
History of the Rose Valley United Church 1876-1976

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The following was read at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Rose Valley Presbyterian/United Church in 1976. It contains some interesting early facts of the area, as well as names some of the early residents, ministers, etc., from the area.

The church was closed and the building sold in the 1980s and is now used as a summer residence.

History of the Rose Valley United Church 1876-1976

In the year of 1831 a Large band of sturdy Young Highlanders from the Isle of Skye and their families emigrated to Prince Edward Island at a time when Charlottetown was but a small village, some twenty of these Highlanders settled in Lot 67. Two more bands followed in 1840 and 1841 thereby increasing the population by ninety families in the Scotch Settlement as it was called, Later called Rose Valley.

These Settlers were not of the pauper class as many of them were in the upper class with money, as they all paid their full fare, one could say they came from the best blood of Highland Scotland.

When they arrived at lot 67 it was nothing but wilderness unbroken by man, unmolested except by paws of wild animals.

We have gathered here today to mark the 100th Anniversary of this Church building, so another milestone is reached in the Rose Valley Church. Due to a fire some records are not available, so if we have in some way omitted some names, it is not our fault as some of the material has been passed down from mouth to mouth and may have been altered or omitted in the passing.

Their first thoughts were education, both secular and spiritual. The first school was built in Springton, then a few years later a school was built in Rose Valley, but for some time they had no church.

Since Religion played a very important part in the life of the people it was not neglected as they met in the homes for worship and study, one such home was that of the late James Nicholson of Scotch Settlement, and another was that of the late Lodwick MacIntosh.

As early as 1835, once a year a visiting Clergyman from Bedeque or some other part of the Island would come and hold open-air services and on these occasions several children would be baptized.

In 1837, worship was held in Springton School house, a very rough structure at that time.

The population increased and this brought about the building of the first church in the Scotch Settlement, the Community now known as Hartsville.

The early settlers worshipped in this building for 30 years, when it became necessary to establish another Church west of Hartsville, and this building in which we are gathered today was the building which was build 100 years ago. Land for the Church building was given by the late Donald MacDonald.

On March 30th, 1876 the following was published in the Presbyterian Newspaper:

Tenders Wanted

Sealed tenders will be received by subscribers until the 18th day of April for the erection of a new Church near Rose Valley School house. Plans and specifications to be seen at the store of Malcolm Matheson, Breadalbane Railway Station, or at the Enterprise Carriage Factory, Rose Valley.

The names of the two approved securities for the faithful performance of the contract must accompany each tender.

It was interesting to find the following paragraph added to the advertisement, on March 30th, 1876:

For further information apply to any of the undersigned committee: Duncan MacKinley, Murdock H. MacKenzie, Alexander MacLean, Samuel Kennedy or Peter MacDonald.

As far as could be found out the two men responsible for the building of the Church were the late Robert MacDonald and the late Joseph Trowsdale.

Much of their labor, material and time was donated by the settlers and their families who were blessed with pluck and self reliance. These people were endowed with more than ordinary courage and a rich sense of values.

In the year of 1876 the Church at Rose Valley was opened and formed part of the Strathalbyn Congregation which consisted of Hartsville, Rose Valley and Breadalbane, with the church at Rose Valley serving Rose Valley and Breadalbane.

The first minister was Rev. Alexander Campbell, he was followed by Reverends John MacLeod, Malcolm Campbell, James MacLean, A. S. Stewart, John Gillis, Alexander Ferguson, and John McCall.

During the ministry of Rev. John McCall, Rose Valley, Breadalbane and Granville formed the Breadalbane Charge, later Pleasant Valley was added.

Rev. John Sterling succeeded Rev. John McCall and remained until union in 1925.

In 1920 a committee of J.D. Matheson and Neil MacDonald, and the late Roderick Nicholson were appointed to purchase an organ, the one the bought is being used today. The first organist was the late Mrs. Florie Dawson, and some of her first choir were: Florrie and Margaret and Neil MacDonald, J.W. MacKenzie, Malcolm MacKenzie, Angus MacKinnon, Kate Belle MacKenzie, Archie Gillis, Mr. & Mrs. J.R. White, Mather Matheson. Prior to this

the people were led in the singing of the Psalms by: Neil MacKay, J.D. Matheson, Malcolm MacKenzie, and Duncan MacDonald.

In 1923, still the horse and buggy days, the men of the congregation donated lumber and labor, erected a horse shed which was designed by Malcolm A. Matheson, a shed 80 by 40 feet, completed and paid for in one year. On a Sunday the church as well as the shed would be filled to capacity. In the summer the shed was cleaned and used to hold ice cream socials and Sunday School picnics. These activities were well attended not only by the locals but people from far and wide would gather on these and other social occasions for fellowship and fun.

When the church was first built each family had their own pew, which each family paid a nominal fee, which was used for maintenance, this practice was used until one evening the minister noticed a fellow sitting in the balcony all by himself with plenty of empty seats in the main part of the church, the young man had to pat his legs to keep up circulation, the minister noticed this and said never again would one have to sit in his own pew while there were plenty of empty seats elsewhere. One cannot say just when the practice of paying for your own pew ended, but long after the practice stopped one could look down and they would be sitting in their regular place.

At first the seats consisted of blocks of wood with planks laid across them with no backs. At Communion service the common cup was used for some years, but for sanitary practices a communion set with individual glasses was donated by the Family of Peter and Flora MacDonald.

Three men from Rose Valley Church entered the ministry and were ordained to preach the word and administer the Sacraments. The late Rev. Donald Morrison Matheson, the late Rev. Angus Matheson, and Dr. M.C. MacDonald. Apart from these men there have been many faithful men and women who have served the church faithfully as elders, Sunday School teachers, organists, and others, who have given their time and talents faithfully for inspirational leadership, to list them all would be impossible.

The ministers serving the congregation since Union are:

Reverends Thomas Palethorpe, David Coburn, Arthur Wallace, Edward Milley, D.J. Morrison, Blair MacPhail, Anthony Ware, Thomas Evans, J.J. MacLeod, Bill Hare, John Wharry, and our present Rev. Wilfred Wilson.

During the years of 1968 and 1969, we were finding it difficult to maintain a self sustaining charge, conversations were carried on with Cavendish Charge, who also found it difficult to maintain its status, as to the possibility of coming together and forming one pastoral Charge.

It was carried out on an experimental basis for one year on June 30, 1970, it officially became on Charge. Prior to amalgamation, there were four churches on each Charge, and with the amalgamation, North Granville of the Breadalbane Charge and North Rustico of the Cavendish Charge were closed, leaving six churches for one minister, with service every Sunday in each Church, with the exception of July and August, due to the heavy influx of tourists there would be a service in the Cavendish Church every Sunday with extra help needed.

Like all marriages there are growing pains when two people come together, so there have

been growing pains with the amalgamation, but with the co-operation of all concerned and the work of the Holy Spirit the amalgamation is working well, and each one must continue to work in order that the work of the Church as a whole can be accomplished.

In 1973 there was a reunion of the young people of 35 years ago, with a former minister as a guest speaker, the Rev. Blair MacPhail, when the church was filled to capacity; a picnic was held following the service on the grounds of Mr. Gordon MacKenzie.

Let us keep abreast of the great march of progress which is going on around us. May we be armed with the word of God in our hands; as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, with this we can fearlessly and resolutely face the great challenge of the church. May our fortune reflect honor and renown on the noble ancestry from which we have descended. Let us go forward with a song upon our lips and joy within our hearts and with patience and perseverance of our ancestors who left us with a great heritage.

Dave Hunter and The Island Register: HTML and Graphics© 2002

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