

## A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE ST. THOMAS (PRESBYTERIAN) UNITED CHURCH

This history has been compiled in large part by Mr. Wilfred Gaston, a long-time member of the St. Thomas United Church in Doaktown, and has been augmented by information obtained from *The Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* privately published by Willis D. Hamilton in 1997. It was last updated on February 14, 2011.

*The following is a brief chronological history of the Congregations, Ministers, some of the personages and characters, whose dedication to their community and to each other have survived to this day and will, with our continued dedication, continue into the future. The historical notes used in putting together this paper are taken from various Church records and reports, and reconstructed memories of some of our congregational members. I would like to like to thank each one of them for their efforts in assisting me to bring these notes together in celebration of the new millennium, the 75th Anniversary of the United Church in Canada and the 118th Anniversary of Saint Thomas.*

~ **Wilfred Gaston**

*A history of a church means a history of the people which constitute the church. To begin with, a history of Saint Thomas United Church cannot be separated from the histories of Saint Georges (Blissfield), from Saint Augustine's (New Bandon), or from Trinity Methodist (Doaktown) because of the personages and the crosses early people bore in order to pass on to us the lighted torch of dedicated Christians. It is all so marvelous, so humble, and so righteous that none of this can be overlooked.*

~ **Thelma Ballard**

Our best attempt at the recorded history of our churches begins in 1826 when **Reverend James Tozer**, born in Maugerville in 1796, was ordained, and came to Blackville as a Baptist preacher. He was later appointed Denominational Missionary to the parishes of Blackville and Ludlow. He preached from house to house, in barns and in schools, and began the building of the "Doaktown Meeting House", where now stands the Doaktown United Baptist Church.



**REVEREND AND MRS. JAMES TOZER**

According to an *Historical Sketch as to the Origin and Growth of the Doaktown Baptist Church (1830-1965)*, prepared in part by Mrs. F. D. Swim, Reverend Tozer "commenced the building of the Doaktown Meeting house and labored on through much discouragement for years before he saw the work accomplished. As there was not any Church at that time to which this house and land could be conveyed, it was deeded to the Eastern and Western Baptist Association of New Brunswick to be held in trust by them for a Baptist Church in the Parish of Blissfield. [Reverend Tozer] had the pleasure of seeing Blissfield Baptist Church organized and advancing in influence in numbers and become a power for good in the land. Today this house stands as a

monument of the determined perseverance of Brother Tozer and a few faithful brethren who so nobly assisted him. Thus he was the pioneer missionary in this county until borne down by the burden of years and pain . . . “

In 1840, a **Mr. Turnbull** came from Perth, Scotland and ministered for some years to the district around Doaktown and Boiestown, which at that time was part of the Saint John Presbytery. **Note:** *The Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* ((pp. 386-387) indicates that John Turnbull was born in Bonhill parish, Dunbartonshire, Scotland on October 17, 1808. He was the minister of a church in Perth, Scotland before coming to New Brunswick in 1840 as the first resident Presbyterian minister at Blackville. With his wife’s help, Turnbull undertook an ambitious program of missionary work all along the Southwest Miramichi, preaching mostly in schoolhouses in Nelson, Blackville, Blissfield, and Ludlow parishes. After three years he had his mind made up to resign from what he called “the most unwieldy charge in the province,” but since other Miramichi pulpits were empty at the time and there was a demonstrable need for his services, he agreed to stay one more year. In June of 1844, he took a holiday in Britain without committing himself to continue at Blackville after his return. He came back to the charge, however, and imbued with the spirit of reform which had disrupted the Church of Scotland in 1843, he joined with two other New Brunswick ministers to create a New Brunswick presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church. In all, he spent 12 years as the only Presbyterian minister in the entire Southwest district, departing in 1854 for Charlotte County. In 1874 he returned to Scotland where he died in 1881 at his home in Dumbarton.

Mr. Turnbull was succeeded by the **Reverend Thomas G Johnstone**. **Note:** *The Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* (pp. 192-193) states that Thomas George Johnstone was born in Douglastown, New Brunswick on November 9, 1928. He received his early



education at the Newcastle Grammar School and was trained for the ministry at the Free Church College in Halifax. He completed his studies in 1854 and was ordained in 1855. He came to Blackville shortly thereafter and spent the next 40 years ministering on the Miramichi. It is said that after the railway was built in the 1880s, Reverend Johnstone preached at Doaktown on a regular basis, often staying overnight at the home of Harvie Doak (1850-1909), the grandson of Squire Robert Doak.

Due to the increase in the number of people who wished to lead a Christian life and the fact that the Meeting House was becoming overcrowded, groups began to branch out. This was the beginning of Saint Thomas and other church communities.

On March 4, 1876, about twenty men from Doaktown and the surrounding area began to plan for the construction of a Presbyterian Church in Doaktown. Some agreed to contribute money (from \$1 to \$100); some gave materials (such as 100 feet of spruce or 1,000 feet of pine); and some gave of their time and labour. Many of the men whose names are recalled -- Robert Swim, Harvey Doak, Henry Swim, John L Murray, George Donald, John T. Bamford, Samuel Freeze, James Russell, James Lyons, and William Russell -- are those who have descendents serving in this church today, while others such as Adam Archibald, George Parker, Samuel Betts, George Sutherland, George Mersereau, and William Carroll have descendants serving in other churches in the community or elsewhere.

*On the ninth day of January, 1879, a deed was signed whereby Mrs. Ann Doak, widow of James Andrew Doak, and her two children, Margaret Jane Doak and Robert Harvey Doak, conveyed to Elijah Fowler, John Loraine Murray and Robert Harvey Doak . . . for the sum of one dollar, 24 square rods of land on the north side of the Highway on Lot 45 [to be] conveyed forever [and] to be used for no other use, interest or purpose whatsoever than the construction of said Presbyterian church".*

The ladies of the Presbyterian congregation decided to hold a Picnic and Apron Fair to raise money to "complete the Church edifice." Excerpts from the *Union Advocate*:

### **June 16, 1880**

The Presbyterian friends at Doaktown are making arrangements to hold a *Picnic and Apron Fair* on the Island near Doaktown, on Dominion Day, in aid of the Building Fund of the Church, now in course of construction at that place. As funds are urgently needed, we hope the friends in that section will turn out in large numbers in aid of the very worthy project. Contributions in aid of the Fair are respectively solicited. Articles so contributed can be forwarded to Mr. R. H. Doak, Doaktown.

### **July 7, 1880**

At Doaktown, the ladies of the Presbyterian Congregation held their *Apron Fair and Picnic* on the Island for which they had been making preparations for some time past, in aid of the very praiseworthy object of raising money to complete the church edifice now in the course of construction at that place. It was a well managed and successful affair and reflects the greatest credit upon the committees of ladies and gentlemen who planned and carried out the excellent arrangements. A correspondent informs us that at 10 o'clock a procession was formed (in which a large number participated) and headed by the band, seated in a vehicle drawn by four jet black horses, proceeded to the Picnic ground; a beautiful and picturesquely situated island below the bridge [Pine Island?]. A temporary bridge had been constructed from the main land to the south end of the island and over this the procession passed. There were about 300 persons present among whom your correspondent saw Reverend Mr. Edwards (Baptist); the Rev. Thomas G. Johnstone, the pastor, and visitors from Newcastle and elsewhere. The very interesting proceedings were opened by speeches, vocal music and recitations and then the ladies proceeded to business; the tables over which they presided displaying a profusion of fancy and useful articles.

The sales were superintended by Mrs., J. L. Murray, Mrs. Pedolin, Miss Carrie Swim (daughter of William Swim Esq.), Miss Doak, and others. Judging from the way in which they disposed of the numerous articles, they were certainly the right ladies for the important position.

The Table where the confectionery, cigars, and refreshments were sold, had some energetic and very obliging attendants -- Miss May Swim (daughter of William), Miss Young of Boiestown, and Richard Attridge Esq. The latter worked like a Trojan and the expertness he displayed in dealing out his N. P. Lemonade would have put to the blush many an older and more experienced lemonader. Mr. John L. Murray, Mr. Harvey Doak, and other gentlemen were also most assiduous in their endeavors to secure the pleasure and comfort of all who participated. Swimming and dancing were the principal amusements, the latter being very heartily enjoyed.

Indeed, I hope your correspondent will not be considered as saying too much when he remarks that the dancing is their "forte", and he hopes they may long continue to hold the fort. The fair ones all secured an apron for themselves, their sisters, their cousins, and their aunts. During the afternoon the Misses Archibald,

assisted by others, discoursed some music on the organ, as also did the Misses Haviland (Gertie and Ida), and Miss Lilly MacLaggan. The affair was most enjoyable and all present representing the various denominations united in the most harmonious manner to make the day pass off pleasantly. The receipts amounted to the very creditable sum of \$229.00 which amount will likely be increased to \$250.00 as several subscriptions were to be handed in.

### July 13, 1881

The Picnic and Apron Fair which took place at Doaktown on Dominion Day, in aid of the new Presbyterian Church was well attended and proved a great success, the amount raised, clear of expenses, being about \$250.00.

The new building was ready for use by 1882 with Reverend Johnstone (after whom the church was named) preaching the first service at Saint Thomas, on August 13. As is noted above, Mr. Johnstone served the area for many years, assisted during the summer months by student ministers. Although he retired in 1898, he continued to give the occasional service in Doaktown and, in fact, died on January 19, 1904 during a visit with the Harvie Doak family. Reverend Johnstone was 59 at the time of his death and his wife, the former Jessie McLeod, had predeceased him by only six weeks.

During this early period (1902-1912), the church had experienced considerable growth with both large Sunday Schools and choirs (some singing in 'four part' harmony). The ministers at this time were **Reverend Alexander Francis Robb** (1898-1901); **Reverend Harold M. Clark** (1901-1903); **Reverend J. S. Rose** (1903-1905) and **Harold A. Kent** (1905).

**Note (1):** *The Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* (p. 323) states that **Alexander Francis Robb** was born in Saint John on January 19, 1872. He is believed to be the first ordained minister to have been based in Doaktown, spending three years there as preparation for overseas missionary service. In 1901, Robb and his wife left to join in the work of the Presbyterian mission which had been established in Korea in 1898. The rest of his ministry was conducted there, and the work in which he and his wife were engaged was strongly supported by the church in Canada. In 1930 he was appointed to the Chair in Church History at the Union Theological College at Pyeng Yang, Korea. After his death was announced in 1935, the United Church publication, *The New Outlook*, stated that "up and down the Miramichi River, where his first ministry was located, he is still remembered for his serious and holy life and leadership."

**Note (2):** *The Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* (p. 67) indicates that **Harold Marston Clark** was born in St. Stephen, New Brunswick on January 11, 1876. He was educated at Dalhousie University and did missionary work in Trinidad before completing his training for the ministry. Ordained and inducted at Doaktown in 1901 as successor to the Reverend Alexander F. Robb, he ministered to "a mission field scattered thirty or forty miles up and down the Miramichi River." It is said that while he was at Dalhousie University, Clark was introduced to "The Ballad of Peter Emberley" by R. Traven Aitken, the eldest brother of Lord Beaverbrook; while he was ministering in the Boiestown area, he visited both Peter Emberley's grave and the author of the song, John Calhoun. Like his predecessor, the Reverend Mr. Robb, Clark left Doaktown after two years to be a missionary in the Far East, serving at different Presbyterian mission stations in China before taking early retirement for health reasons in 1924. He had experienced much personal tragedy – the first two of his three wives died soon after their arrival in China and he had lost his two children, one to illness at an early age and the other in a car accident. Upon his return to Canada, Reverend Clark and his third wife settled in Vancouver where he died on September 7, 1944.

**Note:** Clark's first wife was the former Lillian E. O'Donnell of Doaktown, a half-sister to Bob Swim. Lillian married Reverend Clark on Christmas Day, 1906 when she was 19 and is believed to have died before 1910.

Other churches also began at this time but in a quiet way with not much reporting. The Methodist Church in Doaktown was just such a church. The Methodist-Wesleyan paper spoke of a Sunday School flourishing in 1892, with hopes of a church soon, and in 1893 the paper reported as follows; "at Doaktown, our friends have had a mind to work and they have built a neat little church to be opened November 30, 1893.

The construction of the New Bandon Methodist Church was begun in 1908 and was ready for use in 1913. Prior to that time, however, services were held at the John W. Reid home in 1882, and later at the home of James and Irene Reid.

St. George's Presbyterian Church in Blissfield was started in 1911 and was added to the Doaktown Pastoral charge in 1912.

**Reverend A. J. MacNeill** was the first regularly settled Pastor at Doaktown and Boiestown. As the church could not provide a Manse at that time, he and his family lived in what was known as "the old Attridge House" which stood very near the site of the former High School. However, on January 13, 1916, the *Presbyterian Witness* reported that "a surprise party took possession of the Manse at Doaktown on New Year's Night and made matters pleasant and profitable for the 'inmates'. Besides bringing many good and useful gifts, the Minister, Reverend A. J. MacNeill, was presented with an envelope filled with bank notes." It is reported that the Manse had been constructed at an estimated cost of \$3,000.

In the early 1920s, the gallery at the entrance of the church was removed and a Minshall organ placed in the center of the back wall behind the pulpit with chairs being placed in two rows on either side of the organ. The pulpit was the center of a half circle platform with two steps leading to the choir loft on either side. The windows were small paned and square at the top (there were no stained glass windows at this time).

When **Reverend Alexander Firth** arrived with his wife in 1922, he was offered a yearly salary of \$1,000. It was during this time, on June 10, 1925, that Church Union was realized. The Methodist churches at New Bandon and Doaktown and the Presbyterian Churches at Doaktown and Blissfield joined the Doaktown Pastoral Charge. The Methodist Church at Doaktown was renamed Trinity United.

Although the actual date of Union is listed as June 10, 1925, a meeting of the Session was held on June 11, 1925 at the Manse in Doaktown (this was to be the last meeting of Session before Union). The Church Union situation was discussed and it was unanimously agreed that "a congregational meeting be called under the Provincial Act on Monday the twenty ninth day of June, instant, at eight o'clock in the evening to vote on the question of concurrence, or non-concurrence, in the union of the Presbyterian Church in Canada - the Methodist Church and the Congregational Churches. It was further decided that in the event of the congregation not being unanimous the voting in the meeting shall be by a show of hands."

**MINUTES OF A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING  
JUNE 29, 1925**

A congregational meeting was held in Saint Thomas Church, Doaktown on Monday the 29th day of June 1925 at eight o'clock in the evening. The meeting was summoned, and the purpose of the meeting was set forth in the following notice, which was read from the pulpit at each diet of worship on the two preceding Sabbaths: "Take notice that the union of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Methodist Church and the Congregational Churches became effective on the 10th day of June 1925, and that under the provisions of section 8 of Chapter 59 of the statutes of New Brunswick 1924, a meeting of this congregation will be held in the church on Monday the 29th of June at the hour of eight o'clock in the evening, for the purpose of deciding whether or not their congregation will concur in the said union."

Moved by Otto Hildebrand, seconded by Annie Murray that "this congregation concur" in the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. Carried unanimously.

The Chairman asked that the Minutes of the meeting be read by the secretary. Moved by Mr. C. Cummings, seconded by Ben L. Holmes that the Minutes be adopted. Carried.

Akerley Holmes, Secretary  
Alexander Firth, Chairman of the Meeting

On July 1, 1925 a baptism service was held for Elwood Amos, the first baby baptized at this United Church

*Between 1931 and 1933, many couples who were not members of the United Church were married in the Manse. I have not been able to find the reason for this; however, one couple who was married there was my grandmother, Annie Steel Stewart Gaston, who married Lewis Glidden.*

~ **Wilfred Gaston**

For some time after Union until about 1939 when the Trinity United Church was sold, services were held at Trinity in the morning and at Saint Thomas in the evening.

In 1934 Session reported the following statistics:-

Families in Doaktown – 51	Individuals - 29
Families in Blissfield - 8	Individuals - 9
Families in New Bandon - 15	Individuals - 6

In 1934, a project was undertaken by the Ladies Aid of Saint Thomas to build a Church Hall. At a meeting of the Official Board on August 6, 1934, Miss Whyte was asked to outline her intentions: she would give the church her piano if immediate steps were taken to provide a church hall. A motion was subsequently made to make a recommendation to the Congregational Meeting on Monday evening, August 13 to have a Church Hall erected. A letter was to be drafted to be sent to each family of the congregation regarding the object of the meeting on the 13th. Committees were appointed to look after various aspects of the building of the Hall. A motion was made for a unanimous vote of thanks to Miss Whyte for her generous offer to the church.

**Note:** The "Miss Whyte" referred to above was Frances Whyte (b. January 20, 1894) whose father, William, operated a jewelry and watch making business in a little store adjacent to that of Otto Hildebrand's on Doaktown's main street. The Whyte's were obviously loyal churchgoers as later on a communion table, constructed from wood taken from Squire Doak's white elm tree cut down during the 1940's, was donated in memory of Bessie Alice Whyte by her daughters.

At a meeting held on November 19, 1934, a committee was established to “draw up rules and regulations regarding the use of the Hall.” Ms. Annie L. Murray assumed the position of Secretary, taking over from Mr. L. S. Fraser.

**Rules and Regulations for the Use of the Church Hall  
December 10, 1934**

1. This Hall shall be under the supervision of the Board of Trustees and shall be used for any purpose having their approval along with the approval of the Church Session.
2. All our United Church societies and organizations shall have free use of this building.
3. All outside institutions shall pay from seven to ten dollars for the use of the hall.
4. All community interests such as sister churches, school, clubs, etc., shall pay from five to seven dollars for each meeting or social function.
5. Any details in connection with the above fees shall be arranged by the Board of Trustees.
6. All participants in games shall wear rubber soled shoes.
7. All regular social and recreational activities shall close at 10:30 P.M.
8. All intoxicants, profanity and the use of tobacco are absolutely prohibited within this building.

It should be noted that in 1973 these rules were reviewed and revised as follows:

1. No change.
2. Changed to a prescribed fee.
3. Changed to a prescribed fee.
4. Details in connection with the above shall be arranged by a Hall Committee with the approval of the Official Board.
5. No change.
6. Soft soled shoes.
7. No time stated.
8. Intoxicants and smoking prohibited in the Hall.
9. Dancing shall be confined to United Church groups and their guests.
10. It is the responsibility of the Hall Committee to arrange bookings and rates, and to suggest changes to the rules and regulations. The rules are to be posted in the Hall.

The Hall opened on November 28, 1934, and eight years later on November 28, 1942 the mortgage was burned, the task being carried out by Bradford Ogilvie who along with Robert Swim and Ernest Russell, were in charge of the construction. The Finance Committee consisted of Otto Hildebrand, Thomas Chalmers and William MacKinnon, Senior. On completion of the Hall a special service was held at which time the keys were presented by Mr. Bradford Ogilvie, Chairman of the Building Committee, to Otto Hildebrand representing the Board of Trustees. It took just 79 days to build the hall (payment to workers was made in the form of food certificates, this being the middle of the Depression). For the official opening of the Hall, invitations were sent out with the following text:

We've built a hall adjoining the Kirk  
To aid us in our church's work  
We need some money right aw ay  
To help us now our bills to pay  
And so we send this bag to you  
To share our debt and see us thru'  
Just one cent for every year  
You've spent upon this Mortal sphere  
Now come along and bring the bag  
If not, please send it, help us brag  
And send along some kindly greeting  
For us to read out at our meeting.

One of the replies was:-

Accept this small token of money  
It' not very much to behold  
I am not trying to be funny  
It is a cent for each year I am old  
I am sorry that is all I am giving  
To share in your jollies and fun  
But I have to work for a living  
A student at the James Hamet Dunn  
I often long for your friendship  
A kind word or maybe a joke  
But some day I'll return to our tow nship  
A wiser and older Frances Doak

**Note:** Frances Louise Doak (b. February 7, 1915) was the daughter of Lizzie (Holmes) and Lawrence Doak. She is believed to have trained as a nurse and died on March 21, 1941 at the age of 26.

A piano was indeed presented to be used in the Hall by Miss Whyte who dedicated it to her mother's memory, and the following poem, written by the Reverend Hugh Upham (Pastor from 1934-1938), was recited:

***Our Hall Builders***

This night I do delight to sing  
The praise of men in rhyme  
Who raised this edifice so grand  
To spend with profit, leisure time.  
The men who gave their strength and thought  
Had faith in this Depression day  
To build a place for youth and age  
Our gratitude and say -

**Bob Swim** . . . he is our Postmaster  
Does lumbering on the side  
Along with building stately halls  
Which are his joy and pride.  
Yes, Bob, he has an artist's eye  
As anyone may see  
Just look around and gaze, yourself  
This hall's a symphony.

**Brad Olgivie's** an engineer  
A man of many parts;

He has a smile that won't come off  
And one of the best of hearts.

**Ern Russell** is a builder too,  
A many sided man  
Whose aid we sought to help us build  
According to the plan.

So these three stalwarts builded well  
This hall you now may see;  
Of course they hired carpenters  
Who builded carefully.

**Luke Amos** was the master hand  
Who builded up the frame  
The stage of ornamental art  
Enhances Doaktown's fame

The base is built of concrete hard  
Wainscot of Douglas fir  
With strappings of our native wood  
And roof of metal, Sir.  
The walls you see of insul board  
The ceiling's likewise, too,  
The window sills, the doors and floor  
In harmony all thru.

So all the creeds joined hands here to erect  
This building's fine creation;  
A Calvin Baptist oversees  
Our weekly habitation.  
United Churchmen, Anglicans  
A Roman Catholic Layman  
In harmony a hall to build  
Defeat the wiles of Satan

The Ladies Aid will have a room  
In which to stitch and sew  
And have a jolly cup of tea  
Before it's time to go.  
The youth here sure will have a place  
To meet in social hours  
And have their play and do their stunts  
And learn of Higher Powers.

How shall we ever meet the bills  
And pay for work and time  
The Douglas fir, the metal roof  
The stage and all sublime.  
We have another trio grand  
Who'll show us all the way  
To foot the bills and pay our debts  
Our mortgage fears allay.

**Mr. Hilderbrand** heads our finance  
With **Tom** and **Will MacKinnon**  
This trio sure knows how to pay  
Our debt's accumulation.

**Tom Chalmers** is a railroad man

A jolly sport is he  
At home in cheering baseball games  
And raising funds his glee.

**Will Mac.** he comes of Highland stock  
Of cool and quiet men  
Financing is his proper sphere  
As every Scot's has been  
We used to have a Ladies aid  
Now it's an Association  
With a change of name it's still their task  
Our debt its liquidation.

So now three cheers for these good men  
Who builded well this structure  
And listened well to new ideas  
And promise of the future.  
And let us each on do our part  
And make use of this building  
And make it serve a lofty place  
All for our town's uplifting.

Electric lights were installed in 1935 replacing the old gasoline lamps. The annual meeting was held in the new Hall on January 21, 1935. It should be noted that the Minister's salary which had been set at \$3,200.00 in 1934 was now lowered back to \$1,000.00 for 1935, probably because of the impacts of the Depression.

In 1936, Mr. W. A. Bamford expressed the opinion that it was a pity for the Manse folks to be sitting in the dark looking at the bright lights around them. Within a few days he had collected \$72.00 towards the installation of electric lights at the Manse.

**Reverend Mr. William Swan** of St. Martin's came to minister in 1938 and remained until 1941. **Note:** According to the *Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* (p. 373), Reverend William H. Swan was born in Lancashire, England and came to Canada in 1912. He trained for the ministry at the Presbyterian College in Montreal and was ordained in 1919. He pursued his entire ministerial career in New Brunswick. After leaving Doaktown in 1941, he moved to Hillsborough before retiring in 1947. Throughout his ministry he enjoyed working with young people, both in church and in sports and in other activities. He was also identified with the work of charitable organizations: he served a term as president of the New Brunswick Red Cross Society and was a delegate to the World Sunday School Convention in Oslo, Norway in 1936.

In 1938, it was decided to combine Sunday School and morning worship services. On April 17, 1939 a Committee was named to arrange for the sale of the Trinity United building. Renovations to Saint Thomas Church were discussed, particularly the installation of new windows.

Reverend Swan was succeeded by **Reverend Millard K. Charman**. According to the *Dictionary* (p. 65), Mr. Charman was born in Wallace, Nova Scotia on February 10, 1892. His training for the ministry was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I – he enlisted in 1915 and served overseas with the Canadian forces until the end of the war. He then resumed his studies and was ordained in 1921, ministering in both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island before coming to Doaktown in 1941 to begin what was the lengthiest pastorate of his career. Charman left Doaktown in 1948 and served in various parts of the Maritimes before retiring to the Moncton area in 1960. He died on April 17, 1981.

On November 28, 1942, just eight years after the opening of the Church Hall, the mortgage was burned.

The anniversary service in June of 1943 was a special affair, held in the Hall which was filled to capacity. The "Home Guard" paraded to the service under the command of Lieutenant Blaine Murray, a veteran of World War I.

In 1944 a Memorial cross was placed in the church in memory of Mrs. Isabel Price, by her family. In 1946 three pulpit chairs were presented by Mrs. Eliza Slipp in memory of her parents, William and Elsie Russell. Also In 1946, "moving pictures" were held in the Hall by the Government, a practice that was continued until 1955. A matinee movie on Saturday cost between 15-25 cents. In 1947 the small paned square top windows were replaced by rounded top stained glass windows to correspond with the War Memorial (1939-1945) windows that had been installed behind the altar.

**Reverend Hewlitt C. Upton** replaced Reverend Charman, ministering in Doaktown between 1947 and 1951. According to *The Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* (p. 389), Hewlitt Charles Upton was born on September 21, 1892 in Sheffield, New Brunswick and studied for the ministry at Mount Allison University and the Wesleyan Theological College in Montreal before being ordained in 1923. He occupied Methodist and United Church pulpits in rural New Brunswick, Quebec and Nova Scotia over a period of more than 30 years and created a sensation in Andover, NB in 1929 when he failed to appear for Sunday services because his salary payment were in arrears. Upton was exceedingly fond of the Miramichi and his terms at Doaktown and Tabusintac were among the lengthiest of his ministry. He retired in 1955 and spent most of the rest of his life in the United States. He died in Colorado Springs on January 1, 1970 at the age of 78.

In 1948 the Guild, a group that had been organized by Mrs. Ashley Swim, bought a new pulpit and made a down payment of \$317.00 on an electric organ. Plans were also made for enlarging the cemetery.

*During this period I remember the "plays" that were held in the Hall each year during the winter months and I was privileged to have taken part in at least one of them. As I remember, Mrs. Ashley Swim was Director, Producer and Talent Scout. At one time when preparing for a play, she had called my father and stated that Ronnie, my brother, and I were required to be at the hall on a certain Tuesday to begin rehearsing for that year's production. One had no choice but to be there.*

*The United Church congregation in Blackville would also bring their 'plays' to Doaktown, normally on or around St. Patrick's Day. In addition, numerous road shows, magicians, musicians and traveling entertainments appeared at the Church Hall during the 1940s and 50s.*

*~ Wilfred Gaston*

During 1949 the Altar Memorial was built by Mr. Marvin Betts and his brother-in-law Melvin Robinson, with Everett Gilks doing the varnishing and staining. It was made of oak wood which had been stored in the loft of a garage owned by Spencer Price, nephew of Mr. Herman Attridge in whose memory the Memorial was built and dedicated.

The carving of the symbols of Union which adorn the Altar are beautiful and represent the love, caring and talents of these men from our community.

**Reverend Cater Windsor** served in Doaktown from 1951 to 1959. Born in Wesleyville, Newfoundland on September 22, 1892, he was ordained in 1921 and

began a four-year pastorate in Lockport, Nova Scotia. He retired following his ministry in Doaktown although throughout most of his retirement he served as a supply minister. He died in Saint John on March 7, 1980 at the age of 88. During Reverend Windsor's time in Doaktown, his annual salary was set at \$2,700 (a men's club was also formed during his tenure).

Our chimes were dedicated in 1953 during the anniversary service and were presented by Joyce Charters, President of the Guild. During the same service a brass pulpit lamp was presented in the memory of Mina Annie Bamford by her brothers, Bill and Tim Bamford.

In June 1955, a plaque bearing the names of two of our 'boys' who were killed in action overseas shortly after "D Day" was installed. These were Donald Murray, son of Blaine and Hazel (Holmes) Murray, and Blair Mitchell, son of Roy and Etta Mitchell. The "Honor Roll" was also displayed at this time.

**Reverend George Bennett** ministered in Doaktown from 1959 to 1962. During this time the Christian Education Committee was formed with Mr. Walter Doak as representative. Also during this period, the "sand pile" under the church "came under a fairies wand" and was transformed into a choir room, Sunday School rooms, a washroom and a furnace room. One dream of Mr. Bennett's was an open chancel (a space around the Altar for the clergy and choir) but unfortunately, he passed away suddenly at Doaktown in May 1962 (his body is interred in the United Church cemetery at Doaktown).

Several Ministers (**John Cameron, Reverend Graeme Fraser, Reverend Mr. Hyden, Reverend Chester Walls and John Adams**) served this circuit until **Reverend Mr. J. Harold MacDonald** arrived in 1963, staying until 1970. Under his guidance, an open Chancel became a reality in 1964.

In 1962 the United Church Women (UCW) was formed replacing the Ladies Aid and the Missionary Society. The very faithful members of the Mission Circle were Mrs. Etta Amos, Mrs. Effie Parker, Mrs. Olive Parker, Mrs. Jen Nelson, Mrs. Annie Earl, Mrs. Addie Gilks and Mrs. Edith Russell. In 1963 new seats were installed, a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Swim and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Russell. A new well was also dug at the Manse.

In 1965 a Memorial Window in honor of Reverend George Bennett was dedicated. In 1966, the Bamford Memorial Window was installed and presented by Louise and Katherine Bamford in memory of their parents, Annie (Mitchell) and William A. Bamford.

Reverend MacDonald was replaced in 1970 by **Reverend Robert MacLennan** who remained in Doaktown until 1972. During this time, the heating system in the Hall was converted from wood to oil and the practice of bringing the children to the front of the church for story time and prayer before going off to Sunday School was begun.

In 1972 **Reverend John Henderson** began his ministry in Doaktown. Memorial windows were installed in memory of Otto and Karl Hildebrand by their daughter Joan and her family as well as a window in memory of Albert Dickison and his son James by his wife, Anne, and her family. About this time as well, the memorial piano was exchanged for a piano left in the Manse by Mr. Bennett. In 1975 the Parish Vault was realized with the help of Village Council and six other churches from the area who participated in its construction and maintenance.

**Reverend Malcolm Cogswell** began his ministry here in 1977, remaining until 1982. The lay reader was introduced. The UCW (formed in 1962) continued their dedication to fundraising through various projects such as the fall smorgasbord, various food sales, quilting, and catering for weddings.

**Reverend R. A. Sykes** replaced Reverend Cogswell in 1982. In 1983 money was donated to have an audio sound system installed in the church together with a tape player to be used in the absence of the organist. Reverend Sykes typed his sermons so that those who had to miss a service could, if desired, have one made available. During his ministry many one-day workshops were held for lay persons. Also during this time the 100th anniversary was observed and the church was filled to capacity. It was a most wonderful event. Excerpts from a local newspaper of the time:

On Friday evening, August 13, 1982, St. Thomas United Church in Doaktown held a special service with members and friends to recognize and celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the opening on August 13, 1882. Reverend Rod Sykes officiated at the service while Reverend Douglas Earl of Halifax was Guest Minister. Honorary Elder Willie Carr, Clerk of Session Charles Stewart, and Senior Elders Murray Jordan and Morley O'Donnell attended the special service.

The choir included some present and former St. Thomas members and opened the service with the processional hymn *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, accompanied on the organ by Miss Thelma Ballard. The liturgy, which included the serving of Communion from a Common Cup and Loaf, followed very closely a Presbyterian Church service which might have taken place 100 years ago.

William MacKinnon Jr. and Mrs. Ronald Robb, dressed in period costume read historical, prologues, which included excerpts from newspapers of the day, dealing mainly with fund raising events held for building renovations. Many of the persons named in these articles are the same names in the church and village today such as Doak, Swim and Murray.

The Rev Douglas Earl is a direct descendant of the Doak family who gave the land on which to build the church. (The family home in Doaktown has recently been purchased by the Province as a historic site and is now restored.)

In his message on the theme *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, Reverend Earl spoke of his deep feelings both spiritually and historically in regards to his association with St Thomas.

Celebrations closed with the recessional hymn *Onward Christian Soldiers*. Refreshments were served and supplied by St Thomas United Church Women. The Minister of St Thomas United, Reverend Dr Rod Sykes, and his congregation are grateful to all their friends who helped to celebrate this important spiritual and historical occasion.

As Rev Sykes said in his sermon on Sunday morning (Aug 15) the various denotations have more in common than in dispute and we all share our Common Master. Obviously that was also the case one hundred years ago.

In 1984, **Reverend Allen Warren** succeeded Reverend Sykes, remaining in Doaktown for four years. In 1985, both the Church and the Hall were given a new "coat" of vinyl siding and other maintenance problems attended to (the steeple had some slats missing, the railing adjacent to the steps replaced, and the cement repaired in front of the Hall and kitchen). The chimes also required repair and plans were made to being the installation of water and sewage.

Part-time supply ministers were used during 1988 and 1989 and included **Reverend George Gillis** and **Reverend Donald Sharpe**. **Reverend Harold Kingston** arrived in 1989, remaining until 1992. The insulating of the Hall and changes to the water system discussed.

**Mrs. Joyce O'Brien**, Lay Minister, arrived in 1992. At this time the Christian Education Committee (which had been dormant for about 10 years) was reactivated. Plans were made to purchase an electric furnace for the Manse and plans were made to cut a quantity of logs on the Church woodlot.

In 1995, **Reverend Carol Mullin** came to the charge. The Christian Education Committee was renamed as the Christian Development Committee. This committee constructed our mission statement: *Keeping our eyes upon Jesus, through prayer and praise, we aspire to be a welcoming, friendly, caring, loving community; a community which works together, one in Spirit for to good of all; which reaches out beyond ourselves to our larger community and our world, and which respects, honours, and cares for all of God's creation.*

During this period the church steeple was removed for repair and renovation and later re-installed. The kitchen was extensively renovated under the guidance of Mr. Merlin Mullen. A new sink was installed, cupboard doors were modified, a central serving island was added together with new windows and a new passage way bypassing the kitchen. The Hall floor was scraped and re-varnished; the walls painted and new blinds added to the windows. A time capsule was placed in the steeple for the generations.

The choir added new male members and new gowns. The annual report read, "while the attendance at Sunday school has been down, we continue to try to carry out good Christian work." At this time a new solid state organ was purchased from Irving's in Millbank to replace the tube type that was costing more each year to keep going.

After Rev. Mullin left, **Sheila Mallory**, an Interim Minister from Fredericton, served for a brief period (the Church also relied heavily on the services of our UCW and Session during this time). In 2001 **Reverend Heather Froats** came to the charge – she proved to be extremely good with the young folks in our congregation while at the same time updating her education, receiving her Doctorate of Divinity at the University of Maine. Reverend Doctor Froats was called to a charge in Ontario in June of 2008.

**Lana Medeiros** arrived on September 1 2008 but has since returned to university to complete her training for the Ministry. We welcomed the arrival of **Reverend Hazel-Jane Morris** in June of 2010.

We continue to update the Church and Manse to our benefit and to the glory of our God.

