

The Building of a Church

In 1912, folks decided the Highlands needed a "real" church

The Highlands neighborhood was beginning to sprout on tracts of wild land in 1911 when some of the first residents who had moved from downtown concluded that there was a pressing need for a Union Sunday School.

With the help of Rev. A.W. Coone, a local minister, the first classes were begun in the just completed Highlands School, a two-storey wood frame structure that would itself be replaced in less than a decade by the current brick and stone building.

By July, 1912, just two months after the first class, it was decided a "real" church was needed.

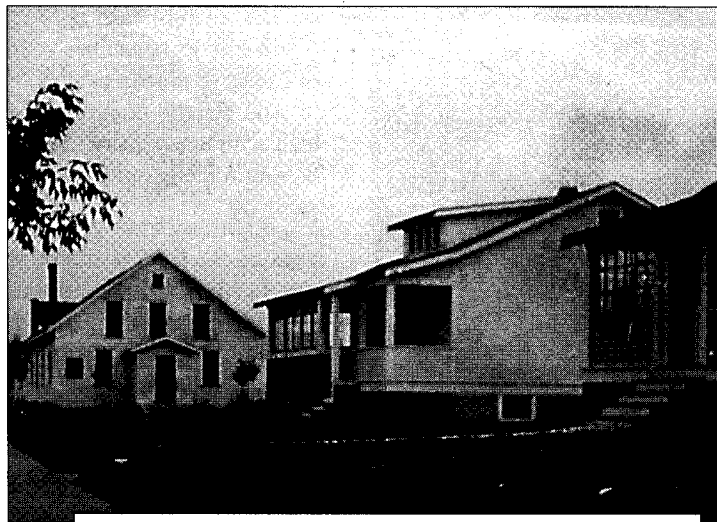
Mr. R.J. Robinson, the first Sunday school superintendent, wrote in a later report: "... the rapid growth of the community warranted the consideration of a church. You are aware of Mr. Magrath's generosity in providing a site in [sic] Houston Street (64th) where a parsonage was built which was ... left unfinished so that it could be used as a meeting place for the Congregation."

In a matter of a few months, parishioner and noted architect E.W. Morehouse designed and supervised construction of the Highlands Methodist Church. The first service was held on December 1, 1912.

The building, at 11317 - 64th Street, still serves as the manse (or parsonage) to this day, although the exterior was radically "modernized" in the 1950s.

In 1912, as people flooded into the new neighborhood, the unfinished parsonage was quickly overwhelmed.

By the summer of 1913 services were moved to the local curling rink, located at the corner of 62nd Street and 113th Avenue for the summer while the house was completed and a new church building quickly erected - all with volunteer labour - at the northwest corner of 64th Street and 113th Avenue.



"Little White Church" circa 1915

The "little white church" served for many years as both a church and Sunday School.

A two-classroom wing was added in 1914, and the little church served through the First World War until 1922, "when ample accommodation became imperative," as a later church history noted.

Sadly, few details are known of the little white church. There is no mention of it in church records, and it is not seen in a 1931 photograph of the site.

But Dorothy Reynolds (11332 - 62nd St.) remembers it. Her father built a house at 11404 - 67th St. in 1913 with lumber

shipped from Ontario, and she attended Sunday School and was baptized by Rev. G.H. Cobblestick, who ministered to the congregation from 1917 to 1921.

She has vivid memories of teaching her first Sunday School class as a teenager in 1925 in the little white church. The building had a second floor gallery across the front (south) end with curtained-off "classrooms" for the children. As part of her job, Dorothy played the church's small foot-pumped organ.

Ted Reynolds, a bachelor, arrived on the scene that year. Ted and Dorothy married in the church in 1931 and remained active in the congregation until the late 1980s.

On August 15, 1923, a cornerstone (still visible on the present church) was laid to mark the official start of construction of a new church with a concrete basement and clinker brick finish.

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SPECIAL EDITION:
The Foundation honours the Highlands United Church on its 85th anniversary with this special edition featuring two reprinted stories from past issues, and many new stories and photographs.

The Building of a Church

Continued from front cover

This was actually phase one of the building program, as the basement, temporarily roofed over, was to be used for church services until enough money was raised to complete the superstructure.

The congregation paid \$9,000 for the new quarters, and the first service was held on December 11, 1923.

The church was renamed Highlands United after the nation-wide union of Methodist, Congregationalist and most Presbyterian churches in 1925. That same year, the congregation decided to complete their church, a "bungalow" style building on the existing basement that would seat 325 parishioners.

Architect W.G. Blakey was hired to design the new structure. He had completed Christ Church (Anglican) in the Oliver district just the year before, and to this day the interiors and finishes of the two buildings remain similar.

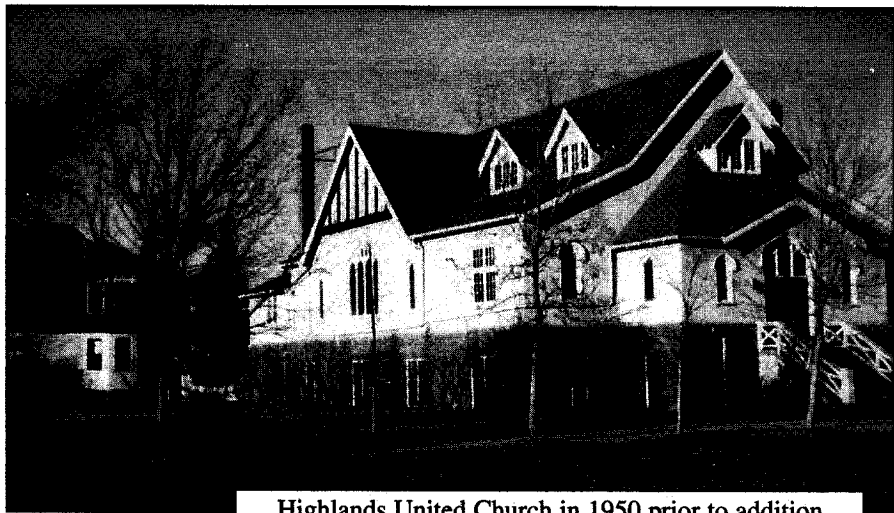
The wood frame, which has timber structure finished on the exterior with painted California stucco and half-timbering, rose quickly.

The interior, with its plain plastered walls and striking dark-stained timber framing and paneled wainscoting was, and is, very reminiscent of the interiors of many of the older homes in the area.

The Gothic arch windows and their magnificent stained glass panels are still in first-class condition. All that for the sum of \$16,000 - pews not included.

The dedication service was held on December 11, 1928, exactly four years after the "basement" was finished.

The oak pews used today were installed in 1934. Despite the Great



Highlands United Church in 1950 prior to addition

Depression, the Ladies Aid raised the \$1,800 to buy them.

The original 1927 building remains little changed to this day, although it is somewhat concealed from the front (south) by the "modern" 1953 addition built to house the influx of parishioners to the Highlands area following the Second World War.

The best view of the original building is from the northwest on 64th Street.

Later modifications to the interior of the sanctuary included the 1948 memorial window, a Neutel pipe organ in 1970 to replace a two-manual Casavant, and the addition of a built-in memorial baptismal font in 1992.

David Brookes

This story first appeared in the Spring 1993 issue of this newsletter