

*Our Story*

*Knox Presbyterian Church*

*Tiverton, Ontario*

*150 Years*

From the scrapbook collection of Alberta Smith  
and recollections of the congregation of  
Knox Presbyterian Church, Tiverton, Ontario

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## Dedication

We dedicate this book of memories to those pioneers who came to this area over 150 years ago. Their hopes for a good life for their families in this new country were high. Their faith in God was strong, and their courage unfaltering. They left us a wonderful heritage.

Lest we forget those hardy pioneers,  
Lord bring to mind their labours, toils and tears:  
A heritage to us, they left behind,  
May we receive it with a thankful mind.

What can we leave to those who follow on,  
When we life's little course down here have run?  
Can they think back to us and say,  
"They pointed us to Him who is the way"?

Anonymous

## An Anniversary Prayer

"Thanks to Thee, Father, thanks unto Thee  
For all Thy mercies, constant and free;  
Leading Thy servants through all the years,  
Opening the pathways; comforting fears.  
Guide us our Father; guide us **this** day –  
Into the future's unknown way.  
In this Thy world, Lord, help us to live,  
As Thou directress our lives to give.  
O Father, bless us, make us to know  
Thy Holy Spirit's power in us flow.  
Help us to share Lord, joining our hands  
With all Thy children in all the lands.  
Thine is the Kingdom, Thine is the Power,  
Thine is the Glory, through every hour;  
Thine is the Way, Lord, guide us we pray  
Into Thy future, into Thy Way. Amen"

Written by Louise A Reith

## Foreword

As we look back over 150 years and try to record the history of this congregation, we realize there are many gaps in our church's story. Our records are not complete, some have been lost, and some events were probably never recorded or preserved. We have tried to accurately record the materials that we had. We are grateful to those many people who have contributed clippings, pictures, stories and memories. If you find mistakes, please forgive us – we did our best! To those who have helped in any way in putting this book together, we offer humble thanks – you have made this possible.

This book is the story of people, from pioneer days to the present time – people of faith who were dedicated, resourceful, conscientious and grateful to God for His blessings. This book is one of memories more than history.

To name all who carried out the work of Knox Church congregation during the 150 years would be impossible. They and you have served by prayer and service, and by faithful attendance at worship week by week, and are known to God. To you who will continue in the years ahead as Christ's disciples in Knox Church, be assured that God is at work with you, renewing your strength and upholding you with His love.

Hold high the torch; you did not light its glow  
Twas given you by other hands, you know.  
I think it started down its pathway bright  
The day the Master said, "Let there be light."  
And He once said, who hung on Calvary's tree,  
"You are the light of the word – Go shine for me."

*Author unknown*

*Cover: The front cover is a composite photo of the unfinished mural in the parking lot entrance being painted by local Tiverton artist Bert Degraaf. The sides are cut off – you just have to come to church to see the full scope. The three ministers depicted are: the congregations first minister Rev. Alexander MacKay; Rev. Kenneth MacLennan who was here in 1909 for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; Rev. R. H. MacLeod who ministered during the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the congregation in 1959. There is a blank spot for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as the congregation has no regular minister and is "looking to the future". Various other important symbols like the Bible and communion vessels, quilters, piper as well as historically significant buildings can be found. You can just glimpse on the left the historical plaque at Sinclairs Corners and a horse and buggy on the right. The rear cover shows the lighted cross at the front of the Sanctuary.*

## The Beginning

In exploring the early days of this congregation, it is important to keep in mind that the area around Tiverton was settled in 1851. Many of the pioneers were of Scottish descent, with the Presbyterian Church strongly represented among them. Our hardy forefathers landed on the shores of Lake Huron, traveling inward to claim land where they could establish a home and raise their family. These pioneers underwent hardship and endured hours of hard work in order to establish a home and earn a living. They gave thanks to God for a safe passage to this new country. It was their trust and faith in God that made survival possible. Immediately they made plans to have services of worship and ultimately to build a church. The story of this congregation and the growth of the village of Tiverton are closely intertwined. When the church and post office were moved to Tiverton, Sinclair's Corners began to decline. As Tiverton developed, so did the Presbyterian Church. The township of Bruce and Kincardine were developed at the same time, with Tiverton lying partly in both townships. In 1879 Tiverton became a village, and was no longer a part of the townships. In the following years, Presbyterians were affected by and involved in the growth of the congregation as well as the development of the village.

### Sinclair's Corners

Sinclair's Corners is significant in the history of the Tiverton area because it marks the first settlement. Michael Green arrived in 1851 and stayed until 1884. Other early pioneers were John MacKinnon and Alexander McBain. Archibald Sinclair built his house near the northwest corner of Lot 1, Concession 2. In the same year he built the first sawmill and gristmill in the township on the creek south of the house. Another first was the Post Office, opened in 1853 bearing the name Bruce. It was located in the Sinclair home with Archibald's son Peter as the first Postmaster.

In 1853 David Gibson, the Government Engineer, allowed the Saugeen to Goderich road to deviate westward through Sinclair's Corners, bringing all north south traffic through this settlement.

After several years planning the first Presbyterian Church of the area was erected in 1857. It was a log construction measuring 40 by 35 feet. By 1860 the congregation outgrew the log church and a new one was built in Tiverton in 1862.

Also in 1857, there were two small stores operated out of the home owned by Alex MacIntosh and Granny Cameron. A pearl and potashery in a two-story building provided a market for the abundance of ashes from the pioneers' chimneys.

When the Post Office moved to McInnes' store in Tiverton and the Presbyterian Church also relocated to Tiverton, Sinclair's Corners declined.



Present historical plaque



Tiverton Crest

## Some Significant Dates

There is no decisive date that we can say is the actual beginning of the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church, Tiverton. There are too many variables. During the four years after 1851 there were no regular religious services among the Presbyterians. Ministers and missionaries did come from time to time, as they were available.

On January 9th 1856 the Rev. Daniel Clark was appointed to Kincardine and the surrounding townships.

On October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1856 Rev. John McNaughton and Rev. Ferguson dispensed communion. A meeting was held at the home of Mr. Gunn to discuss erecting a church in the immediate future. A second meeting was held at Sinclairs Corners and a building committee formed with Malcolm MacKay, chairman and J. P. McIntyre, secretary.

In 1857 a log church was erected at Sinclairs Corners.

In December 1859 a meeting was held for the purpose of moderating a call to a minister.

On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1860 a call was presented from South Bruce and Greenoch in favour of the Rev. Alexander MacKay.

On April 25<sup>th</sup> 1860 Rev. MacKay was ordained and inducted. The stipend was \$440.00 annually.

On September 27<sup>th</sup> 1860 seven men were ordained and inducted as elders of the united congregation of South Bruce and Greenoch. A communion roll was made up numbering 64.

In 1862 the congregation of South Bruce built a new church in Tiverton at the site of the present church.

In 1865 we find the "Presbyterian Church, Tiverton" replacing the designation of "South Bruce".

In 1868 Rev MacKay moved to New York State. Rev. John Fraser of Kincardine was named the interim moderator. A formal separation from Greenoch Station took place at this time.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1870 Rev. John Anderson was inducted. Later that year the frame church was enlarged.

In the summer of 1871 a manse was built.

In 1875 the Underwood section of the congregation was separated by mutual consent and joined with Centre Bruce.

In 1899 at the annual meeting, a decision was made to build a new church.

In 1900 a new brick church was built.

In 1901 on the first Sunday of the New Year, this church was dedicated.

In 1907 the mortgage on the church building was discharged and it seemed the right time to celebrate the Jubilee of the congregation.

In 1909 the congregation held Jubilee celebrations. Was this the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the congregation? You decide! At any rate, anniversary celebrations are reckoned from this date – 1909 – and in 2009 we acknowledge the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this congregation and celebrate the occasion with joy!

### Ministers for the First 50 Years of Knox Church Tiverton

Rev. Alexander MacKay 1859-1868

Rev. John Anderson 1870-1894

Rev. James Steven 1895-1897

Rev. Kenneth MacLennan 1897-1914

## Churches

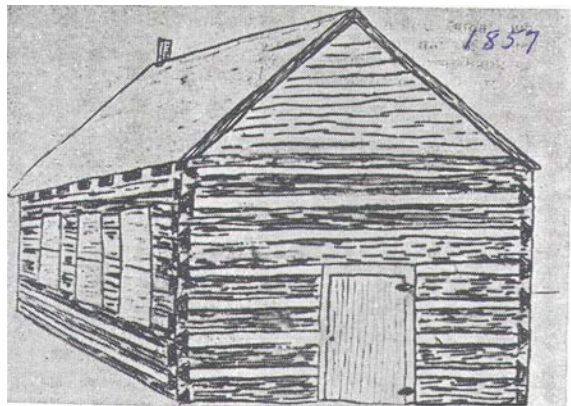
*“Beautiful is the large church  
With stately arch and steeple;  
Neighbourly is the small church,  
With groups of friendly people,  
Reverent is the old church,  
With centuries of grace;*

*And a wooden or a stone church  
Can hold an altar place.  
But whether it be a rich church,  
Or a poor church anywhere,  
Truly it is a great church  
If God is worshipped there!”*

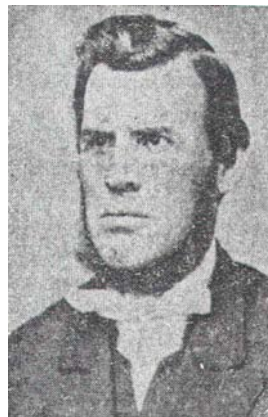
*Anonymous*

## The First Church Building

The first church building in which Presbyterians in this area would worship was built at Sinclairs Corners in 1857 on the side of the creek that runs through the southeast corner crossroads at Lot 1, Concession 2 of Bruce Township. At the time, Sinclairs Corners was a prosperous settlement, boasting a post office, school, two small stores, a pot and pearl-ash factory, a sawmill and a gristmill. The log church was 40 feet 35 feet. The seats were planks laid on blocks of wood. William Wilson, who later became an elder, was the mason appointed for the building of the church. This church, known as the South Bruce Church, had members from miles in all directions.

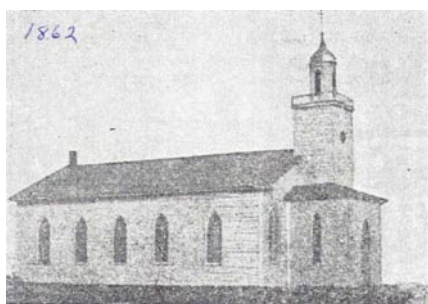


The first log church



Rev. Alexander MacKay

## The Second Church Building



The congregation quickly outgrew the first log church. The post office had been moved to Tiverton, and gradually business moved there also. It seemed sensible to build the new church there. In June 1862 Timothy Allan sold one quarter of an acre of Lot 1, Concession 1, Bruce Township to the congregation on which to build a new church. A frame building 50 feet by 35 feet was erected on this lot, which is the same location of the present brick church. The frame church was described as being commodious and comfortable. Early in the 1870's, this church was enlarged.

## **Early Days**

Stories of early days in the Presbyterian Church are not readily available. Those who could tell us of those times are no longer with us. Many of us have heard of events and people, but our memories have not retained much of this interesting information. But there are some memories that have been recorded.

In one instance, a request was made for a married, ordained minister. His salary would be augmented by an allowance for the upkeep of his horse. Mostly, his accommodation would be with pioneer families as he traveled from place to place. An unmarried preacher received no horse allowance. He would be expected to walk along forest paths, as did those pioneer settlers. Ministers would not necessarily be paid in cash – part of their stipend would be produce – particularly for a married minister.

## ***Sunday in the 1850's***

Sunday was a very special day for those pioneer settlers. It was a day set apart for worship, and only work of absolute necessity was carried out. Saturday night would be bath night, probably taken in a washtub in the curtained off area near the fireplace. Clean clothes would be ready for the next day. Earlier on Saturday, preparation for the Sunday meals would be made as no unnecessary cooking was done on Sunday. The wood box was filled. Of course farm chores had to be done and animals tended to, but no work in the fields or woods was ever done on Sunday. Worship services, if a minister was available, were held as regularly as possible. If there was no service, time was spent memorizing scripture passages and singing hymns. A time of church school was held for the children, often outdoors, under the direction of a father. Prayer was simple and sincere. Because their work through the week was heavy and demanding, this time of shared worship and quiet companionship, made them confident and strong as they faced the week ahead.

*From an old newspaper clipping*

## **A Hard Life for Women in the 1850's**

Mrs. Donald MacLean came to the tenth of Kincardine in 1853 with her young husband and other members of the family. She was obliged to stop at the log home of Mr. and Mrs. Sailor Jack McArthur, grandparents of Mrs. Ollie Catto, just south of Tiverton, to have her baby. When she was able to travel again she rode up the tenth on a jumper drawn by a yoke of oxen.

Food was a big worry to these early housekeepers. It was scarce and cash was usually non-existent with which to buy it. Many stories have been told of families existing sometimes for weeks on potatoes, turnips and salt. As early as the year 1851, every settler had an acre of potatoes and an acre of turnips, even if he had nothing else. Fish and wild pigeons were plentiful at certain times of the year. Dan Matheson told of knocking pigeons off tree branches with clubs and his mother dressed and packed them by the hundreds in barrels for later consumption. Wild berries were picked and preserved.

The year 1859 stood out as a very hard year, taxing the culinary abilities of the women to the utmost. The grain crop was a failure in 1859 because of poor weather and as the settlers had no cash crops, they had no money to buy grain or flour. Today 1859 is still referred to as the "Famine Year". The settlers were all given grain according to their needs by the municipalities and the men paid for it by developing township roads that, up to now, had been rough bush trails.

Housekeeping was a difficult job with water having to be carried from the nearest creek until the men found time to dig wells. Clothing was made of very heavy material