

# Toiling Workmen Sign Of First United Growth

BY PETER BRUTON

Victoria residents, walking down Balmoral to Quadra frequently stop to gaze at workmen toiling on a vacant lot next to First United Church.

For there, the foundations of a new reinforced-concrete hall which will cost \$85,000 are rapidly taking shape—proof of the ever-expanding activities of First United.

The church was founded just a few years after the Colonist began publication—well over 10 years ago.

And from that day it has been serving Victoria's churchgoers.

## YOUNG MEN MEET

Back in April, 1861, a young clerk in the Bank of North America noticed a young man coming into the bank. The clerk, Alexander Wilson, made inquiries as to where the young man was from and what he intended to do in Victoria.

The young man replied his name was John Hall, that he was a minister of the Gospel

and that he had been sent out by the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as a missionary to the Pacific Coast.

Mr. Wilson said: "You hire a hall and I'll round up a congregation."

That was the beginning of what is now First United Church.

The following Saturday an advertisement appeared in the Colonist announcing that divine service would be held in Moore's Hall, Sunday, April 21.

## LONG SERVICE

Mr. Wilson, the young bank clerk, had a long and honored connection with the church and lived to see the day when in May, 1915, the present church building was opened and dedicated.

Much of the early history of what is now First United was closely related to the history of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, mentioned on this page last week. The church was originally built and dedicated in

1863 on a site at the corner of Blanshard and Pandora.

In February, 1913, Rev. John Gibson Inkster became pastor of the church. It had been fully realized that the church on Blanshard had become too small to accommodate the increasing congregation.

## DOUBLE USE

The property was sold at a good price and a lot was purchased at the corner of Quadra and Balmoral. When Mr. Inkster arrived the new Sunday school building was under construction and for a time it served as a church as well.

A momentous decision was taken in 1924, when, by majority vote of the congregation, First United became part of the United Church of Canada and on June 5, 1925, adopted the new name of First United Church of Victoria.

## LARGE CONGREGATION

The present membership of First United is more than 2,000. Last year the Sunday school had an average attendance of 500 for the year.

Rev. Moir A. J. Waters was inducted as pastor on January 7, 1949, and at the recent meeting of the B.C. Conference of the United Church of Canada he was elected president for the coming year. He is assisted by Rev. Frank Johnson, who came from Ireland a year ago.

Some milestones in First United's history are:

1861—First services in Moore's Hall.

1862—Congregation of First Presbyterian Church on Vancouver Island officially organized.

1863—Laying of cornerstone for church at Blanshard and Pandora. Cost of the lot was \$1,100 and contract price of the building was \$3,120.

1864—Sunday school and church vestry completed.

1865—Rev. John Hall, the first pastor, left for New Zealand and was succeeded by Rev. Thomas Sommerville of Glasgow.

1876—Rev. John Reid became pastor, to remain until 1881.

1882—Rev. R. H. Smith arrived. First Church joined the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Mr. Smith succeeded by Rev. David Gamble.

1883—Sunday school and vestry burned to the ground. Church building badly damaged.

1884—Church re-opened. Rev. Donald Fraser arrived to serve as pastor for seven years.

1892—Rev. John Campbell—pastor for 20 years.

1913—Rev. John Inkster became pastor and led the congregation from the old to the new church.

1921—Dr. W. G. Wilson inducted as pastor, serving for 17 years.

1925—First Church officially entered United Church of Canada.

1938—Dr. Hugh A. McLeod inducted as pastor and served for 10 years.

1949—Rev. Moir A. J. Waters inducted as pastor.

1951—Raised \$9,437.16 for missionary and maintenance fund.

1952—90th anniversary services.

932 Balmoral/1701 Quadra

First United Church, shown above, is marking 87th anniversary today with special services conducted by Rev. Moir J. A. Waters.

—Colonist Photo.

## Started in Colonial Days Church Has Anniversary

A special anniversary service today will mark the 87th anniversary of First United Church, successor to the oldest Presbyterian Church west of Winnipeg.

The service will be conducted by Rev. Moir J. A. Waters, recently installed minister, who takes his place in the line of ministers of the church that stretches back to Colonial days.

By 1860, Victoria had suddenly swollen into a town of some 6,000 in which tents and buildings stood side by side as the city was mushroomed into importance as a supply centre for the Fraser River gold rush.

Construction of churches had lagged a little in the feverish expansion, but it did not lag long. There were already two Anglican churches, a Roman Catholic, a Congregationalist and a Methodist Church by February 3, 1862, when a small band met to form a Presbyterian congregation.

### LIST FOUNDERS

Present were Chief Justice David Cameron, Rev. John Hall, John Wright, Robert Carter, John Bastedo, George H. Saunders, Alexander Wilson, John Martin, Charles Cochran, Joseph Kilgour, Thomas Mann, George Reid, Simon Anderson and Alexander Loury.

Many of them were settlers who had come around the Horn to the colony.

Mr. Hall was a young preacher who had been sent from Ireland as a missionary to the Pacific Coast, and with the help of Mr. Wilson, located Moore's Hall, corner of Langley and Yates Street, as a meeting place.

Plans were under way to build at the corner of Pandora and Blanshard Streets, but in the meantime, the founding congregation met at several diverse meeting places, sometimes including Mr. Justice Pemberton's police court.

### CORNERSTONE LAID

Finally on April 9, 1863, the cornerstone of their new church was laid by Chief Justice Cameron, and a year later the Sunday school hall and vestry were added, the completed building costing \$6,000.

The following Spring, Mr. Hall went on to New Zealand for missionary work, and Rev. Thomas Somerville was sent out by the Church of Scotland to replace him.

Differences between congregation and pastor resulted in Mr. Somerville's resignation, and he immediately proceeded to organize another congregation, known as St. Andrew's.

For a time First Church managed to get along with an occasional pulpit supply, but eventually closed for nine years until a permanent minister could be secured.

On March 16, 1876, Rev. John Reid became minister, succeeded in 1881 by Rev. R. H. Smith, who in turn was succeeded by Rev. David Gamble in 1882, the same year the congregation joined the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

### FIRE CAUSES DAMAGE

The next year on September 4, the schoolroom and vestry were destroyed by fire and the body of the church considerably damaged.

During the four months while

repairs were under way the congregation held services in the Broughton Street Hall and for a short time in the old Temperance Hall.

By 1884, Rev. Donald Fraser had replaced Mr. Gamble, and on his death Rev. John Campbell became pastor and began his 20-year ministry at the church.

It was in 1913, when Rev. John Inkster took over, that it was realized that the church on Blanshard Street had become too small and the present lot at the corner of Quadra and Balmoral Streets was purchased.

The \$30,000 mortgage that was raised to build the new church then was finally discharged in 1936.

### JOIN UNITED CHURCH

In October, 1921, Rev. W. G. Wilson, M.A., D.D., became minister of the church and three years later, in 1924, a majority of the congregation voted to join the United Church of Canada in a momentous election.

Since Dr. Wilson left his post as minister in 1938, Dr. Hugh McLeod served until late last year, and this year Mr. Waters was installed as minister.

During the period between Mr. McLeod's departure and Mr. Waters' arrival, Rev. Wilson once again took an active part in the ministry of the church.

### WOMEN'S WORK

Over the years the church has been proud of the work of its women.

When the church first organized, a small band of women fed a "multitude" at a tea meeting that enriched the church treasury by \$600.

They have been doing as well since.

932 Balmoral / 1701 Quadra

## Birthday Anniversary Sunday

Colonist. Feb. 6, 1960 p.10.

# First United 98 Years Old

### Rev. Shaun Herron To Be Guest Speaker

One of Victoria's oldest churches marks its 98th anniversary Sunday, when the congregation of First United Church gathers for special services.

Rev. Shaun Herron of Weyburn, Sask., will be guest preacher at both the morning and evening services. Congregation of Metropolitan United Church will attend the evening service.

Actually, the birthday is being celebrated late. It was on Feb. 3, 1862, that 14 men and two women met to formally organize the congrega-

tion of what was then the First Presbyterian Church of Vancouver Island.

Rev. John Hall, former missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, conducted those first services, held in Moore's Hall, upstairs at the corner of Yates and Langley Streets. It was to be the first of three locations.

### Cornerstone Laid

In 1863, corner stone of a new church at the corner of Blanshard Street and Pandora Avenue was laid by Chief Justice David Cameron, and the church was opened and dedicated that November.

Rev. Thomas Somerville, second minister of the church, quarrelled with the congregation in 1866 and resigned to organize the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Left without a minister, the church found it impossible to continue and was closed from 1867 to 1876.

But it got started again,

grew steadily, and in 1913 the church on Blanshard Street became too small to handle the ever-growing congregation. A lot was purchased at the corner of Quadra and Balmoral Streets, and the present church was opened May 2, 1915.

A "come to dessert party" will be held in the Fellowship Hall, 934 Balmoral Street, at 6.30 p.m. for the final observance of the birthday celebration. Tickets may be purchased at the door.

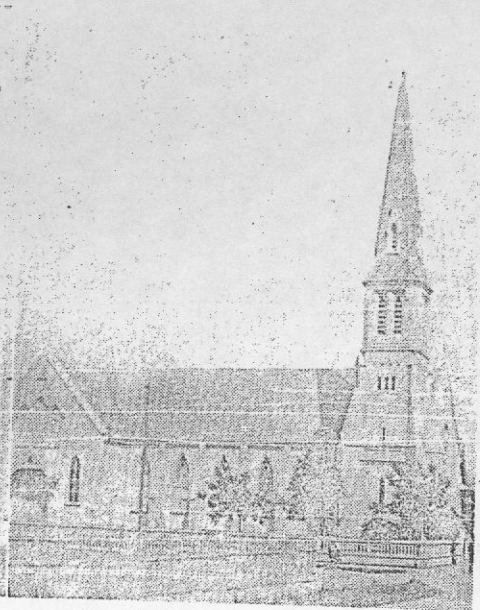


932 Balmoral/1701 Quadra

Jan. 13 '62 p. 19 Times.



First United Church as it is today.



The old Church on Blanshard Street.

## FIRST UNITED CÉLEBRATES

# Church Shares City Birthday

Victoria's First United Church—the largest in membership west of Calgary—is 100 years old this year and shares this anniversary with the city itself.

The occasion will be marked with a series of 15 celebrations from January to October in which the church's more than 2,800 members will be invited to take part.

First of these will be a service for the Rededication of Elders on Sunday, Jan. 21, but the actual anniversary is on Feb. 3. On this date, 100 years ago, a group of 14 men and two women met in Smith's

Hall on Government Street and formally organized the first Presbyterian congregation in Victoria.

### Historic Meeting

This early church became the First United Church when it officially entered the United Church of Canada on June 10, 1925.

Present at the first historic meeting were Chief Justice David Cameron, Rev. John Hall, the first minister, John Wright, Robert Carter, John Bastedo, George H. Saunders, Alexander Wilson, John Martin, Charles Cochrane, Joseph Kilgour, Thomas Mann, George Reid, Simon Anderson and Alexander Loury.

Rev. John Hall had been sent out from Belfast by the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He remained here until 1865 when he left for New Zealand and was succeeded by Rev. Thomas Somerville from Glasgow.

### Building Planned

The first services were held in Moore's Hall, upstairs, at the corner of Yates and Langley, but plans were soon made for the erection of a church building.

A site was acquired at the corner of Blanshard and Pandora—where the B.C. Electric building now stands—and the

corner stone was laid by Chief Justice Cameron on April 9, 1863.

The completed church, with school hall and vestry, was built at a cost of \$6,000 and dedicated in November 1863. The first church bell was purchased in San Francisco and the church pews were bought by members of the congregation. The centre seats for \$30, side seats for \$25 and single seats at \$6.50 per annum.

### Fire Took Toll

The church grew steadily in strength and influence until Sept. 4, 1883, when fire destroyed the schoolroom and vestry and severely damaged the church itself.

The building was restored and rededicated on Jan. 4, 1884.

The present church at Quadra and Mavor Streets was opened on May 2, 1915, and dedicated by the then minister, Rev. Dr. John Inkster, assisted by two earlier pastors, Rev. Dr. John Reid and Rev. Dr. John Campbell.

### Famous in Sport

Through the years First United has always been famous for its champion basketball teams and many of its congregation have been prominent in public life.

L. J. Wallace, deputy provincial secretary in the B.C. government, is chairman of the church's centennial committee, with W. C. Hudson as secretary and Newell Morrison as treasurer.

Also serving on this committee are W. R. Hunter, Mrs. R. Howell, Prof. N. A. Swainson, Dr. M. Anderson, Mrs. J. A. M. Beere, G. H. Stevens, Paul Beere, J. R. Woods, choir master, Rev. A. I. Higgins, church minister, and Rev. Stanley Sears, his assistant.



932 Balmoral/1701 Quadre

# Centennial Rites Start Sunday

Colonist Jan. 20 '62 p. 7.

## At Busy First United Church

First United Church, like Victoria, celebrates its 100th anniversary this year with actual centennial services Sunday, Feb. 4.

The birthday will be observed in a number of special events, concentrated in February but starting this Sunday at the 11 a.m. service, with re-dedication of the church elders and the congregation—a matter of particular significance in a church that has served Victoria for a century and has grown to a congregation of 2,800.

Elders are elected by church members to lifetime service and there now are about 140 serving First United.

Oldest of these in years of service is James Logie, who was elected in 1918. Next is Hon. R. W. Mayhew, elected in 1919.

Other senior elders, and the years in which they were elected, include: Fred M. McGregor and Alex McKeachie, Sr., 1923; J. G. McFarlane, 1924; Donald MacKinnon and William T. Straith, 1928; John Gough, 1931; Walter J. Fletcher, R. N. Higgins and G. H. Stephens, 1934, and Alastair Campbell, 1938.

Planning to attend this and other centennial services is Rev. Dr. W. G. Wilson, minister at First United from 1921 to 1938 and still, at 94, active in church affairs.

Music for the Sunday morning service will be provided by the Royal Jubilee Hospital Nurses' Choir.

Guest speaker Sunday morning at First Baptist Church will be F. G. Shears of Vancouver, provincial treasurer of the B.C. Baptist Convention.

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Rt. Rev. G. R. Calvert, Lord Bishop of Calgary, will be preacher at St. John's Anglican Church at 7.30 p.m. Sunday.

### UNVEIL PLAQUE

Times Jan. 27 '62

## First United Unveiling Saturday

p. 31.

Mrs. Mary Hermitage, member of longest standing in First United Church, will unveil a plaque on the site of the original church at Blanshard and Pandora next Saturday at 3 p.m.

The ceremony, marking the 100th anniversary of First United, will be conducted by the present minister, Rev. A. I. Higgins. Also taking part will be two former ministers—Rev. Dr. Hugh A. McLeod and Rev. Dr. W. G. Wilson.

Music will be provided by the Victoria Citadel Salvation Army Band.

Rev. Mr. Higgins will conduct centennial communion services in the church this Sunday. On Monday the church archives will be opened and a church history written by Prof. Neil A. Swainson will be released.

Rev. Dr. McLeod will speak at a Centennial banquet in the Fellowship Hall on Monday, Feb. 5.

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## 100 FIRST UNITED PIONEERS AT CENTENNIAL RECEPTION

Times Jan. 30, 1962 p. 11

# Church Honors 'Noble Record of Service'

More than 100 pioneer members of First United Church—now celebrating its centennial year—were honored at a reception in the Fellowship Hall Monday night.

Among the pioneers was silver-haired Miss Helen Fraser, whose father, Rev. Donald Fraser, was minister of the church from 1884 to 1891.

"I hope he is here to see this wonderful gathering tonight," she said.

### SERVED WITH SIX

Alexander McKeachie recalled that he served the church under six ministers—Rev. Dr. John Campbell, who succeeded Mr. Fraser; Rev. Dr. John Gibson Inkster, Rev. Dr. W. G. Wilson, Rev. Dr. Hugh McLeod, Rev. Dr. A. J. Waters, and the present minister, Rev. A. I. Higgins.

Rev. Dr. Wilson, now in his

94th year, returned to the church which he served from 1921 to 1938 and recalled the historic union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches in 1925.

"It was a great event in our history," he said, "and one that has proved its worth in strength and membership."

### 2,800 MEMBERS

Lawrence J. Wallace, chairman of the church's centennial committee, welcomed the pioneers and spoke of their continuing service to a church which now has 2,800 members—the largest west of Calgary.

He said First United had been closely identified with the development of Victoria. It had produced leading citizens, champion basketball teams and outstanding choirs.

"We are proud of our history," he said.

In a tribute to the pioneers,

Victoria College Prof. Neill Swainson declared:

"You have a noble record of

service and we believe it will be an inspiration to those who follow. We salute you and

pledge ourselves to try and live up to your traditions."

Hon. R. W. Mayhew, a for-



**AMONG PRE-1915 MEMBERS** of First United Church, honored at a pioneers' reception Monday night were (from left) Miss Helen Fraser,

who joined church in 1886; Mrs. J. A. Heritage, 1874; Mrs. Peter McKechnie, 1881; Mrs. Margaret Christie, 1909.

mer Canadian ambassador to Japan, spoke for the pioneers when he said:

"We have never served a better cause."

The pioneers were presented by G. Herbert Stevens and Rev. A. I. Higgins. W. Robert Hunter was chairman and an enjoyable concert program was provided by Alice Waddell, Allan Husband and Mrs. John Gough.

Rev. Stanley F. Sears offered the benediction.

### CHINA PLATE GIFT

The pioneers honored were members of the First Presbyterian Church (now United) prior to and including June 1915, and those received into membership since June, 1915 and prior to July, 1925, when First Presbyterian Church became First United Church.

Each was presented with a china plate bearing a facsimile of First United Church.

932 Balmoral / 1701 Quadra

Times Feb. 6, 1962 p. 40

## FIRST UNITED CENTENNIAL FETE

# 'This Was Their Finest Hour'

By NORMAN CRIBBENS

Rev. Dr. W. G. Wilson, minister at First United Church from 1921 to 1938 and now in his 94th year, imitated the voice of Sir Winston Churchill Monday night when he said:

"If this congregation should live for a thousand years, historians will say 'This was their finest hour.'"

The occasion was the centennial banquet of First United Church—founded as the First Presbyterian Church of Vancouver Island on Feb. 3, 1862—and Dr. Wilson with many other former ministers returned to pay homage to an institution closely identified with the history of Victoria.

"We look back with pride on our history," said Dr. Wilson, "but we look forward to an even greater future."

More than 500 church members, gathered in the spacious Fellowship Hall, rose and cheered the veteran minister at the close of his brief address.

There were cheers, too, for Dr. Wilson's successor, Rt. Rev. Dr. Hugh A. McLeod (1938-1948), who is now moderator of the United Church of Canada.

Dr. McLeod referred to many of the pioneers who had given "life and stability" to First United, and recalled many happy memories of his ministry in Victoria.

Lands and Forests Minister Ray Williston brought greetings from the B.C. government and said his long association with the church began in February, 1914, when

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DR. WILSON  
... imitates Churchill

he was christened there by Rev. Dr. John Gibson Inkster (1913-1921).

"Even in those far off days," he said, "Victorians had a concern for Saanich. They thought they were a bunch of heathens out there, so they organized a Sunday school in the Gorge which became Gorge Presbyterian Church."

Mr. Williston added that the successive generations of men and women who had served First United "have been a considerable force in the life and development of this community."

Ald. Mrs. Lily Wilson, on behalf of the mayor and city council of Victoria, said:

"We remember the strong Christian influence this church has had on the people of Victoria and we thank you for all the good deeds that have been done by members of this congregation."

Lawrence J. Wallace, chairman of the church's centennial committee, felt the church had been "supremely blessed" in the number of fine ministers who had served it.

Rev. Alexander Calder, minister of Oak Bay United Church and chairman of the Victoria Presbytery, said the presbytery "sets certain limits upon you but helps you when you are in need . . . I hope you will never need us."

Dr. Murray Anderson, chairman and organizer of the centennial banquet, introduced a number of pioneers, including Miss Helen Fraser, whose father, Rev. Donald Fraser, was minister of the church from 1884 to 1891.



932 Balmoral/1701 Quadra



First United Church marks 100th anniversary as 700 parishioners jam Fellowship Hall.--(Colonist photo)

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## Goodbye to a Century

Colonist Feb. 6, 1962 p. 13

# Time Too Important For Pious Oratory

By TED PULFORD

How does a church say goodbye to a century?

With pious oratory, perhaps, or solemn hymns sung to the crashings of a mighty organ?

To the 700 parishioners of Victoria's First United Church who gathered in Fellowship Hall last night to mark the church's 100th birthday the occasion was too important for that.

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If you had been there, you might have watched a 10-year-old child laugh with delight at her minister's jokes. You would have helped cheer for an old lady who turned out for the celebration—just as she had for every other im-

portant day in the life of her church since 1891.

And, running like a thread through the congratulatory speeches, the stories of church life before the turn of the century, the pioneer memories brought alive again, you would have found an idea as simple and as profound as the roots of the church itself:

"No man has ever amounted to much, who turned his back forever on the past; nor has a man ever amounted to much who lived for the past alone."

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Dr. W. G. Wilson, minister of First United Church for 17 years before his retirement in 1938, put it this way:

"The past is a prologue to the future, hence it is useful and we revere it. It gives us a foundation to build upon; it is something we can all be proud of."

As he walked away, the 700 people stood to cheer the 93-year-old minister whose voice still rang into the hall's farthest corner.

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Testimonials were read from neighboring congregations, churches throughout the country and former First United ministers.

Lands and Forests Minister Ray Williston brought greetings from the provincial government.



# 'Peculiarities' Noted In First United Fire

Intensive investigation is continuing into what fire officials call "certain peculiarities" of the \$100,000 inferno that gutted a section of First United Church at Quadra and Balmoral early yesterday.

Deputy Fire Chief John Abbott called 55 firemen out to battle the blaze, which left the Sunday school section of the church a smoking ruin in just over two hours.

"Owing to certain peculiarities the fire calls for an intensive investigation," Deputy Abbott told The Colonist.

## SAME SECTION

It is second fire in two years in the same section of the church.

The earlier fire caused \$35,000 damage, and broke out at almost the same time as a blaze that destroyed another church a block away.

It was a "considered opinion at that time," Deputy Abbott said, that faulty wiring and a power surge caused the earlier fires.

## RE-WIRED

But First United has been completely re-wired since.

"We can't see any reason at this time why the cause could be wiring," the deputy added.

Two officials of the provincial fire marshals' office are leading the probe.

## CHECKING

They could not be reached for comment as they had "certain contacts they have to check."

Deputy Abbott said the blaze appeared to have started in a ground-level hallway, just 10 feet from a door leading to Balmoral, and within five feet of the seat of the 1960 fire.

## 'COULD START'

It then went up through the partitions and flooring to

burst through the roof.

A steam-radiator was near the area where the flames are believed to have started, and "over a period of time a steam-pipe could start a fire . . . the wood would dry out," an official said.

## LAST RUN FRIDAY

But building superintendent George Schoeman of 930 Balmoral said last night that the furnace, a semi-automatic oil burner, was last run Friday morning.

First alarm was turned in at 3:04 a.m. Saturday.

While the cause of the blaze could not be ascertained at press time, Deputy Abbott said "we do know it had a wonderful start."

## NEAR SOURCE

Non-operation of a fire-alarm linking the church to superintendent Schoeman's home was not considered significant.

Batteries powering the device were near the presumed seat of the fire, and actuators for the alarm were in the basement, below the fire's base.

## SMOKE, WATER

Main body of the church escaped the flames, but water and smoke damage was suffered as flames raced through the two upper stories, roof and basement of the rear portion of the building.

Destroyed were the minister's study, supplies and records in the Sunday school office, chairs, a piano, a kitchen, hymn books, and the mechanism for a \$10,000 electronic carillon was believed a total loss.

## INSURED

Insurance up to \$400,000 was carried on the building.

A firewall between the body of the church and the gutted extension may have minimized damage.

## SORROWFUL WATCHER

Rev. A. I. Higgins of First United, due to leave next week for a new charge in Toronto, watched sorrowfully as flames leapt into the sky.

He was to have given his last service in the sanctuary in Remembrance Day services today.

Passing motorists, Mr. and Mrs. Helgh, 1555 Fairburn, and Tom Higgins, 1169 Balmoral, first saw the fire.

## TODAY'S SERVICES

Higgins ran to Schoeman's home and the superintendent phoned for firemen.

Schoeman locked the church at 9 p.m. Friday, after returning to turn off a basement light.

Regular services, except for the 9:30 a.m. service will be held at the Fellowship Hall.

Silhouetted against flames roaring into early morning sky, fireman vainly directs hose into section of gutted church. Two hours after first alarm, building was skeleton of brick walls and rafters.—



## Aftermath Of Fire

Devastation left by searing flames of \$100,000 First United Church blaze included

ruined piano and deeply charred walls. Rafters, right, show effects of intense heat.

—(Ryan Bros.)

932 Balmoral/1701 Quadra

Building @

24-VICTORIA DAILY TIMES, SAT., FEB. 1, 1969



HALL

... founder



MORRIS

... incumbent

## B.C.'s Biggest Church Marks 107th Year

By NORMAN CRIEBENS  
Church Editor

Victoria's First United Church — believed to be the largest in membership this side of the Rockies — will mark its 107th year Monday.

It was on Feb. 3, 1862, that a group of 14 men and two women met in Smith's Hall, Government Street, and organized what was then the First Presbyterian Church of Vancouver Island.

First services were held in Moore's Hall at the corner of Yates and Langley and were conducted by Rev. John Hall, former missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

A site was then acquired at the corner of Blanshard and Pandora Avenue — where the B.C. Hydro building now stands — and the cornerstone was laid by Chief Justice David Cameron on April 9, 1863.

### BIG EFFORT

The completed church, with school hall and vestry, was built at a cost of \$6,000 and dedicated in November, 1863. It grew steadily in strength and influence until Sept. 4, 1883, when

fire severely damaged the building.

But the congregation made a big effort to raise funds and the building was restored and rededicated on Jan. 4, 1884.

Rev. Thomas Somerville succeeded Mr. Hall as minister but seemed to have difficulty getting along with the congregation.

In 1866, after an open quarrel with church elders, he resigned and proceeded to organize the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, now 103 years old and still going strong.

Left without a minister, First Presbyterian Church found it impossible to continue and was closed from 1867 to 1876.

### BECAME UNITED

Little is known concerning its re-birth, but between 1876 and 1913, the congregation at Blanshard and Pandora grew to the point where it was too big for the building.

A lot was purchased at the corner of Quadra and Balmoral streets and on May 2, 1915, the present church was opened and dedicated to "the glory of God."

The congregation continued to grow until in 1925 it elected to join the United Church of Canada. First Presbyterian became First United at an impressive choral service on June 10, 1925.

Over the years First United has been famous for its champion basketball teams and award-winning choirs and many of its members have won distinction in public life.

One of them is L. J. Wallace, deputy provincial secretary and chairman of the B.C. centennial committee during the celebrations of 1966 and 1967.

This Sunday the church will celebrate its 107th anniversary with special services at 11 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

### GUEST PREACHER

Rev. George Morrison, minister of Ryerson United Church, Vancouver, will be guest preacher at both services. In the morning his subject will be The Church On Its Way; his evening topic will be Seeing Faith.

"All are welcome to share this anniversary with us."



# First United Church To Recognize Worker

By DON GAIN

Colonist Church Editor

First United Church Sunday will honor four people who have served the church from three to 18 years.

Guests at a presentation ceremony in Fellowship Hall after Sunday morning's service will be Ethelyn Wallace, who has been church secretary for 18 years; Trudie Patmore, who was director of leadership development and community service for 4½ years; and Rev. Bob Faris and his wife, Celia.

Faris has been associate minister of the church for the

past three years and his wife has worked with CGIT and Sunday school groups.

Miss Patmore retired April 30, Miss Wallace will retire June 30 and both will remain in Victoria but the Farises are going to the United Church's mission ship Thomas Crosby V.

They will live in Prince Rupert when not on board the ship, calling on 55 locations such as lighthouses, logging camps, fishing camps, Indian villages and isolated individuals.

Their schedule calls for a three week period aboard ship with two weeks in Prince Rupert for refuelling and restocking supplies such as food, Christian education materials, books, used clothing, films and other items.

Faris said he and his wife wouldn't be leaving Victoria but for the call to mission work.



—Colonist photo by Ian McKain

## Miss Patmore, Miss Wallace and the Farises at First United

"We totally enjoyed living and working in Victoria," he said. "We could have spent the rest of our lives here. We are particularly grateful for

the loving community of this church."

"We all feel that," said Miss Patmore. "It is a loving church and enabled us to

work in the community. We had a great group gathered round us as our arms and hands."

Miss Wallace said she

would miss the church where she was, to quote the Farises and Miss Patmore "secretary, office manager, archivist and repository of all knowledge."

"It never seemed like work," Miss Wallace said, "because of the people."

Taking her place at the church office is Mrs. Kay Girard. Lawrence Moon of Cadboro Bay United Church will start at First United on July 1 as Christian education director and assistant to the minister.

Miss Patmore's outreach and community service committee, with chairman Mrs. James Gerry, has taken over her duties as their own.

Miss Patmore has a number of hobbies she hopes to have time for now. A rockhound, she has three tumblers to polish stones in her apartment. She will also do some writing. She's had lots of experience after four years on the church's new curriculum program in Toronto and six

years of conducting a mail and radio Sunday school program on the prairies.

Miss Wallace is a graduate architect from the University of Manitoba. She is particularly interested in retirement housing and may get involved in that now that she has the time.

The Farises hope to bring the Thomas Crosby V to Victoria in October for all their friends and associates to see.

932 Balmora | 1701 Quadra



# Pioneer Presbyterian

By Ian Baird

The Hudson's Bay Company was the prevalent force in the early administration of the colony of Vancouver Island and its capital, Victoria. Anglicanism was the official creed of the Hudson's Bay Company although it was certainly in the background. A majority of the leading company men were of Scottish origin and hence Presbyterian. They encompassed a broad view of religion in the new colony, albeit out of necessity.

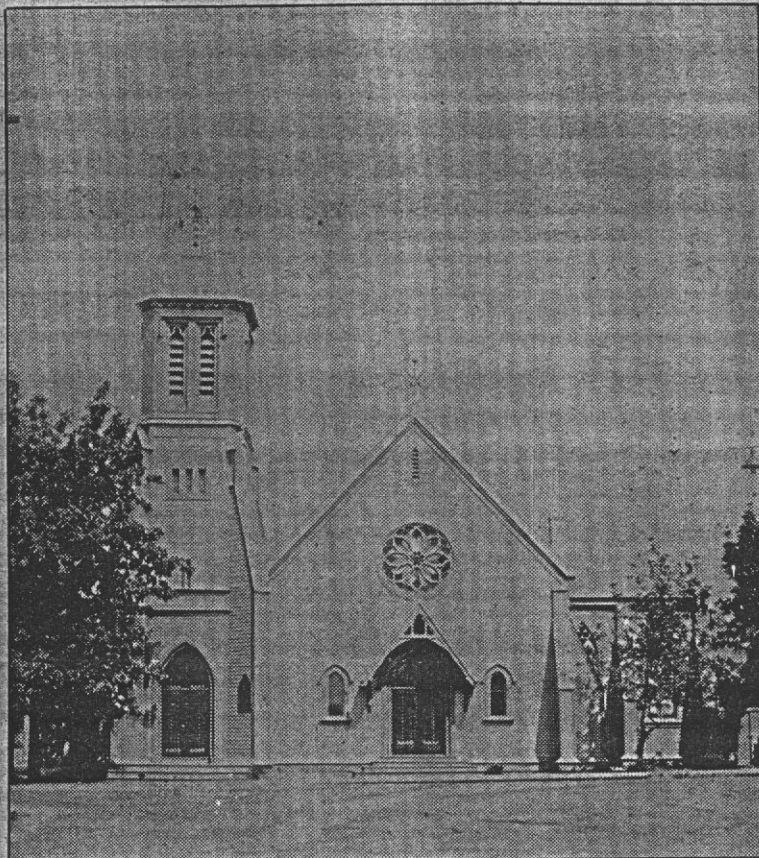
However agitation began amongst leading Presbyterians of the community to obtain their own minister of the gospel. It was difficult due to a number of factors. The more highly settled areas of Ontario and the northwest demanded initial attention. A lack of union among Presbyterians in eastern Canada hindered a concentrated effort to supply western Canada (especially in the area that is now British Columbia). A further factor was that the uncertainty of a gold rush country was not appealing to many missionaries.

Following requests to the parent church and discussion by the colonial committee of the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, an interesting development took place. The Presbyterian Church of Ireland was actively recruiting ministers for the far-flung colonies. It was a result of a decision by the Church of Scotland and its Irish counterpart in 1841 to jointly procure funds for dispatching Presbyterian missionaries to British colonies. As further evidence of Irish Presbyterians being involved in overseas mission work, it is noted that in 1846 the Irish Presbyterians had formed a Colonial Mission of their own and by 1849 had six missionaries in Canada.

The minister who responded to the call was a Reverend John Hall of County Cavan, Ireland. After completing his theological preparation in 1851, his first parish was the congregation of Athy, County Kildare, where he became their minister on March 27, 1852. The records of the church show that Hall labored faithfully for his congregation. One instance of his loyalty particularly stands out. In 1854 the ladies of the congregation gave him a pulpit gown and a gift of 10 sovereigns. It was characteristic of Hall that "he allocated £5 to the purchase of books for a congregational library and £5 towards a stove for the church." Judging from his tenure and efforts, they were happy years at Athy, but he yearned for distant shores. Accordingly he was designated a "missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to British Columbia" on February 6, 1861. His salary was confirmed at £200 per annum to commence from date of passage. After a stormy passage Reverend John Hall arrived via San Francisco on the steamer Cortez on April 14, 1861. Nobody knew of his arrival so Reverend Hall searched the town for Presbyterians and finally he found Alexander Wilson and "a good find it proved to be, for Wilson was one of the pillars of Presbyterianism for many a long year until his death in 1917."

Following examination of his credentials by a group of Presbyterians, Reverend Hall was asked to accept the post of minister.

Services were first held in Moore's Hall on Government Street. "...to Moore's Hall goes the distinction of having the first Presbyterian service in British Columbia on Sunday 21 April, 1861, with an attendance of about 30 people." Moore's Hall was also the gathering place for the first Presbyterian sacrament of the Lord's Supper on Jan. 12, 1862. The sermon was entitled Faith. Seventeen persons comprised the congregation of whom 15 were men. In the following month, on Feb. 3, a meeting was held to organize the Presbyterian congregation. The following prominent citizens were in attendance: Hon. David Cameron, Chief Justice; Rev. John Hall; Messrs. John Wright, architect; Robert Carter; John Bastedo; George H. Sanders, architect; Alexander Wilson; John Martin; Charles Cochrane; Joseph Kilgour; Thomas Mann; George Reid; Simon Anderson and Alexander



First Presbyterian Church, Pandora Avenue.

Victoria City Archives

*J. Quach*

Loury. The Hon. Chief Justice Cameron was elected chairman and a resolution was passed which firmly established Presbyterianism on the shores of British Columbia. It read as follows: "Moved by Alex Loury and seconded by Alex Wilson that this meeting do organize itself into a congregation to be called the first Presbyterian Church of Vancouver Island, and that the Rev. John Hall be requested to act in the meantime as our minister."

In the same year services were moved to the police court room before finally obtaining a permanent place of worship at Smith's Hall. "This was over offices on Government Street and adjoining the old post office building. At the organizational meeting a committee was struck to secure a permanent church site. The committee consisted of Hon. Chief Justice Cameron aided by Messrs. Martin and Wright. A site was selected on the corner of Blanshard and Pandora Streets and purchased for the sum of \$1,100. The cornerstone was laid on April 9, 1863, by Chief Justice Cameron who was presented with a silver trowel to commemorate the occasion. The trowel was designed by a Mr. Watson. Before being lowered into place, a bottle was placed in the stone containing "the records of the congregation, the newspapers of the day, and several coins."

Architects for the church were Wright and Saunders of Victoria who described the church as the early pointed style of Gothic architecture. Wright was the same architect as designed the recently restored Emmanuel Synagogue. Dimen-

sions of the church were 70 by 30, constructed of wood on a stone foundation. A 100-foot tower encompassing the entrance porch was on the southwest corner. The church was completed by November of 1863 at a cost of \$3,120. To accentuate the structure's Scottish origins, a Scottish thistle was embossed on the steeple.

Reverend Hall, having seen what he deemed his duty accomplished, gave intent of resigning his charge in May of 1864. During Reverend Hall's ministry the Church of Scotland sent out Reverend James Nimmo as their missionary. Upon Hall's resignation Reverend Nimmo was withdrawn.

Reverend Hall had seen the Presbyterians of Victoria through the "period of perilous and pioneer life" and established the Church of Scotland firmly in the colony. The congregation's affection was shown by many gifts. Among these was a gold watch suitable inscribed and a purse of £100.

On April 2, 1865, Reverend Hall sailed on the brig Domitila for the Sandwich Islands where he was to have a short sojourn before proceeding to New Zealand. Upon his arrival in New Zealand he ministered with the same crusading zeal he had given in Victoria.

He was succeeded by Reverend Thomas Somerville under whom Presbyterian and Congregationalists united. However difficulties soon arose which were to lead to the formation of a second Presbyterian congregation in Victoria. This church was to be named St. Andrew's Presbyterian.