

A Brief History of Wesley United Church

Submitted by Calvin Stewart Nov-24

The early history of this Church has been well documented and researched by W.D. Hamilton in Old North Esk and Old North Esk Revised, by Doreen Menzies Arbuckle in The Northwest Miramichi and D.W. Johnson in the History of Methodism.

All the above researchers agree that Mary (Dame) Shaddick arrived from Devonshire, England in June 1830 with her husband John and two sons John and William. They settled in English Settlement and she was the founder of the Church.``

On page 188 of the Northwest Miramichi, it was stated "Mrs. Shaddick had brought with her from England as her chief treasures, her Bible and hymn book, having been a member of the Primitive Methodist Church in the Old Country." She soon made it a custom to go to the woods alone for reading, singing and prayer. She maintained this custom for a period of two years. After this period, Mrs. Shaddick encouraged her neighbors to join her on Sunday mornings for regular Sunday services.

After five years without a minister, Samuel D. Rice (minister from Chatham 1837-1840) arrived. The first Chatham Methodist records of the area from NB Archives states an unnamed Allison child was baptised in October 1838, whose father was a farmer/lumberman. According to Old North Esk Revised it describes the possibility that this child's parents would be William and Susannah (Kingston) Allison.

English Settlement Methodist Church was part of the Chatham (St. Lukes) circuit until the mid 1860's when it became part of the Newcastle (St. John's) circuit. In 1881 it became part of the Derby circuit until 1925 when it became part of the Red Bank Pastoral Charge under the newly formed United Church of Canada.

The Church maintained the name of English Settlement United Church until a Congregational meeting in 1951 when it was changed to Wesley United Church.

Based on a 1935 article in the North Shore Leader, the congregation celebrated a one hundred year anniversary of the church.

The Church Buildings

As described above, the first congregation met in the home of Mrs. Shaddick for approximately five years.

The second meeting place was a log church located on the east side of the road. It was probably constructed about 1840.

The third meeting place was a wooden structure. According to local individuals, it was located just northeast of the present structure. Little is known of the date of construction but it was moved south and renovated to become Joe Shaddick's store. The Church remained squatted on Copp property until October 12, 1899 when the deed was recorded. Joseph and Maria Copp sold approximately one acre to the English Settlement Methodist Church for three dollars. The land did not include the cemetery.

The existing church was opened and dedicated on Saturday and Sunday on June 26th and June 27th, 1920 according to an article in the North Shore Leader dated July second 1920. According to D.W. Johnson in History of Methodism of British North America, pg 191, the cost of the church was about \$5000. The North Shore article stated that there was a public meeting held on Saturday at seven thirty.

On Sunday there were three services held at 11a.m., 2:30 and 7:30. The article stated that members of the congregation provided their labor free of charge. By Saturday evening, the church owed a sum of \$628.38. After the collections proceeds for the three services was tallied, the outstanding amount was only \$249.65. Rev, Mr. Rowlands, the pastor at the evening service, thanked all the labourers for their work on the building especially Mr. Allen Whitney and Mr. Ernest Tozer who were the chief builders. Mr. Alex Hare, the painter, Mr. Jackson Baisley who was the means of securing the bell, Mr. Kiah Copp, the Treasurer, Mr. Herbert Phair, the secretary, Mrs. William Waye, the collector, the Ladies and Trustees of the congregation. At the close of the evening service the Sacrament of Baptism was administered to four children of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mullin.

In addition to the North Shore Leader article, interviews with some older members of the congregation were conducted. The late Hilda Waye stated that Jackson Baisley went door to door collecting money for the church bell. The late Lillian Copp confirmed Mrs. Waye's story and stated that Howard Copp bought the bell from Newcastle by horse and wagon.

The late Emma(Hare) Mullin stated that Alex Hare used what she thought was nutmeg on the top of the wainscoting and used a wart on his hand to make the design.

Over the next number of years, renovations and repairs occurred to the church building. One of the first renovations included a memorial stained glass window donated by Douglas Dunnett.

In 1949, the members of the Congregation agreed to put an eight foot basement wall under the church. It was to be 30 inches at the bottom and 15 inches at the top. Alex Baisley assisted by Gordon Allison supervised the work.

In 1956, the belfry had to be replaced. In 1958, the colored glass windows were installed with green glass on the top and amber glass on the bottom half. This was completed from donations.

In 1961, a motion was passed to insulate the church.

The original Church ended where the arch can be seen behind the pulpit. Work started in the summer of 1969 and was completed that year by Mr. Plaxton. This addition gave more room for the Choir as well as room for a kitchen in the basement which was completed over the next five years or so. During this period, in 1971, Hubert N. Matchett donated two memorial stained glass windows placed on either side of the existing stained glass window.

In 1955, George Copp was given the responsibility of Renovation Fund Treasurer, but it was not until 1969 that a major extension to the church was approved.

The last major renovation occurred in the early 2000's, when under the direction of Church Treasurer, Joan Norton, the pews were sanded and re-varnished by Brian Adams Painting, hardwood floors were laid by Eastern Tile and Allison Manufacturing. In addition, the pews on the north side of the church were shortened to allow easier access for modern day coffins. Under Mrs. Norton's guidance, the entire project was paid for by donations. At the same time, the sound system was installed and donated. In addition, the choir loft chairs were obtained and were totally paid for by donations.

The Cemetery

The cemetery was first used in 1822. A Copp family member gave a verbal history and said that Henry Copp settled with 200 acres on both sides of the river. Henry settled on the west side of the river earlier that year. His daughter, Elizabeth was badly burned and later died in October 1822. The child and her mother requested that she be buried across the river by the large pines. The child's death is recorded in Old North West Revised and the story is repeated on pg. 189 of The Northwest Miramichi. Therefore, the land was used as a burial ground approximately fifteen years before there was a church in the area.

The Cemetery was supervised by the Copp family for many years under the following conditions:

- 1) The oldest son of each generation of Henry Copp's heirs would be in charge of the cemetery.
- 2) The cost of a gravesite would be free for members of the area associated with the church.

In this time frame, the following Copp's would have cared for the cemetery: William Copp, Joseph Copp, Kiah Copp and Howard Copp.

In 1964, a Cemetery Committee was formed consisting of the following: Lyman Dunnett, George Copp, Gordon Allison and Howard Copp. In 1966, a motion was made to include a member of the Shaddick family to the Committee.

In 1972, a gift of land on the east side of the road across from the church was received from Mrs. Frank Copp.

In 1973 the vault was built.

The Copp's retained ownership of the Cemetery property during this period. Just prior to his death in 2016, Glenford Copp arranged for the property to be deeded to the Cemetery Committee.

Organizations Affiliated with the Church

The Ladies Aid

The Ladies Aid was formed in 1948. On September 1948, ten ladies gathered at the home of Eliza Matchett and appointed the following officers:

Eliza Matchett- President

May Matchett- Secretary

Kathleen Copp- Treasurer

In the early years, the ladies met monthly in member's homes. Members supplied goods for sale with the proceeds going to charities. This group is still in operation in 2024, meeting monthly in the church basement.

Youth Groups

The Young people's Union for young adults was active in the late 1960's and was disbanded in 1973.

The Sunday School operated in three locations. The Curventon/Sevogle Sunday School operated for a short time during the 1960's.

The Chaplin Island Road/Trout Brook Sunday School started in the late 1940's until the late 1960's. They went from house to house from Byron Ashton's residence to Allen Allison's house in the east.

The English Settlement/Wesley Sunday School was established soon after the church was constructed and operated in the Church until the 2000's.

Thank you, to the staff of the NB Archives, Fredericton and the United Church Archives, Sackville, for their assistance.