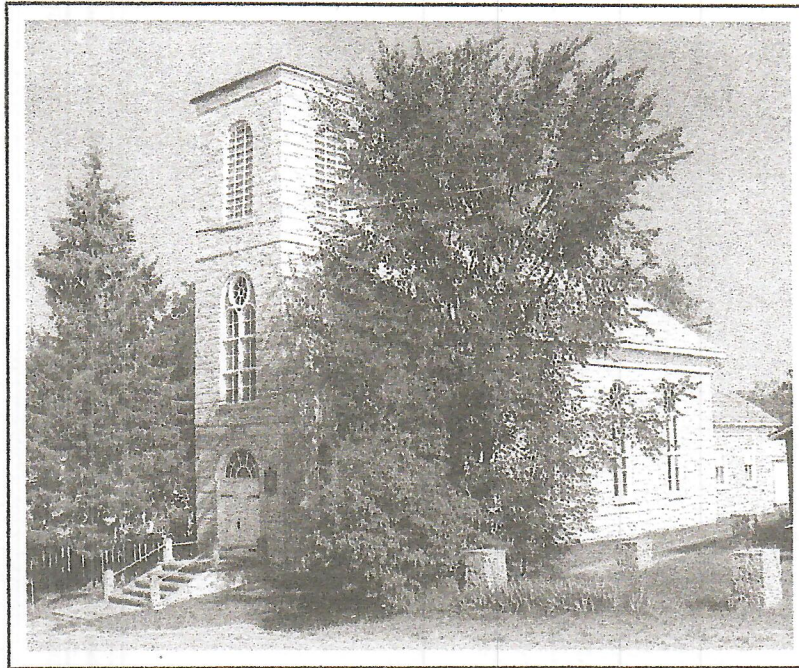




Originally compiled by Mrs. J. H. Roberts 1975
Reprinted and updated by Betty Lalonde 2002

**HISTORY OF THE
MARBLE CHURCH
of
BRIDGEWATER
(ACTINOLITE)**

1864 - 2002

*This is the Church.
Kyle was christened
in.*

Jen & Shanna married here.

Actinolite United Church

BACKGROUND

The twenty-first of June in the year 1864 is a red letter day in the history of the village of Bridgewater, for it witnessed the laying of the corner stone of the beautiful Marble Church which, despite the calamities which have fallen upon the village, still stands serene and firmly planted as the rocks and hills of which it seems to be a part.

The history of the church is so closely interwoven with the history of the village that it would be almost impossible to disassociate them. There are few communities in which the interests of Church and community were so nearly identical, and the Church stands a memorial to the devotion, piety and high ideals not only of the builders, but of those who so courageously carried on in spite of adversity and have upheld the traditions of its founders, even to this day.

The village was founded 1854 by the late Senator Flint, not a Senator then, but a business man seeking opportunity. The lovely Scootamatta River with its narrow gorge and foaming rapids, its wooded slopes and valleys evidently captured the imagination of Mr. Flint, for he decided to build a village in this delightful spot, and make it the headquarters of a lumber business.

The site chosen was admirable for his purpose. The source of the Scootamatta is many miles northward flowing through wooded country it joins the Moira River about two miles south of the village forming a continuous waterway to the Bay of Quinte and the City of Belleville. Here was a means of transportation for the logs – chiefly pine – which would be cut during the autumn and winter, drawn by horses or oxen, and landed on the ice to wait for the spring break-up. The river, literally full of logs – expert loggers directing their course – the foaming rapids – the log “jams” – their safe arrival in Belleville – the problem of marketing – these, no doubt formed the picture visualized by Mr. Flint as he drove northward on his tour of inspection of the site of “Bridgewater”.

In order to carry out his plan, Mr. Flint purchased a large tract of land along the banks of the Scootamatta, and here he built a modern industrial village. He utilized the available water power for turning the wheel of industry. The village thrived and Bridgewater was the hub of the surrounding country, supporting the necessities and luxuries of life otherwise unobtainable nearer than Belleville. A daily coach joined the village with that city.

The County of Hastings Directory of that period supplies us with the following information regarding the village. Mr. Flint built a grist mill, a saw-mill, a sash and door factory and a tannery.

He also erected a three-storey boarding house containing seventy bed rooms, a large dining hall and sample rooms for travelling salesmen. He also owned a two-storey general store where four clerks and a book-keeper were employed. The store was lighted by gas produced from Petroleum. The lumber camp boasted a farm which supplied a large part of their food. In additions we find the following factories and their founders listed:

Furniture Factory – Oliver Frost

Foundry – Wm. Garrett

Axe Factory – Harry Warren

Hardware Store – Josiah Turner

Woolen Factory – Mr. Wolfe

In addition to the industries mentioned many tradesmen established themselves here. There were shoe-makers, carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, a tailor, a sadler, a tinsmith, and a wagon-maker.

There was a limestone quarry and a lime-kiln. Later, Mr. Turner sold his house to Mr. J.H. Roberts, who opened another general store. In addition there were families of those employed by Mr. Flint; a Postmaster and the farmers who settled in the surrounding country. A small professional group, included the Minister, two teachers and a doctor whose practice extended from Roslin to Flinton and required the use of six horses. Such was the vigorous community which undertook the building of the Marble Church.

CHURCH The site of the church was the gift of the Hon. Mr. Flint. The sum of \$2,260.00 was subscribed in advance. Mr. Flint headed the list with a donation of \$1,000.00. The community was in fact indebted to Mr. Flint for his generous contribution to the cost of the Church, and for his great interest in the erection of the building.

The laying of the corner stone on June 21st, 1864 brought visitors from far and near. The service was conducted by the Reverend R. Robinson, by reading a hymn, a prayer and a lesson from the Liturgy, appropriate for the occasion.

The report of the committee was read by Rev. M. Burwash. It contained the names of the Governor-General of Canada, the Delegates and Co-delegates of the Belleville District; The Minister of the Hungerford Circuit for the past and present year; the members of the Municipal Council; the Trustee and Building Committee of the Church; the Architect and Contractor; the Officers of the Sabbath School and the Subscribers to the Trustee Fund with the amounts of their donation. Music was supplied by the Belleville Choir.

The assembly was addressed by the Rev. J. Douse. He congratulated the people on their pious initiative and said that the Church

was erected for the most important of all purposes. Here the great truths of the Gospel would be proclaimed and this Church would be the centre for religious life for the surrounding country.

The Rev. N. Burwash then spoke. He emphasized the importance of Churches, and public worship to the secular progress of a new country. He felt it a matter of personal privilege to be permitted to participate in the blessings of such a happy day.

The Hon. Billa Flint then informed the audience that the box about to be deposited in the corner stone contained the following documents:

The Report of the Committee (just read);
The Christian Guardian of June 15th;
The Hastings Chronicle of June 17th;
Belleville Independent of June 14th;
Toronto Globe of June 20th;
Kingston British America of June 18th;
Picton Times of June 14th;
Montreal Witness of June 18th;
Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference of 1863;
Report of the Wesleyan Bible Society and British, American and Canadian coins.

The box was then laid in the cavity prepared for it.

Mr. Flint then addressed Miss Holton of Belleville as follows:
"The Trustees of the New Wesleyan Church have deputed to me the pleasure of presenting to you as a mark of their confidence and esteem the trowel and mallet to be used by you in the laying of this cornerstone."

The trowel was of solid silver and bore the following inscription: "Presented to Miss Eliza Jane Holton on the occasion of laying the cornerstone of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Bridgewater, June 21, 1864." Miss Holton proceeded with the trowel to lay the mortar, after which the stone was lowered to its place "properly square and level". Miss Holton gave the stone three raps with the mallet while the following words were said, "In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost we lay this cornerstone for the foundation of a house to be builded and consecrated to the service of Almighty God, according to the rites and usages of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Amen".

The Rev. N. Burwash followed with prayer, the Doxology and Benediction.

The mason work of the building was done by Mr. Francis Tucker and the joiner work by W. Kerr, both of Bridgewater. The architect was Mr. A.J. Stap.

The painting was done by Wm. and Arthur Wensley of Belleville.

A fine toned bell was installed in the tower and an excellent organ in the choir loft. The seating capacity was 500. It required nearly two years to complete the work of the building.

The Belleville Intelligencer of March 7, 1866, contained an account of the dedication under the following headline:

"Dedication of New Wesleyan Church at Bridgewater, March 4, 1866"

Bridgewater is said to be a model village and the Church ought to be a model Church. This last is generally admitted. The site is well chosen and the Church has a fine appearance as one enters the village from the South by what is called the Belleville Road. The dedicatory services which took place on Sunday, March 4, by Rev. G.R. Sanderson, Chairman of Belleville District and Rev. J. Gemley of Kingston District.

The morning Service was preached by Rev. Mr. Sanderson. His text was Isaiah. Chapter 26 "In that day shall the song be sung in the Land of Judah. We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks". He likened the Church of God to a strong city dealing with his subject under the heads of:

1. Its Amplitude – embracing not only all true believers of every sect and creed but the spirits of just men made perfect.
2. Its Order – Its Author being the God of Order.
3. Its Magnificence – consisting in the purity of its membership
4. Its Strength which has been tested in all ages of its history.

The afternoon service was conducted by Rev. J. Gemley whose sermon was based on 1st Chronicles Chapter 29, latter part of verse 5 – "And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" was rich in historical and scriptural information and delivered in his usual eloquent manner.

The Rev. A.R. Sanderson officiated in the evening and preached a most interesting sermon from Luke 15 verse 11-24 the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The administration of the Sacrament closed the service of the day.

The attendance throughout was good and not withstanding the severely cold weather and bad roads many were present from a distance.

Altogether the day was a memorable one to the people of the Village and to all who participated in the service."

The Marble Church was one of the most beautiful of its kind in Canada. The white marble from which its stones were hewn was quarried only a stones throw from the site of the Church. The walls are twenty-three feet in height from floor to ceiling on a base sixty-eight feet in length by thirty-nine and a half feet in breadth. A Sunday School room on the rear measures 28 by 30 ft.

The tower in front is 15 ft. square and the tower and spire (the latter since destroyed by fire) rose to a height of 101 ft. The inside had a gallery, choir and organ. The seats were cushioned and the aisles carpeted. Cushions surrounded the Communion Rail at the time when people still received Communion at the rail from a common cup. True to the tradition of the Wesleyan Methodism, the Class Meetings, the weekly Prayer Meeting and the Sabbath School flourished, exercising a powerful influence for good in the community.

On the 24th of May 1889 a disastrous fire destroyed the greater part of the village. The following quotations taken from the Belleville Intelligencer in the issues of May 25 and subsequent dates give an idea of the disaster, as it was reported at that time.

Daily Intelligencer, May 25, 1889.

"Bridgewater Burned" Loss \$50,000 to \$70,000. Insurance \$2,800."

"The business part of the village of Bridgewater was almost entirely consumed. Twenty dwellings, three stores, post-office and the fine Methodist Church were consumed."

It was learned that those who were left homeless were sheltered in the parsonage and in Mr. Robert's home. The latter place was saved after considerable difficulty.

Issue of May 27

"The calamity which befell the village of Bridgewater on Tuesday last is of so severe a character as to arouse the warmest sympathies and to call for the active assistance of the people of Belleville. The village was swept by fire as detailed elsewhere and the buildings were reduced to ashes. The residents of Madoc took prompt Action. On Saturday they raised the sum of one hundred dollars, provided a supply of provisions and sent them to the desolated Bridgewater and declared their readiness to give further assistance. Belleville is also ready and willing to help, public feeling being happily expressed in the following telegram dispatched this morning by the Mayor.

Belleville, May 27, 1889

To Hon. Billa Flint, Bridgewater

Please ask Rev. Wilson and Mr. Roberts to meet with you and advise us. Belleville is prepared to help the sufferers. Say if help is needed and what you Want."

(signed) W. Jeffers Diamond, Mayor

Issue of May 30, 1889

The citizens of Belleville have subscribed handsomely for so worthy an object. The amount realized being \$300. This with the \$200. Grant by the City Council was taken to Bridgewater on Wednesday by Messers L.W. Yeomans and W.F. Jones who will also inquire into the condition of those in distress.

A letter has been received from the Reeve of Elzevir from which it has been learned that the Township Council has been called together to take action in the matter and a grant will be forthcoming from them. The distressed are those being provided for as speedily as possible."

The destructive fire was a blow from which Bridgewater never recovered. Most of the dwellings destroyed belonged to the estate of Hon. Senator Flint. The buildings that escaped were the school, townhall, parsonage, the Robert's home, the Kerr home, and a few others the names of whose owners is not available. Fortunately the grist and saw mills belonging to Mr. Flint were saved.

All that remained of the Marble Church, the pride of the village were the walls.

Nothing daunted, the work of re-building the church was soon begun. A committee composed of J.H. Roberts Sr., E. Harrison and R.W. Miller and through the co-operation of the comparatively few remaining people the work was carried to completion. The amount of insurance (\$200) was inadequate to restore the Church to its former beauty. The burden of meeting mortgages, interests and payments was added to a dwindling congregation. However, the debt was wiped out in 1902.

It was indeed an achievement that the remnant of the congregation had the courage and spirit to undertake, in the face of all their adversity to restore the Church to its place as the centre of the community for future generations.

It still stands serene after 77 (111) years despite the calamities that have befallen the village. The C.P.R. passed by; the lumber industry declined; the fire swept away pleasant homes and prosperous businesses, but the business of God survived. The people rallied their small forces to the task of restoring their place of worship. The Marble Church still stands. The names of its founders are only a memory by the spirit will live from generation to generation.

FOUNDERS of the MARBLE CHURCH

Bridgewater/Actinolite

Can you find the name of an ancestor here?

Hon. Billa Flint	\$1,000.	Chas. Merryday	\$20.
Thomas S. Bentley	100.	John Raymond	20.
James Harrison	100.	Silas Winter	20.
Dr. Andrew Higgenbottom	100.	Elisha Langman	18.
Wm. Garrett	60.	Edward Cronk	10.
Samuel Crawford	25.	Francis Empey	10.
Geo. Dickson	25.	Jeremiah Ferguson	10.
Joseph Frost	25.	Thomas Houston	10.
Oliver Frost	25.	Jas. Mairs	10.
W.B. Kemp	25.	Alfred McCallum	10.
Wm. Kerr	25.	John McNaughton	10.
Henry Klienstuber	25.	George Wolfe	10.
Frances Lawrence	25.	Chas. Gunyea	8.
Walter Meacham	25.	John Credicott	5.
John McCammon	25.	Alfred Hardy	5.
Duncan McCallum	25.	Jas. Hardy	5.
Robert Nelson	25.	Jas. Houston	5.
Wm. Rath	25.	I. LaFontaine	5.
H. Rath	25.	G. Lindsay	5.
J.W. Robinson	25.	Robert Record	5.
Charles K. Thompson	25.	Daniel Sedgewick	5.
Francis Tucker	25.	Wm. Walker	5.
Geo. W. Wood	25.	F. Hott	4.

\$2,164.00

Population of Village at that time, 311.

TO WHOM WE ARE INDEBTED FOR THIS HISTORY

NOTE 1 - The above history of the Marble Church was compiled by Mrs. J.H. Roberts. The information regarding the laying of the corner stone, the fire and the Dedication was obtained from the files of the Belleville Intelligence through the efforts of the Rev. E.D. Snelgrove who searched the files and copied the quotations. Some of the information was recalled from conversations of the older residents who have heard the story by word of mouth from the villagers of early days.

Through the courtesy of the Misses Thompson of Ottawa, former residents of Queensboro, information was obtained by them from the County of Hastings Directory of that period and was kindly contributed.

NOTE 2 Emma C. Roberts

Rev. E.D. Snelgrove will be the Guest Speaker at the 111th. Anniversary of the Bridgewater Marble Church on June 20th this year (1975).

It is also the 50th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada.

M. Augusta McNaughton Due to illness unable to be with us.

Reprinted & updated by Betty Lalonde, 2002