others who, jointly, built the frame Episcopal Methodist Church on the Orser farm. This sect did not permit musical instruments in their place of worship, with the exception of a tuning fork; however, it was pointed out that their voices more than overcame the lack of musical instruments!"

... and then he goes on to say ...

"In late 1850 and the early 1860's, several families settled in the neighbourhood. These were adherents of the Wesleyan Methodist faith and included the Goodfellows. As related to me, feelings ran high between the two Methodist sects even to a point where families had strained relations and the respective children assumed a degree of segregation at school and even in the schoolyard."

Charles Goodfellow and his wife Mary Connaughty had come from Antrim County, Ireland, in 1841 and by 1847 had purchased a farm in the north end of Murray Township at Preston Hill, immediately east over the swamp from Orser Neighbourhood. Their son William purchased a farm in Orser Neighbourhood in 1866 after he had married another recent settler, Ann Ames, daughter of James Ames. The Ames family had moved to the area in 1850 from Waupoos Island in Prince Edward County, taking land on the south side of the 8th Concession Line.

Another Wesleyan Methodist family that lived in Orser Neighbourhood from around 1850 was the family of Henry Belford who had settled on Lot 35 of Concession 8, on the north side of the road, across from the school, cemetery and church.

In 1873 the Wesleyan Methodists in the community got together and built a new brick church. Bill Goodfellow goes on to say:

"When the Wesleyan's acquired the site of Mt. Olivet Church in 1873, they secured – to the east of it – land for a cemetery; however, as related to me, no Episcopal Methodists were buried in it for many years."

It's interesting to note that James and Mary Ames were shown to be Episcopal Methodist (ME) but their children are mostly recorded as Wesleyan Methodist (WM). In a strict sense, the marriage between William Goodfellow and Ann Ames would have been seen as an interdenominational marriage, which would have been cause for debate in those days. This may also explain why James and Mary Ames were buried several miles away by road in McPhail's Cemetery and not close to home in the new Mt. Olivet Cemetery where most of their children would eventually be buried. We see another interdenominational marriage when William James Belford married Johannah Orser in 1866. It would appear to have been a trend.

Another point that demonstrates the change between generations is that Stephen Ames, a son of James and Mary Ames, who became a renowned local carpenter and builder, was the chief

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carpenter responsible for building the new Wesleyan Methodist Church which was located just east of the Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Regarding the resolution of the denominational differences, Bill Goodfellow adds “ ... during the late 1870`s the strong denominational differences were resolved to a point where both sects became supporters of the new Wesleyan Church. My Dad always said he was glad the differences between the sects were resolved when they were or else he – a Wesleyan Goodfellow – and Mother – an Episcopal Valleau – might never have been married in Hilton Parsonage in 1887!”

This quote refers to Bill’s father, Charles James Goodfellow and his mother, Martha Miranda Valleau who was a daughter of William Andrew Valleau and Maria Wanamaker; they lived toward the west end of Mount Olivet on Lot 36.

The Village of Codrington was founded in 1856 when a post office was established there. During the next years it became a thriving business centre with hotels, stores, blacksmith shops and carriage works. The Brighton and Seymour Gravel Road was completed from Brighton to Mallory’s Corners (Warkworth Road) in 1856 and the result was that the Village of Codrington gained traffic, business and residents while Orser Neighbourhood remained a productive farming community. Both church and schools in “The Neighbourhood” would eventually be closed.

Since the 1830’s there had been some sort of school on the south side of Marsh Creek in the area where Codrington Public School would be built in 1874. The 1850 Census shows that there was a school house on the property of William Trumpour. However, there was no church in the village. Even then, local worshipers were not inactive. Mrs. Leona Austin tells us in her very interesting history of Wooler and area entitled “As the Crow Flies” that “Early settlers built a church midway between Codrington and Newcombe’s Mills (now called Orland), in 1870 on land purchased from Hugh McPhail for \$54.00. The name chosen for the church was Bethany Methodist Church and it was served by ministers from Smithfield parish; but in 1884 it became part of Hilton charge, together with Mount Olivet.”

The Bethany Methodist Church was a fine brick building located just off the gravel road between Orland and Codrington. Loomis Road is the gravel road that comes from the west and crosses Number 30 Highway between the Hennessey and Peister farms, continuing east for a short distance before swinging north to meet The Old Wooler near the home (as I recall during my time in the area) of Harper Peister. The only evidence of this church on the spot is a set of steps that can still be seen at the south edge of the lawn. A modern home was built on this lot and Cyril Peister lived there when I lived in the area.

Let’s listen while Mrs. Austin tells us what happened next: “In 1923 Bethany became part of the Norham circuit, this being made up of Bethany, Norham, Mount Olivet and Meyersburg. In 1928 it was decided to remove the church from the McPhail property to the village of Codrington and, owing to a shortage of ministers, Mount Olivet was taken off the circuit and materials and bricks

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from both churches were used to build Codrington United Church. The framework of Bethany Church was drawn up to Codrington through the area west of the highway and was placed on a lot beside the school. The men of the congregation joined the contractors and helped to complete the new building which was dedicated in November, 1928. The church was then on the Norham charge with Rev. Clare as minister.”

This was a momentous and difficult event for local churchgoers. Both dismantled churches had been in use for a long time. Bethany was built in 1870 which means it served the community for 58 years; Mount Olivet served only three years less. We can only imagine the sadness and ill feelings that may have been expressed by some members of the congregations as they saw their familiar churches come to an end.

On the other hand, there is a document in The Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington which sheds some light on early steps in the direction of combining the two churches into a new one at Codrington. This document appears to be a typed transcription of the notes from a meeting of the Trustees of both Mount Olivet and Bethany Churches. It is dated March 30, 1915 – thirteen years before the project was accomplished. Here are the details:

“We the undersigned hereby subscribe the amounts opposite our respective names for the purpose of building a Methodist Church and closed sheds at Codrington in Brighton District ... the proposed church to take the place of the Bethany Church of the Hilton Circuit of the Brighton District and the Mount Olivet Church of the Norham Circuit of the Campbellford District. The estimated cost of such Church being \$8,000.00. Subscriptions are to be paid in three equal payments and notes given therefore payable at the Standard Bank, Brighton on Nov. 1st, 1915, Nov 1, 1916 and Nov 1, 1917 and to be made payable to the building committee appointed by the Mount Olivet and Bethany Trustee Boards without interest. It is understood that this agreement is one entered into between the persons whose names are hereunder written and the Building Committee of the Mount Olivet and Bethany Trustees Boards either already appointed or hereafter to be appointed. Dated the 30th day of March A D 1915.”

A small inset appears to be a printed newspaper clipping showing “The Trustees of Mount Olivet and Bethany Churches met at Codrington on Wednesday to consider uniting and building a new church at Codrington.”

Segments of the hand written list of subscribers include the following entries: “Maurice Ames - \$200; John Dinner - \$200; Ralph Ames - \$200; Walter Ames - \$200; William L. Clark - \$100; M. Austin - \$75; D. C. Stewart- \$75; S. J. Phillips - \$75; F. B. Dusenbury - \$200; D. B. Armstrong - \$60; Wm. Wilson - \$25; C. J. Goodfellow - \$100; Aubrey Woof - \$200; Tennyson Adams - \$60; D. R. Hennessy - \$50; William R. Ames - \$50; J. G. Dusenbury - \$100; H. M. Ireland - \$100; John W. Kemp - \$100.

Another account of these events comes to us from Bill Goodfellow’s writings about Mount Olivet Church. He writes “Sometime about 1925 or 1926, I was appointed to succeed Lorne

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Evans as Recording Secretary of Norham Circuit, with responsibility for collecting Circuit dues from the treasurers of each church, paying the minister, and keeping minutes of Board meetings. Hopefully, those records are preserved by the Presbytery since they contain much historical data on important changes made in the area. About that time, Rev. D. R. Clare was delegated to the Norham Circuit as Pastor. From what he told me, he was more or less selected by the Bay of Quinte Conference to tackle and perform a very unpopular task, that of closing Meyersburg Church and moving toward the amalgamation of Bethany and Mt. Olivet. He was not too tactful, but it was an undertaking to be accomplished where a minister could not win any popularity contest, and Mr. Clare knew it. The closing of Meyersburg actually presented no problem because there were few substantial supporters and for most of them it would be almost as convenient to attend church in Norham or elsewhere. Likewise, the Bethany adherents and supporters were almost unanimous in their willingness to join with Mt. Olivet in the building of a church in Codrington. There was, however, considerable opposition to demolishing Mt. Olivet, not from the regular churchgoers and substantial supporters, but from those who opposed the move on sentimental grounds that it was a sort of monument to the efforts of their forefathers. It is doubtful, though, if they would have contributed to any extent when the need would arise to put a new roof on the old church.”

From this we can see that the change in local churches was being planned by the Trustees more than a decade before the change happened and that support was strong. It was a necessary step to provide a more sustainable situation from a financial standpoint. The evidence would likely have been clear in the ledger books. In today’s business world it would be called “rationalisation”, a term we may not like but which means that we look at the facts and change things to work better. However, when it’s your church going away, this is always hard to swallow.

The new church required a patch of land at Codrington. In the Land Registry Records located at the Land Registry Office in Cobourg we can see the transaction that recorded the purchase of the land where the church would be built. The Index Book for Brighton Township, Concession 8 contains several pages for Lot 3 since that encompasses most of the Village of Codrington. Grant Number 12509 (Instrument Date: January 31, 1929; Registration Date: September 25, 1936) shows that the Grantor was Alciberis Van Blaricom (widower) and the Grantee’s were Robert Barrett Ryckman, Alciberis Van Blaricom, John Kemp, Maurice Ames, John Dinner, Grant Goodfellow, James Henry Ross, Harry Reddom, Kenneth Gladstone Ames, Harper Peister, Trustees of Codrington Congregation of the United Church of Canada. The land is described as part of the centre part of the north half of the said lot and the cost was \$100.

Alciberis Van Blaricom was 68 years of age at this time. He had purchased the land around the school and to the south of the village from Alfred D. Richards in 1893 and was a long time resident of Codrington. Two of his daughters would run the Post Office for many years and his youngest son, Ross Van Blaricom, lived for many years in the house south of the Morganston road where Bob Hazelwood lived in my time in Codrington.

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Bill Goodfellow goes on to add “The building of the church in Codrington was a great example of co-operation in a common cause. The volunteer effort was magnificent and, although the Great Depression had started, the contributions of the adherents were above expectations with the result that, when the church was opened, there was less than \$3,000 outstanding. The Trustees, numbering less than thirty, pledged with their signatures, this amount which – in spite of the Depression – was soon paid off. Great credit is due the late Maurice Ames who, as a competent builder, supervised the project to completion.”

We can see that the congregation that supported the new Codrington United Church proved to be strong in their commitment to the church and, even in difficult times, made it a success. It became an important community meeting place with a convenient location and good facilities. The parking lot, the large basement and the well-appointed kitchen added to the solid reverence of the church to serve a growing population through several decades of constant and intense activity.

It is interesting that Bill Goodfellow mentions Maurice Ames as the supervisor of the building of Codrington United Church. We may recall that Stephen Ames was the carpenter who built the Mount Olivet church. Stephen Ames had two sons, Ralph and Maurice, who both became accomplished builders in their own right. Among many others, they built the two houses on Codrington Village Lot 6, on the west side of the highway, which would eventually become the houses of Lloyd Ames, on the south part of the lot, and Maurice Harvey on the north side. Lloyd Ames, my grandfather, often talked of how he had learned the trade of carpentry from his two uncles, Maurice and Ralph Ames.

On June 4, 1929, the Dedication Service for the new Codrington United Church took place. “The Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington” includes a newspaper report of that important event, as follows:

“Codrington. June 4, 1929. (Examiner Staff Correspondence) If the Codrington United Church had been designed to accommodate such congregations as attended it last Sunday then there had been serious miscalculation in the specifications. Every available seat was occupied. Chairs were placed in the aisles and at the rear. People crowded in the doorway and stood jammed on the stairs leading to the basement. Others listened at the open windows which were high above their heads. Scores were unable to get in the building or near enough to its doors or windows to hear enough of the service to make it worthwhile staying.

The event was the dedication of the building known as Codrington United Church. As an example of such, it is unique. The building is of brick, stone and concrete. It stands on the west side of the Campbellford-Brighton Highway, on the south edge of the Village of Codrington. It is not, in a sense, a new building, but the combination of two older structures into one modern building which will cater to the spiritual needs of the members of the United Church in that district. Proof that it is a real United Church is adequately furnished by the fact that the

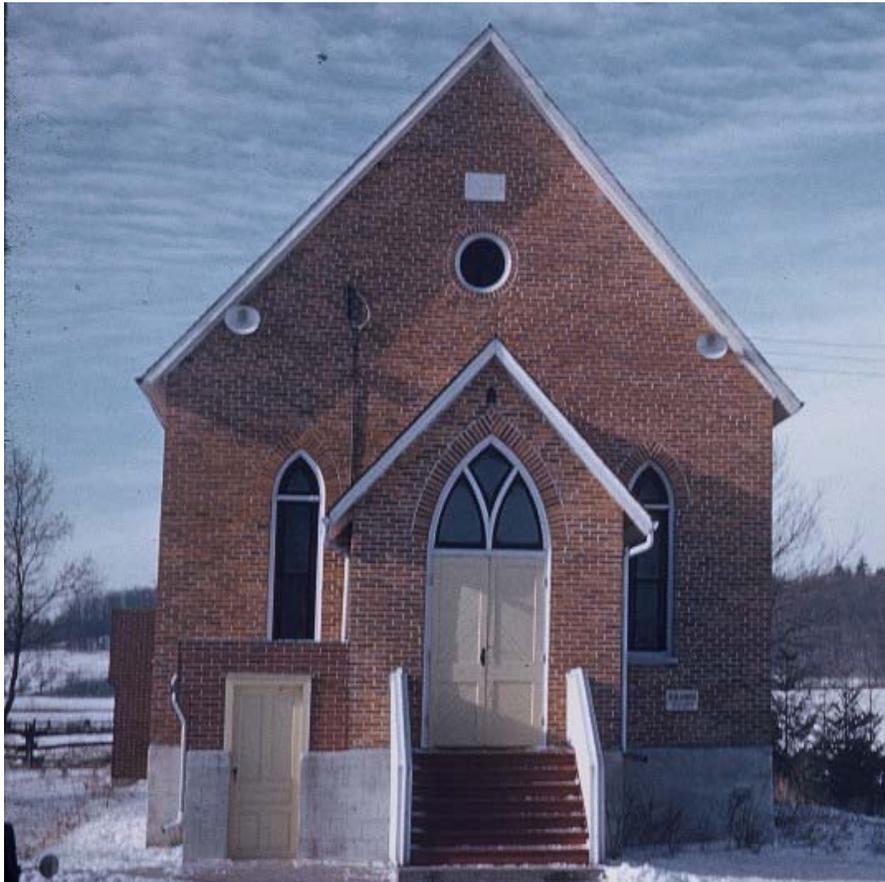
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foundation carries three corner stones. The oldest is the stone from the Bethany Church which bears the inscription 1870, Mount Olivet is the second oldest, with the inscription 1873. The third is modern, 1928. The material from both buildings was used in the erection of the present one. The Bethany church was originally on the McPhail land but was moved from there to its present site by Mr. Huffman. In a brief address to the congregation yesterday afternoon, the Rev. D. R. Clare, minister of the church, said he thought the day should be one of thanksgiving since it represented the consummation of one of the objects of the congregation. The building which formed a part of the present ceremony was more in the form of a re-dedication ceremony. Another feature of the day was the fact that it was United Church Conference Sunday.

In honour of the occasion there was a well filled choir loft. The singers added greatly to the attractive service. Miss Laura Mackie of Oshawa, was the soloist at both afternoon and evening services. In the afternoon she sang "My World" and in the evening "Beside the Still Waters" (Humbly). Her accompaniments were played by Mrs. Cameron, the church organist. In the afternoon the choir sang "I Love to Tell the Story" (Gabriel) the solo parts being taken by Lorne Darling, Tenor, and Clarence Massie, Baritone. There were two anthems in the evening. The first one "It is Not Far" (Clarke) was sung with Mrs. Loomis and Mr. Darling taking solo parts, one duet passage was sung by Mr. Loomis and Mr. Darling and the second duet by Mr. Loomis and Mrs. McColl. Through the services, violin music was used in conjunction with the

organ and choir. In the afternoon, the Rev. Mr. Smith, a former minister of the district, was the special speaker. The Rev. R. C. Tait was the minister in the evening.

The official dedication ceremony followed the sermon. Of the board of trustees seven were present. The ceremony was solemnly performed with the Rev. Mr. Smith, the Rev. Mr. Leigh and Rev. Mr. Clare taking part. The seven trustees stood in a line in front of the pulpit platform during the



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ceremony.”

My grandfather, Lloyd Ames, told me that the large machine shed behind our house had been the “Carriage Barn” that once sat behind Bethany Methodist Church and sheltered the horses and buggies of the congregation from the elements. He had purchased the building in 1928 when the Bethany Church was moved to Codrington. In one of the few pictures we have of Bethany Church, seen in “The Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington”, we can see that there is a building to the north behind the church. Much of grandfather’s story had to do with the ingenious engineering that went into moving the building and then jacking it up onto cement pedestals to allow the open north side to provide direct access at ground level. For many years our forage harvester spent the winter squeezed into the east end and the harvester wagons filled the middle section along with various other machines.

After the Codrington United Church was built, it was served by a succession of ministers, beginning with the Rev. Clare mentioned by Bill Goodfellow.

Mrs. Austin provides the following lines “In 1941 Norham circuit was broken up. Norham went with Warkworth, Meyersburg church closed, and Codrington joined the Wooler circuit. Rev. Wm. Delve served on this circuit 1941-1948; Rev. Wm. Fletcher 1948-1954; K. T. Smits 1954-1956; R. G. Newman 1956 until his death in 1958; J. H. McCallum 1965-1968 when the church was closed.”

One of the marriages that was performed by Rev. Fletcher during his tenure at Codrington was in 1949 when he joined in marriage William Charles Buchanan and Mary Alberta Ames – my parents.

We are lucky to have news of some events that took place in Codrington United Church, many preserved by The Women’s Institute in “The Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington”. For example there is a picture which has the caption “Membership Class at Codrington United Church with Rev. J. K. Flatt as minister – 1934 or 1935”. The names of the people in the picture are: Rear (Left to Right) John Goodfellow; Beryl Carr; Helen Goodfellow; Bernice Clark; Harrison Reycraft; James Goodfellow; Raymond Kemp. Middle Row: Donald Goodfellow; Douglas Goodfellow; Cecil Ames; Lulu Hazelwood. Front Row: Arthur Ames; Eliza Wright; Mrs. Fred Jones; Jack Forester; Dorothy Goodfellow and Bernice Ames.

There are several pages that contain reports for Wooler Pastoral Charge for a particular year. These usually include a message from the minister as well as lists of Baptisms, Marriages and In Memoriam. A typical item reports on the year 1951 where the message from Rev. William G. Fletcher says “Throughout the charge, 1951 has been a year of building. At Tabernacle further work went on to complete the annex to the church. At Wooler a new furnace was installed and a sink with hot and cold water. At Codrington, extensive alterations were made to the church and improvements to the basement. At each church much of the work was done by voluntary labour and there has been great joy in working together with our hands in the service of our church and

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Master. The women have worked hard, serving meals at community sales and other ways to help out in the financing of the various projects. All the organizations have carried on with vigour and faith.” This also happens to be the year when my own name is listed under “Baptisms”.

The 25th Anniversary of Codrington United Church was celebrated with a special service on November 7, 1954. The program includes the following lines on the front page along with a good picture of the church: “1929 – 1954; Codrington United Church; Anniversary Services; Sunday, November 7, 1954; at 11:00 a.m. and 7.30 p.m.; Minister: Rev. T. K. Smits; Recording Secretary: Harper Peister, Esq.; Choir Director: Mrs. John Goodfellow; Organist: Mrs. Bryce Hazelwood.” Inset in this page we see a newspaper clipping including the following: “November 16, 1954. Capacity crowds filled Codrington United Church Sunday, November 7 on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary.”

A report for 1957 shows a section entitled “Organizations of Codrington United Church” with sub-titles of “The Sunday School” and The Woman’s Association”. Under “The Sunday School”, we see the following: “Superintendent – Mr. John Goodfellow; Asst. Superintendent – Mrs. J. Goodfellow; Teachers – Miss Deanna Wright, Miss Patricia Mound; Pianist – Mrs. J. Goodfellow; The Sunday School is conducted as a Junior Congregation during the later part of the hour of Church worship. The amount raised in 1956 was \$106 of which \$29 was given to Missions.”

Under the heading of “The Woman’s Association” we see many familiar names: “Hon. President – Mrs. R. G. Newman; Past President – Mrs. Walter Carr; President – Mrs. John Goodfellow; 1st Vice President – Mrs. Chas. Buchanan; 2nd Vice President – Mrs. Robert Carlaw; Secretary – Mrs. Bryce Hazlewood; Treasurer – Mrs. Don Anderson; Press Secretary – Mrs. Bryce Hazlewood; Visiting and Flower Committee – Mrs. L. Ames, Mrs. W. Goodfellow; Parsonage Committee – Mrs. H. Peister, Miss Zoa Cole; Finance Committee – Mrs. D. Woof, Chairman, Mrs. D. Anderson, Mrs. G. McGee, Mrs. W. Carr, Mrs. G. Raycraft.”

A tragic event for the community occurred when the minister of Wooler Pastoral Charge, Rev. R. Gordon Newman, passed away suddenly on June 21, 1958. He had been minister for the Wooler Pastoral Charge only since 1956 but had been active for many years as a missionary in China and as pastor at several places in Quebec and Ontario before coming to Wooler.

During the early 1960’s, I was a young teenager growing up on the farm at the north end of the village. My parents were both very active in Church and Sunday School so we visited the Church constantly. Church on Sunday had a familiar feel that made it seem as natural as the sun going down at night. I enjoyed sitting in our family pew, trying to keep still, singing with Mother, who had a very good voice, and waiting for the time half way through the service when the kids gathered at the front for a brief message and then filed down the stairs for Sunday School.

When I was younger, my favourite event was Vacation Bible School which was held for a week in the heat of summer and provided a welcome change from the farm routine. There were always

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different kids there and teachers we had not seen before. There were lots of things to learn and those of us who liked to compete in learning verses or reading lessons had plenty to keep us occupied.

Later, I came to enjoy the annual Pot Luck Dinners. When I was younger we had always attended these delicious dinners that were put on by the Women's Institute but we never actually ate dinner together because mother and grandmother were always so busy helping in the kitchen. There were three sittings, an hour apart – 5:00 pm, 6:00p, and 7:pm, I think. Everybody had sold tickets for weeks in advance and hundreds of patrons parked in the lot or along the road and lined up to get their meal. For several hours, it was bedlam. The banging of pots, clanking of dishes and cutlery mingled with laughter and much chatter to raise the decibel level and with it, the degree of enjoyment for everyone.

For several years in the mid-1960's, I took part in several of these dinners as a helper. This might not seem very cool these days, but I was hyped for the event. The same attributes that allowed me to play baseball pretty well were very useful here. My young legs, skinny frame and good eye-hand coordination were helpful during the three sittings as jugs of water and bowls of steaming potatoes and vegetables had to be carried from the kitchen, between the long tables and placed at strategic intervals- without dropping anything! Dishes had to be taken away and the dessert provided along with coffee and tea. In between sittings, all the tables had to be cleaned off and new settings produced like magic. It was hectic, usually hot, and constantly noisy, but I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

The End of an Era

The decade of the 1960's saw the situation in Codrington evolve in many ways resulting in the need to amalgamate church congregations once again. The closing service of The Codrington United Church was held on Sunday, June 30, 1968. A picture of the congregation gathered outside the church after the service is found in "The Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington" and a newspaper clipping is inset "Final Service; This was the scene as the final service was held at Codrington United Church on June 30. This is one of the United Churches closed in the amalgamation of parishes."

The last funeral service to be held in Codrington United Church was that of my mother, Mary (Ames) Buchanan who died December 4, 1967 and was buried at McPhail's on December 7th. The last wedding was on March 2, 1968 when Doreen Carr, daughter of Delbert and Luella Carr was united in marriage with Paul Todd. The last function to be held at the church was a U.C.W. meeting in early December, 1968.

A page in "The Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington" goes on to explain "The following committee was appointed by the board to look after the business pertaining to the interests of the former congregation: Robert Carlaw, Charles Buchanan, Bryce Hazelwood, Howard McCann, Mike Clitherow. Mr. Carlaw later resigned."

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Then after the church was closed we see a newspaper clipping that says “Contents and materials, church building, pews, chairs, church bell, glass, piano (Heintzman upright grand), doors, windows, cupboards, 2 Clare Hecla furnaces (as new), lumber, bricks, etc. Fred Van Vaals, ... Wooler, Ontario.” .. and .. “ During 1970 the church building was taken down. Some things in the church were sold. The kitchen supplies, dishes and silverware were given to W.I., as well as the stack chairs. The land was put up for tender; W.I. offered to take it for \$1.00.”

Finally, “On March 18, 1972, business was completed. By request of the old church board the moneys received were to be divided between Mt. Olivet and McPhail Cemetery boards, to be invested in perpetual care. This is in memory of all those who worked in the Mt. Olivet and Bethany churches and those who united and became Codrington United Church, and who now rest in peace in these cemeteries. Each board received \$117.57.”

Mrs. Leona Austin adds a few comments regarding the closing of Codrington Untied Church in her book “As the Crow Flies”. She says “The majority of the congregation went to the Brighton United Church with the exception of three families who transferred to Wooler.” This was certainly true for our Buchanan family as we went to Brighton where I recall several enjoyable years attending services in Brighton and singing in the choir.

She also adds this lament “This was a sad climax to an era of sacrifice, hard work, community spirit, and over one hundred years of faith in the future, and the people still question the wisdom of those who made the decision to close the church they loved so dearly.”

In my own experience, this was certainly true of my grandfather, Lloyd Ames. Like many of the local seniors, he had poured his heart and soul into this church for most of his adult life. For him, it was a significant betrayal and he could never bring himself to attend church in Brighton. I guess I might feel the same if I had done so much over the decades to fix and build things in the building and attend so many events there, not to mention contribute to the financial health of the facility all those years.

When the Codrington United Church was dismantled and the various parts of it distributed in different directions, several important items found permanent homes in different places. There was a Memorial Plaque dedicated to the memory of Pilot Officer Donald Goodfellow who had been lost on a bombing raid to Berlin on February 15, 1944. Before the church was torn down, the plaque was removed and on November 11, 1970, a rededication ceremony was held at the Cenotaph in Brighton and the plaque was mounted inside the foyer of the Brighton Legion hall. A newspaper report of this event in “The Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington” states:

"Flags Lowered; The flags are lowered to observe the two minutes of silence at the Brighton Cenotaph on Wednesday morning. It was part of the Remembrance Day service held by members of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 100." (Nov 11 1970) and "Plaque Rededicated; A plaque originally in the Church at Codrington, now pulled down, was rededicated on Wednesday morning in perpetuity. It is mounted on the wall of the entrance foyer of the

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Brighton Legion Hall. Pilot Officer Donald Goodfellow whom it remembers, was killed in action in 1944. Rev. Flowers and James Goodfellow are shown."

When Codrington United Church was built in 1928, corner stones from both Bethany and Mount Olivet churches were installed in the building along with a third corner stone for the new church. These three corner stones were carefully removed from the church as it was being dismantled.



The corner stone from the Bethany Church, which reads "M.E. Church, A.D. 1870" and the corner stone from the Codrington Church, which reads "Codrington United Church, 1928" were moved to McPhail's Cemetery where they were placed in the ground at each end of a new memorial for the Cemetery. The corner stone for the Mount Olivet Church, which reads "W.M. Church, A.D. 1873", was taken to Mount Olivet Cemetery and placed near a new memorial that was constructed there.



The land where the Codrington United Church stood was sold to the Women's Institute and they converted the property into a park for several years. In the Tweedsmuir Histories of Codrington there is a picture taken from the rear of the part looking across to the house across the road. The grass was kept cut and some tables and benches provided a pleasant picnic area.

In August 1982, The Women's Institute sold the property to Richard and Qwen Dingman who had been proprietors of Codrington General Store since 1971. Rick and Qwen built a beautiful

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home on the lot. When the store was sold in 1986, the Post Office was moved into the Dingman home where they serviced the community until their retirement in 1997.

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