



Museum Musings

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Message in a Building -- The Contents of a Cornerstone



Cornerstone contents of the former St. David's Presbyterian (later United) Church, Toronto Rescued from the building during demolition in 1999 – Lists of committee members, financial reports & newspapers, etc.

In 1999, the former St. David's Presbyterian Church, located on Harvie Ave. at the corner of St. Clair Ave. in Toronto, faced a certain future – demolition. After St. David's United Church had amalgamated in 1969 with the former EarlsCourt United Church to form Faith United Church in the EarlsCourt building, Toronto West Seventh-Day Adventist Church had purchased the St. David's building. This congregation grew and moved to a new building they had built in another location. They sold their former church to a developer who subsequently demolished the building to build condominiums. Gord Dick, an elder and Convenor of the Property and Finance Committee of Patterson Presbyterian Church on Harvie Ave., explained to the demolition contractor that Patterson Church was the continuing congregation of the original St. David's Presbyterian Church after Church Union in 1925. Gord asked if it would be possible to obtain the contents of the cornerstone that was inscribed, "ST. DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1906 - 1918", so that they could be displayed at Patterson Church. The contractor, Summit Restoration Ltd., agreed.

On December 2nd 1999, the cornerstone was opened at the Toronto Convention Centre where a home builder and renovator expo called Construct Canada was being held. The honour of opening the cornerstone was given to former Lt. Governor Lincoln Alexander, Chair of the Ontario Heritage Foundation (now known as Ontario Heritage Trust). Four members from Patterson Church were invited to attend this event: Gord Dick; Jean Noddings (who was a former member of the original St. David's Presbyterian Church); and ministers, Rev. Kenrick Keshwah and Rev. Dr. Nora Gorham. Also observing the opening was Mike Filey, noted Toronto historian and columnist. After the ceremony, the cornerstone and contents were given to Patterson Church.

Shortly after this ceremony and during the construction of the condominiums, Patterson Church was approached by the restoration company regarding the cornerstone. It had been suggested the cornerstone be incorporated into the façade of the building as a constant reminder of the church's existence. This was agreed and the cornerstone is now a permanent fixture in the front of the condominium entrance.

(Gord Dick, on behalf of the former Patterson Presbyterian Church, Toronto recently donated the cornerstone contents of St. David's Church, Toronto. This will serve as the Museum's display of the typical contents deposited in a cornerstone. The Museum Advisory Committee is indebted to Gord for his comprehensive account of the re-discovery of these documents.)



St. David's Presbyterian Church, Toronto (Earls Court Subdivision)

Harvie Avenue, northwest corner of Harvie and St. Clair Avenues

Construction began in 1914, but was halted because the loan was cancelled due to the outbreak of the First World War. Construction resumed in 1918.

The inset photo is of the congregation's first minister, Rev. Dr. Charles A. Mustard, who served the congregation from 1910 to 1955.

Credit: United Church Archives, Toronto. Accession No. 1995.001/12



Silver-plated trowel used at the cornerstone laying of St. David's Presbyterian Church on June 15, 1918

donated to the Museum by an earlier donor

Trowel inscription:

**"Presented to John Barron by
St. David's Pres. Church, June 15/18"**

John Barron had begun the mission in 1906 which later became St. David's Church and he served as one of the original members of the Board of Managers of the congregation.

The tradition was for the congregation to ask an esteemed member of the congregation to lay the cornerstone, then to present them with the trowel as a gift in commemoration of this honour.





Cornerstone opening – Dec. 2, 1999

Former Lt. Governor Lincoln Alexander, Chair of the Ontario Heritage Foundation (now Ontario Heritage Trust), opening the cornerstone of the former St. David's Presbyterian Church at a home builder and renovator trade show, Construct Canada, at the Toronto Convention Centre on Dec. 2, 1999. Witnessing the opening are Jean Noddings, member of Patterson Presbyterian Church and member of the original St. David's Presbyterian Church, along with Mike Filey (second from right).

Credit: Gord Dick

Cornerstone opening – Dec. 2, 1999

Ministers and members of Patterson Presbyterian Church.

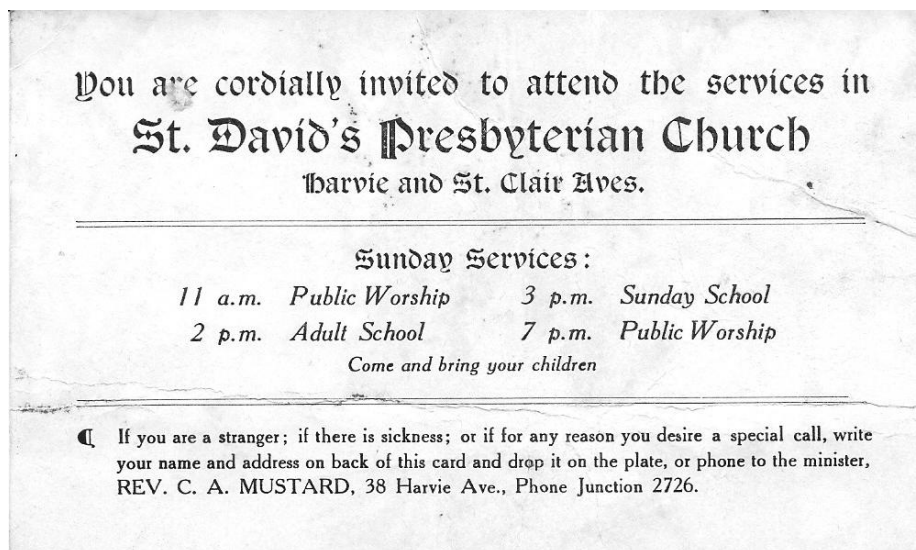
L to R: Rev. Kenrick Keshwah; Gord Dick, elder and Convenor of the Property and Finance Committee; Rev. Dr. Nora Gorham; Jean Noddings, member of original St. David's Presbyterian Church.



Credit: Gord Dick

Documents in the cornerstone:

- lists of members of the Session, the Board of Managers and the Building Committee
- contracts were let in May, 1918 and the following were awarded:
 - Architect – Herbert B. Paull, Toronto ¹
 - Mason work – John McMurren & Sons
 - Carpenter work – James McKenzie
 - Steel – Hepburn and Disher
 - Roofing – A. Matthews Co. Ltd.
 - Plastering – R. C. Dancy
- typescript register of every recruit from the congregation who was serving in the Armed Forces during “The Great War”, World War I
- receipt for the purchase of Lot 7, Harvie Avenue, the future church site – receipt was dated June 13, 1912 – the lot cost \$12.08
- photo of Rev. Charles A. Mustard
- cheque issued to Rev. Mustard
- typescript address delivered by **Mr. John H. Barron** at the cornerstone laying at 3 p.m. on June 15, 1918 -
- financial reports for 1914, 1915, 1916 and 1917 – financial report ending in 1914 shows that Rev. Mustard received \$1,200.00 and Miss A. Porter, deaconess, received \$460.20
- Building Fund Financial Report, 1914-15 – includes names of workers and the amount of wages each received – there is also a reference to **the sod-turning ceremony which took place on Aug. 14, 1914** – report notes that the ceremony included a fund-raising component: “Collected on Spade when turning 1st Sod of New Church at Garden Party”
- Invitation Card to attend worship services
- ballot for the election of elders – this was in the day of *true* elections for elders – 4 elders were needed and a roster of 9 names had been created from those who had been nominated at a congregational meeting
- *St. David's Bulletin*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (March, 1916) – 4 page leaflet typeset by West Toronto Printing House, Keele and St. Clair
- newspapers: two Toronto dailies (*The Toronto Daily News*, *The [Toronto] Evening Telegram*), the weekly, *The Toronto World*, and the neighbourhood newspaper, *The Weekly Times*



Invitation Card that would have been placed in the pew rack

Church Calendar

Sunday	Morning Service	11.00 a.m.
	Evening Service	7.00 p.m.
	Young Ladies' Class	2.00 p.m.
	Young Men's Class	2.15 p.m.
	Sunday School	3.00 p.m.
	Chinese Class	4.00 p.m.
Monday.....	Christian Endeavor	8.00 p.m.
Tuesday.....	Boys' Brigade	8.00 p.m.
Wednesday.....	Prayer Meeting	8.00 p.m.
Friday.....	Choir Practice	8.00 p.m.

Stated Meetings.

Session.....	Last Friday	8.00 p.m.
Board of Managers.....	First Tuesday	8.00 p.m.
Women's Missionary Society.....	First Tuesday	3.00 p.m.
Ladies' Aid.....	Third Tuesday	3.00 p.m.
Hero Helpers.....	2nd and 4th Tuesdays.....	3.00 p.m.

From St. David's Bulletin Vol. 1 No. 1 (Mar. 1916)

The honour roll was a typescript register (in blue ink) of the names of the young men of the congregation who were serving or had served in the armed forces in what was then known as "The Great War". In Canada, it was known that the highest recruitment happened among the most newly arrived immigrants from the British Isles. No finer case study as proof of this reality could be offered than examining the response of the young men of St. David's Presbyterian Church, Toronto and the Earls court neighbourhood. In the early 1900s, the area of York Township in what would become the Earls court subdivision of the city became the destination for many British immigrants. They flooded into this area and established a colony of hundreds of tarpaper covered shacks, "with crude roads, and houses in irregular rows and sidewalks in the early design of two planks laid lengthwise. It seemed fitting that this area, where the accents of every county in England mingled so inextricably, should be called Earls court after the community known to every Londoner, and that two of its streets should be named for two of England's most noted race tracks – namely, Goodwood and Ascot Avenues." (cited in Gorham, pgs. 2-3)

In what would be considered a small to medium-sized city congregation, there was an astonishing roll of 179 young men who were serving in the armed forces when the register documenting their service was deposited in St. David's cornerstone on June 15, 1918. The creator of the this typescript register recorded not only their names, but their service number, their rank, their type of service (army, navy, air force, etc.); name of regiment and/or battalion and/or company, their home address, and if he or a member of his family was a member of St. David's Church (e.g. the citation, "People members", indicates that although the serviceman himself was not a member, his people, a.k.a. relatives, were members of the congregation).

At the time of the cornerstone laying ceremony, 32 young men of the congregation had died in the War.

Examples of entries in The Great War Roll of Honour register:

Prisoner of War Corp. D. Logan
 #27225
 48th Highlanders
 10th Co [mpany] Lago I.
 Westphalia, Munster
 Germany
 Mrs. Logan now in Scot [land]

Serg. G. Cameron
 #27424
 British Pris [oner] of War
 Hotel Bellevue
 Murren, Switzerland
 (to be moved)
 Wife. 150 Blackthorn.
 Members.

Signaller Chas Methven
#157642
13th Platoon
4th Co [mpany] P.P.C.L.I. [Princess Patricia
Canadian Light Infantry]
B.E.F. France [British Expeditionary Force]
Mother now at 92 Emmerson
(Ashburnham)

- pencilled beside the citation for Charles Methven is the citation, "Killed", suggesting that news of his death occurred in the brief period between the typing of the register and its deposit in the cornerstone

Pte. [Private] J. A. Cooper
#769782
18th Can. Batt.
West Cliff, Eye & Ear Hospital
Folkstowne, Eng.
Likely Blind.
Wife at 62 Prescott.
Bro [ther] of J. Peters

The register noted which organization in the congregation with which the serviceman was associated, if he was a member of the congregation. As an example, the register noted that Private Alex Wilson of 338 Boon Avenue was a member of the Men's [Bible] Class.

Only two of the servicemen who were members or adherents of St. David's Presbyterian Church served in forces other than the army. One joined the Royal Flying Corps and one served in the navy onboard the *H.M.S. Excellent*.

The bulk of the men were soldiers attached to one of the many companies, regiments and battalions of the army. The list below provides insight into the diversified roles undertaken by the young men of St. David's Church:

- Canadian Army Medical Corps ■ Canadian Field Ambulance ■ Canadian Division Cyclist Corp
- 1st Canadian Labour Battalion ■ Bandsman ■ 1st Canadian Ammunition Sub-Park, France
- No. 4 Company, 6th Canadian Railway Troops ■ Pay Master's Office, 134 Battalion ■ 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles
- Canadian Army Dental Corps ■ Bakery Section, Canadian Army Supply Corps
- Pipe Band Drummer in the 134th Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force ■ Canadian Ordnance Corps
- Army Service Corps ■ Bantams Battalion, Camp Borden ■ Driver, 1st Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column
- Canadian Field Artillery ■ 3rd Field Butchery, Canadian Army Supply Corps
- Forestry Draft, Sunnydale Camp, Berks [hire], England ■ Canadian Engineers Training Depot
- Canadian Forestry Corps ■ Bugler, No. 2 Field Ambulance, Canadian Army Medical Corps
- 1st Field Company, Canadian Engineers ■ No. 1 Railway Construction, C Company
- Camp Campucasing [Kapuskasig] ² ■ Home Guard (England)

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I need not assure this brilliant company how deeply I am impressed by the significance of this occasion. I am not vain enough to find in it any personal compliment. I like better to believe that the ties of our Church, of common faith, of common citizenship, and inseparable destiny, are drawing our congregation together.

I congratulate you on this assembly to-day, because of the purpose which has promoted us to come together, and I greet with words of cheer and hope, the many who come after us, because of the work which we, this day, commemorate [commemorate].

St. David's Church is the effort of a band of faithful young men of Westminster Church³, who organized to do some Christian work.

Early in the year 1906 they applied to Presbytery for allocation of a field for work, and the present district was given them. The first services were held at the Heyden House on Sunday April 1st, 1906. This place was, in many respects, unsuitable, but no other building was available. However, in due time the property on St. Clair Ave. in the Royce Estate was secured, on which our first Church was built and opened on Sunday April 9, 1907. Dr. E. H. Oliver⁴ officiated, assisted by members of Westminster Young Men's Club. Dr. Oliver's text was taken from Psalm 127. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

The attendance at Church and Sabbath School services steadily increased under the direction of the following Students in charge: Dr. E. H. Oliver, Mr. Andrew Thomson, Mr. N. A. McEachern, Mr. F. S. Dowling, Mr. John Mutch, Mr. C. A. Mustard and Mr. Arthurs.

In the year 1911 the congregation applied to Presbytery to organize as a congregation, which was granted, and a Session was duly elected, and extended a call to Rev. C. A. Mustard in April 1911. We owe to Mr. Mustard a great debt of gratitude for his faithful and zealous work in bringing the congregation to its present standing.

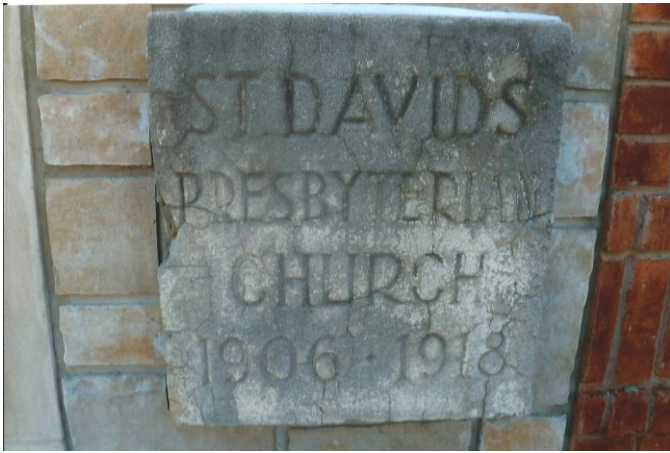
In the year 1911 the present site was secured. Seventy-two feet of the frontage being presented by Westminster Church, to which the Church building was moved and alterations made. This building was opened on Nov. 12, 1912.

The congregation outgrew this accommodation, and in the year 1914 plans were prepared and the present building was commenced, but owing to conditions brought about by the war, the basement only was finished and used for services to the present time.

Let us liken our work here to a great wheel, of which our Church is the HUB, we as fellow workers will constitute the SPOKES, bound around by a concrete band in Jesus Christ, and may we all work together in the erection of this new building and make it the House of the Lord.

And now may I express the earnest hope that we will utilize this occasion, not merely as participating in the laying of the corner-stone, but that each and every one of us in our heart of hearts will renew our allegiance to our Church. We know its splendid history, we have faith in its bright future, and we go forward, not in vain, to build the City of God for the home of man.

(signed)
John H. Barron
728 Yonge St.



Credit: Gord Dick



Credit: Gord Dick

St. David's Presbyterian Church cornerstone, 2013

- anchored into the courtyard archway of the condominiums on the site of the former St. David's Presbyterian (later United) Church, Harvie Avenue (northwest corner of Harvie and St. Clair Avenues), Toronto

Footnotes:

¹ Herbert George Paull (1858-1948), Toronto architect, was commissioned in 1914 by the congregation of St. David's to design its church. The architectural plan had to incorporate the congregation's first frame church which had been re-located to the new site from the original one on the south side of St. Clair Avenue opposite McRoberts Avenue.

² Camp Kapuskasing was one of 24 internment camps in Canada that functioned throughout World War I for the confinement of Ukrainian and Austro-Hungarian Canadians. Camp Kapuskasing operated from Dec. 14, 1914 to Feb. 24, 1920. ("Ukrainian Canadian internment")

³ Westminster Presbyterian (later United) Church was located on the south side of Bloor Street East, opposite Park Road, between Yonge and Church Streets. After several amalgamations with other United Churches, its name was changed to St. Andrew's United Church in 1950. The historic building was demolished in 1981 and was replaced with an office tower on the same site that houses the sanctuary on the lower level. ("St. Andrew's United Church [Toronto]")

⁴ Rev. Dr. Edmund Henry Oliver became the professor of history and economics at the University of Saskatchewan as well as the principal of the fledgling St. Andrew's (Presbyterian) College affiliated with the university. He left the university and enlisted in May, 1916 as Chaplain of the 196th Western Universities Battalion. Dr. Oliver established the University of Vimy Ridge in France (a.k.a. the Khaki College of Canada) during the winter of 1917-18. (Coggins, pg. 6) Dr. Oliver later served a term as Moderator of the United Church of Canada from 1930 until 1932.

Sources:

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National Presbyterian Museum

415 Broadview Avenue

Toronto, Ont. M4K 2M9

Located in St. John’s Presbyterian Church, corner of Broadview Ave. and Simpson Ave.

416-469-1345

presbyterianmuseum@presbyterian.ca

www.presbyterianmuseum.ca