

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

P.O. BOX 284 ORBOST VIC 3888



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NEWSLETTER

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HISTORY OF THE ORBOST PRESBYTERIAN/UNITING CHURCH

BY MARGARET SMITH



Above: OPENING DAY - January 9th 1898.
Back L-R: Alaster Cameron, Peter Cameron, R. P. Cameron, George Hossack, John Watt snr., John Watt jnr.

Front: Cr John Cameron, Hugh Duncan Cameron (child), Hugh Cameron, Margaret Cameron (Donald), Ruth Cameron (Watson), Penuel Cameron (Hossack), Rachel Hossack (Irvine), Charlotte Hossack (Cameron), Jessie Hossack (child), James Hossack jnr., Penuel Hossack (Findlay).

The first Presbyterian Church service was conducted at the Orbost Station Homestead in 1885, during a visit by Sir William Clarke, who was accompanied by two ministers. The organist was resident Grace Jennings Carmichael. Services were later held in Mr J. W. Borland's shop and the Mechanics Hall.

In 1887, the land on which the church now stands was purchased from Mr James Hossack snr, for £50 (\$100). The trustees were Mr John, Peter and Hugh Cameron, Mr John A Watt and Mr James Hossack Jnr. Timber from Richardson's Tabbara Mill was used by builder Mr R. P. Cameron and at a cost of £311.3.7 (\$622) the church was opened January 9th 1898.

By 1889, it was agreed a **Manse** was needed, this too was built by Mr R. P. Cameron. Several rooms were let out to Dr Kerr and later Mr. Basil Hooper. A stable containing two stalls and a chaff-house, with a loft above was later built by Messrs. Pleydell and Rodwell. The current Manse was built in 1964, on a block owned by the Voight family. The Voights owned a small shop often frequented by school



Corner of Tennis Court and Mrs Voight's Shop and dwelling.

children in the early 1950s, which later became a dwelling for Mrs Voight. Tennis courts adjoined the block, which were used for the first men's night basketball, under the leadership of Mr Dave Hillyear.

The first **Communion** service was celebrated on 17th July 1892. Those present were: Messrs. James Hossack snr & jnr, George Hossack, J. Baird, D. R. Morris, Alex, John, & Robert Cameron, Mesdames James and Robert Cameron, Mr and Mrs John Russell, Mrs Collinson, Mr Lindsay, Mr John Rowe, Mrs M McKinnon, Mrs Hillyard, Mr George Temple, Miss Maggie Temple, Miss Irwin, Mr John Irvine, Mr Farquhar, Miss Farquhar, Mrs McInnes, Mr McCosh, Mr Hocking and Mrs Beattie.



ORBOST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - opened in 1898.

The timber for the building was cut at Richardson's Tabbara Mill. Mr. R. P. Cameron was the builder. The timber for the pulpit was brought from the New Hebrides by the Rev. Alexander (Sandy) Morton.

In 1906, the ladies of the church formed a **Sewing Guild**. Those participating were: Mesdames James Hossack, James Cameron, Shortell, Battley, Stirling, Parsons, Royce and Munro, Misses Jean Munro, Irving, Patterson, Draffin and Gray. The meetings were held every Friday, initially in the Manse before moving to a room at the Post Office.

Rev. Alexander Morton earned great respect from the Orbest community, during his ministry here between 1894-1904. He brought with him from the New Hebrides timber which was used for the pulpit. Affectionately known as "Sandy" Morton, he was very friendly and endeavoured to reach all his bush parishioners, often on horseback. He was known up the Gelantipy Valley as an itinerant Preacher with a difference, he often doubled as a dentist, who was quite adept at pulling teeth, often with a pair of pliers.

Sunday School was first taught in private homes. The first recorded classes were in 1904 by Rev. Gray assisted by his daughter, Mr & Mrs Rowe, Mr & Mrs Battley, Mr Hossack, Munro, Draffin, Rowe, Hocking and De Forest. A small room was built beside the church in 1916, often referred to as the "Kiosk". In the 1930's Mrs Belle (Frank) Richardson began a school in New Town, in the home of Mrs Miles, as the numbers swelled the classes moved to the verandah and were assisted by:

Rotha Scharlemann (Mrs Ross), Margaret Davies (Morrison) and Jean Wellsmore (Miles). A small church was later built in Bowers Street where the minister was Rev. Bill Miller.

Sunday School Picnics were first held at Ewings Marsh and on the paddle steamer "Curlip". By the 1950s picnics were mostly held at Mr Hugh Adams property at Brodrigg. Over the next ten years picnics were progressively held at the Marlo Race course, the Warm Holes at Lakes Entrance, Cross's Beach and Lake Tyers.



SUNDAY SCHOOL GROUP - in front of Church during the Rev. Alexander Morton's ministry.



SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNIC - early 1950s at Mr Hugh Adams' property, Brodribb.

L-R: Joan Wehner, _____, Sheila Briggs, Lil White, Margo Rosser, Dawn Smithers, Beryl Hooper, Mrs Somerville, Rene Smith.

A big occasion always enjoyed was the **Harvest Festival** concluding with a Concert. The hall was always beautifully decorated with local produce, and the church decorated with autumn leaves and huge bowls of flowers. "The concerts were always tops", and lots of laughs. Some of the stars were Eric Wehner, Faye & Norma Williams, Jean & Jack Ralston, Florrie Sheills and Dolly De Piazza. The choir was conducted by Alex Cameron assisted by his sisters Pen and Flora.

The union of the **Methodist and Presbyterian Churches** was fraught with difficulties and misunderstandings. However, Sunday School was the first to amalgamate, with a decline in attendance during the early 1960s and a shortage of teachers in both churches, the move was essential. During the following years the Methodist Church lost several key members and the decision was taken to close the church. So on Sunday 29th November 1970, a reciprocal co-operation service was held to celebrate the union.



At the Opening and Dedication of St. Andrew's Church, Orbost, on Saturday, 2nd May, 1964.

L-R: Nance Jennings (Gilbert), Faye Moss (Williams), Norma Cooney (Williams), Rev. Les Hatton. Mr George Perry is in the background.

Another milestone in the Presbyterian's life was the current **Uniting Church**. As far back as 1945 discussions and fund raising took place with a new church in view. The tender of £9,103 (\$18,206) was accepted by Mr A. F. Cameron in 1963. The building committee was Messrs: Ray Smith, Hugh Adams snr., and Eric Wehner, whilst the furnishing committee consisted of Mesdames Pen Richardson, Norma Cooney, Mary Wehner and Mrs Haywood.

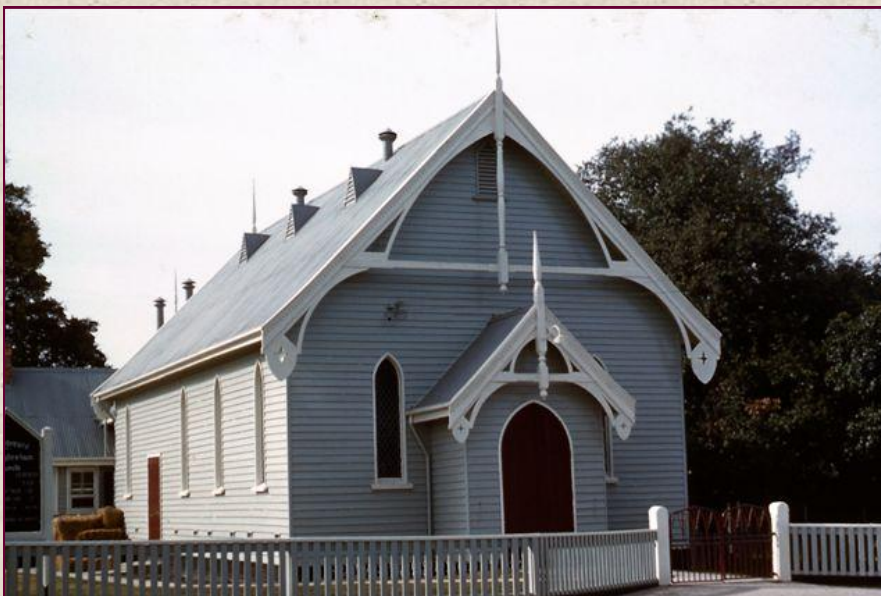
It was 1948 (after World War 2) that the Presbyterians held their first "**Rose Show**" in the tiny building beside the church. Jean

Leatham (Spink), a choir member, recalls what dressy events these were, with lavish afternoon teas. The next venue was the Mechanics Hall, which was also used by the Anglican Church for its public events. Who can forget the lucky dips, toffee apples and cakes galore.

Uniting Church.

It was not until 1977, ten days before the Inauguration Day of the Uniting Church in Australia, that Orbest was welcomed into their fold.

AMEN



Above: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - early 1960s.



Above: CHURCH CONCERT - 1960s

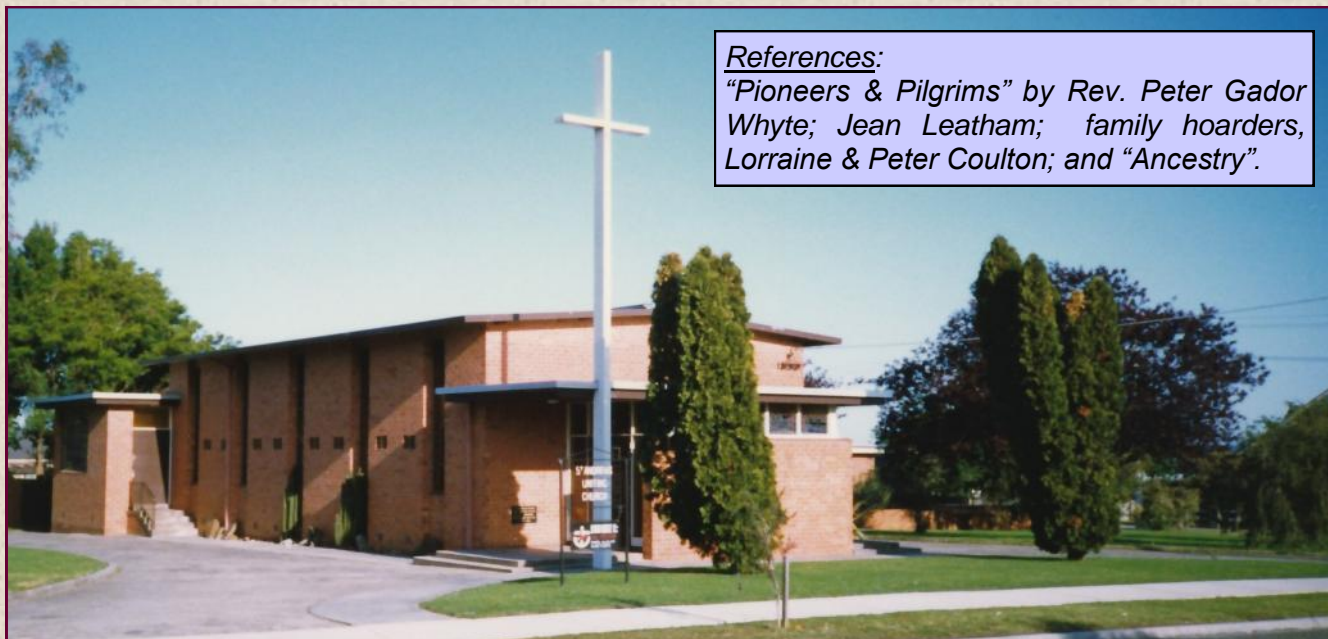
Back L-R: _____, Mrs Napier, Thora Jones, _____.
 Front: Norma Cooney, Jack Ralston, Fay Moss, Eric Wehner.



Above: GROUP IN FRONT OF CHURCH - with the Tennis Court and St James Anglican Church in the background.

Back L-R: Max Herrmann, Pearl Rankin, Jack Ralston, _____.
 Front: Christine Baker, Margaret Smith.

Below: St. Andrew's Uniting Church - September 1991



References:
"Pioneers & Pilgrims" by Rev. Peter Gador Whyte; Jean Leatham; family hoarders, Lorraine & Peter Coulton; and *"Ancestry"*.