

## COMMENTS: VIRTUAL TOUR OF RESTORATION SITES IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

1. Welcome to our virtual tour of Restoration sites in Southwestern Ontario. This journey will challenge our imaginations!
2. “Virtual reality” is the achievement of the computer age. Of course it is modeled after and was preceded by the imagination of the human mind! Our challenge will be, through our imagination, to transport ourselves to those by-gone days, to visualize in our minds the scenes and experiences of early settlers, and to summon up in our hearts the aspirations of those early folk who may well be our spiritual ancestors. And because ours is a “virtual” tour, we are able to escape the gravitational pull of place-to-place travel, allowing us to journey chronologically through time.
3. To return to the purity of the teaching and practice of the early church has been the motivation of men and women down through the centuries. The aim has been to achieve “the ideal of true and authentic New Testament Christianity and the primitive church of the apostolic age” (Hunter). The progress of Restoration insight from the Highlands of Scotland to the Lowlands of southwestern Ontario is the stirring story of ordinary people, stalwart pioneers in early Ontario, searching out the wisdom of the scriptures in the attempt to fashion their spiritual lives by the Word of God.
4. Our tour begins in Scotland!
5. And taking advantage of our imagination’s virtual reality, we whisk away to the Highlands of Scotland to begin our tour.
6. To Scotland, the land of inventors, common sense philosophers, and significant religious movements!
7. Of particular importance to our ongoing journey is the region of Argyllshire, or the County of Argyll.
8. The important backdrop to Restoration activity in Southwestern Ontario is found in the religious movements and the people located in Scotland that had direct links with developments in our selected region. Two developments affect our journey in important ways: The “Highland Clearances” that spurred migration, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelical revival of Great Britain that advanced the developing Restoration.
9. Ontario had their origins in Argyllshire. The “Highland Clearances” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century came about during the troubled times following the Jacobite Rebellion, from 1725 onward. New breeds of sheep on the land were more desirable to the clan chieftains than unruly Highlanders. The land was cleared of “crofters,” who were expected to settle in coastal villages to fish and harvest kelp, or to emigrate. A mass emigration came in 1792, known as the “Year of the Sheep,” with many Scots settling in the Carolinas, the Maritimes, and Upper Canada. As we will note later, large numbers of settlers coming to Southwestern Ontario had their origins in Argyllshire.
10. The 18<sup>th</sup> century Evangelical Revival in Great Britain was felt in Scotland as “free church” movements broke away from the National Church of Scotland and as the

“Methodist” movement led by John Wesley was felt in Scotland—for example, George Whitefield preached to a gathering of 30,000 at Cambuslang, near Glasgow, in 1742.

11. Our interest is drawn, particularly, to the leadership of John Glas, a Presbyterian minister who turned to independency, beginning in 1725. Glas rejected the “national covenants” upon which the Presbyterian Church was the Established church of Scotland. As a result of his serious study of the scriptures, he encouraged the development of independent congregations that were to be led by elders, participation in the Lord’s supper weekly, and acceptance of the scriptures as their sole guide. Glas appealed for the “restitution” of primitive Christianity, as the Anabaptists had.

12. The Glasite movement was continued and expanded through the efforts of Robert Sandeman, son-in-law of John Glas. Sandemanian churches were established in England and New England, and in Halifax in Nova Scotia.

13. The tenets of the Glasite-Sandemanian movement were preserved and advanced by the Scotch Baptist fellowship that began in 1765. Their important contribution was the addition of believer’s baptism to the practices of the Glasites. Archibald McLean led this fellowship until his death in 1812.

14. The Baptists churches after the English order began their activities in Scotland with the baptism in 1801 of Christopher Anderson, a Scotsman who associated with English Baptists studying at the University of Edinburgh. The first English Baptist congregation in Scotland was established by James Lister in Glasgow, also in 1801. The Baptists of the English order in Scotland became the dominant Baptist group in Scotland as the 19<sup>th</sup> century advanced.

15. A further influence of importance in our background examination is that of Robert and James Haldane, wealthy laymen of the Church of Scotland who dedicated their lives to a spiritual renewal of their countrymen and to evangelism. Eventually separating from the established church, they planted independent churches and established schools of evangelism— training over 300 men and supporting their preaching activities. Their activities began in 1797, and James engaged in a preaching tour in 1798 that took him into Argyllshire. The Haldanes accepted baptism at the hands of the Scotch Baptists in 1808. Gradually, the three strains of Baptists in Scotland, the Scotch, the Scottish, and the Haldanean drew together, with an agreement of union reached in 1869.

16. Upper Canada. Our tour gets under way in the Crinan Canal area of Argyllshire.

17. Influences of the Scotch Baptists, Haldanes, and Scottish Baptists converged in this area of Argyllshire at the turn of the century.

18. In the Knapdale area lived John McKellar who may have been influenced by James Haldane in his early evangelistic endeavors, and who was said to have preached “refomatory doctrine” as early as 1798.

19. David Oliphant Jr. wrote concerning John McKellar in his *Living Laborer*, Jan. 1880, 5: “Fourteen years previous to the reformatory work of these servants of the Lord in America [i.e. Thomas and Alexander Campbell in 1812, thus 1798], a worshipper in Argyllshire, Scotland, who had from infancy been instructed in the National Church, began to distinguish between the light that shone upon him from the capital of his native land, and the light he was privileged to receive from Jerusalem. With a few kindred

spirits, in 1798, the reformer in the Scottish highlands opened the inspired volume and taught men to worship according to the pattern on Mount Zion—a pattern given to workmen by the Holy Spirit. This fellow citizen with the saints crossed the Atlantic, and with his family adjusted himself in Aldborough, Ontario, in the year 1818, and publicly pleaded reformation...”

20. Donald McVicar, who had trained in the Haldane school, evangelized in the Crinan Canal area at the turn of the century, drawing together a group of believers. In this, McVicar was encouraged by a fellow and former Haldanean student, Christopher Anderson. Anderson had been removed from the Haldane operation when he accepted baptism at the hands of the English Baptists, in 1801.

21. McVicar was subsequently convinced to become a Baptist, as well, and was baptized by Anderson. The group that he had drawn together subsequently became a Baptist congregation at Bellanoch.

22. Anderson further convinced McVicar that he should become an ordained Baptist minister, and McVicar accepted ordination in 1805.

23. In 1814, McVicar turned the Bellanoch congregation over to the care of Dugald Sinclair who in turn, in the next year, moved it to nearby Lochgilphead. McVicar then migrated to Canada, arriving at Aldborough Township around 1818.

24. Dugald Sinclair, from Bellanoch, and thus, no doubt, under the early influence of McVicar, had been baptized in Glasgow by James Lister in 1801. Sinclair was thus one of the earliest Scottish Baptists after the English order in Scotland. He went to England to study at a Baptist college, then returned to Scotland in 1810 and served for a number of years as a missionary to the “Highlands and the Islands,” serving with great distinction.

25. Preaching in the Lochgilphead area, Dugald Sinclair baptized 20- year old James Black, of the Kilmartin Parish, in Loch Awe in 1817.

26. James Black migrated to Aldborough Township with his family in 1820. In 1831 Dugald Sinclair and his young wife, Christina, and three children, and 16 members of the Lochgilphead church, more than half of the membership, immigrated to Upper Canada. Lobo Township, Middlesex County was the destination for the Sinclairs.

27. Before arriving in Canada, a side excursion takes us from Scotland to America. Students of Restoration in Canada recognize that influences arriving from south of the border with increasing strength as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, helped to shape the Canadian Restoration experience. In preparation for this part of the southwestern Ontario story, a brief review is important.

28. Thomas Campbell, a Scots Presbyterian pastor serving in northern Ireland was exposed to the preaching of such British evangelicals as Rowland Hill, brought to Scotland and Ireland by the Haldanes. Campbell worked for union among the fractured groups of the Presbyterian Church of his day. Poor health took him to America in 1807 where he settled in Washington, Pennsylvania south of Pittsburgh. He again worked for unity among his fellow Presbyterians, only to be ejected from his directing synod for his efforts.

29. Thomas Campbell composed his historic statement, The Declaration and Address, in 1809, in which he expressed his vision of the two great goals of the Christian movement:

i.e. finding the Truth as contained in scripture, and achieving an active Unity of believers based on a universal sharing of Biblical truth.

30. Alexander Campbell, son of Thomas, with the rest of Thomas' family, was to follow him to America in 1808. A shipwreck delayed their passage. This forced Alexander to spend portions of 1808 and 1809 in Scotland. In Glasgow he studied at the university and was exposed to the teachings of Greville Ewing and to the influence of the Haldanes. Here also he experienced a crisis of faith, determining to give up his membership in the National Church. When united with his father in America in 1809, he discovered that they were of one mind religiously. Together, they shaped their Christian activities on a careful reading of the Scriptures. Concluding on the necessity of adult baptism, they were immersed and began building congregations after the Baptist order. Finally, their reform ideas were unacceptable to the Baptists, and by 1830 they and their followers determined to be "disciples" in a non-sectarian fellowship.

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34. In the meantime, a young Presbyterian by the name of Barton W. Stone from North Carolina was struggling with the question of ordination and his possible future in the ministry of Christ.

35. Stone finally accepted preaching charges with two Presbyterian congregations, at Concord and Cane Ridge in Kentucky in 1797.

36. Cane Ridge became the location of America's most notable camp ground meeting, the Cane Ridge Revival in 1801. This was viewed as part of the Second Awakening that had its roots in the Great Awakening in New England a half century earlier.

37. Subsequent events led to the publication of *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, the second great document of American Restoration. In it was proclaimed the right of free men to interpret the Scriptures for themselves and to base their faith on the Bible alone, apart from the opinions of men.

Stone's followers, the "Christians," and Campbell's, the "Disciples," joined forces in 1832 in Lexington, Kentucky. Often designated the Stone-Campbell Movement today, the American effort became the fastest growing religious movement in the US in the later years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And, as we will see, its influence spilled over into Canada.

38. And now, in our imagination, we cross the Atlantic on a sailing vessel, proceed up the St. Lawrence River, bypassing the Lachine Rapids in a barge, traverse Lake Ontario in a sailing ship, portage the Niagara Peninsula with our goods conveyed on ox-carts—and Oh! the first glimpse of the Falls!—and on the last leg of our journey, by lake boat on Lake Erie, we proceed to Port Glasgow, a diminutive bay at the mouth of the 16<sup>th</sup> Mile Creek in Aldborough Township. Our tour of Southwestern Ontario Restoration Sites is about to begin!

39. But first, let us consider the bigger Ontario picture as a backdrop for our tour. We will work with Ontario counties as they were designated in 1880.

40. Our special interest in this tour concerns the seven counties of southwestern Ontario.

41. These include Essex...

42. Kent...

43. Lambton...

44. Elgin...

45. Middlesex...

46. Norfolk...

47. And Oxford.

48. In Southwestern Ontario, the early leaders identified are James Black in 1821 in Elgin County, and Dugald Sinclair in 1831 in Middlesex County. The early influence in this region, as we have noted, was that of the Scottish Baptist.

(Some may well ask, "Whatever happened to the 'Scotch Baptists?'" Students of Canadian Restoration history are well aware of the traditional view that Restoration in Canada was largely under the "Scotch Baptist" influence. The term "Scotch Baptist" was frequently used in the literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but rather than a specific reference to that small, distinctive fellowship in Scotland that followed Archibald McLean and that had very definite views of church polity, the common description, "Scotch Baptist," was a generic phrase referring to anyone from Scotland who happened to be a Baptist regardless of the variety. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century "Scotch" was a synonym for "Scottish.")

49. Parallel Restoration activities were taking place eastward in the province. It is important that we identify these locations and their distinctive background influences. The first that we turn to is the Guelph-Toronto region.

50. Included are the key counties of York and Wellington where Restoration activity began in 1820 and 1830 respectively with such leaders noted as John Menzies and Alex

Stewart in the former and James Black in the latter. The dominant early influence in this area was that of the Scottish Baptists.

51. The second region of importance is that of the Niagara District.

52. Here, the county of Lincoln experienced early activity with the leadership of Daniel Wiers. Wiers established a Restoration congregation in 1832 near Beamsville. The surrounding influence, particularly from Upstate New York, was that of the Free-Will Baptists.

53. The third region I designate as the “North Shore” area.

54. Here, the convictions of Joseph Ash led to the planting of the first “Disciples” congregation in Ontario, in 1836—in Cobourg, Durham County. About the same time, Benjamin Howard and Z. F. Green, from New York, worked in Prince Edward County, with early congregations arising in 1834 and 1835. The distinctive influence here was that of the Christian Connection.

55. Let’s look again at “the big picture.” The beginnings of Restoration in Ontario are found in four regions, having three distinct Restorationist influences...

56. The Scottish Baptist in Southwestern Ontario and the Toronto region...

57. The Free-Will Baptist influence in Niagara...

58. and the Christian Connection influence in the “North Shore.”

59. Our virtual tour of southwestern Ontario will pass through two periods: 1818-1855, the Pioneer Period, the time of the Scottish Baptists, and 1850-1900, the settlement period, the time of the Disciples.

60. As we have determined, settlers from Argyll and other parts of the Scottish Highlands targeted Elgin County in Upper Canada and chose Aldborough as their desired destination.

61. Countrymen sought fellow countrymen, and relatives looked for relatives as they made their choices in the New World. Aldborough was a wonderfully fertile region bordering on a major lake, reflecting the land (although not hilly!) and water reminiscent of their Highlands homeland.

62. A small cove at the mouth of the Sixteen Mile Creek offered a sheltered spot for disembarkment after the long and tedious journey from Scotland.

63. Today’s visitors have to use their imaginations to see the early stream of newcomers, their faces revealing a mixture of fatigue, uncertainty, eagerness, and triumph--the passing is over, the journey is about to begin. The faith they brought with them was their most important possession.

64. This reach along the north shore of Lake Erie was opening to New World settlers because of the efforts of land developer, Colonel Thomas Talbot. In part, the historical plaque reads; “The settlement begun in May 1803 by Thomas Talbot, despite the controversial practices of its founder, was one of the most successful in Upper Canada. Major roads were constructed throughout the settlement, and by a system of close and personal control Talbot managed effectively to keep out land speculators and secure hard working settlers...”

65. Talbot was well rewarded in his settlement activities, receiving 150 acres for every 50 he settled! Ultimately the Talbot Settlement reached from Norfolk County in the east to Essex County in the west, including 29 townships in which 30,000 settlers occupied one-half million acres. The region was turned over to the Executive Council in 1837.

66. The “Assessment Role” for Aldborough Township in 1820 lists 86 farms. Of interest is the tally of 3,450 acres settled, of which only 105 acres had been cleared, and that the total settlement possessed only two horses, 20 oxen, and 44 cows.

Of even greater interest, to our journey, is the fact that nine families are listed who are known to have been participants in early Baptist worship. Duncan McKillop is listed, as is Colin Ferguson, his name given as it would have sounded in the Scottish brogue, “Ferguson.” These two are said to have led the early worship of their fellow Baptists in their homes and barns. The other names of interest are John McKellar, identified earlier, and his sons Archibald and John McKellar Jr. who arrived in Aldborough in 1818. In addition to the McKillops, Fergusons, and McKellars listed above, is another family that participated in the early Baptist fellowship, the family of Malcolm Robertson. An early tradition has the preacher, Donald McVicar serving this group. McVicar was in Aldborough in 1818 if not before.

67. James Black, who is pictured here in later life, arrived in Aldborough with his family in 1820 in the company of some thirty Scottish families. Their arrival in fall of that year put major stress on the community that had experienced poor crops that summer. Thus James and his brother, Donald, left to join their brother, Hugh Black who was surveying in Mulmar and Tosoronto Townships in Dufferin County. Here they spent the winter on the surveying “chain gang.” (Hugh, also, had earlier come to Aldborough, in 1818.)

68. Returning to Aldborough in the spring of 1821, James Black took up the multiple tasks of farming, teaching, and preaching. He likely had some association with Donald McVicar. In later life, James Black, recollected that the group included 11 from Scotland, 7 baptized by him. His group might be described as “Reforming Baptists,” for Black was by then turning from seeking the services of an ordained Baptist pastor to administering baptism himself. He was also beginning to question some of the tenets of Calvinism.

(It is of interest to note that another Baptist group formed in the Township at that time, to the east, near Wallacetown, i.e., the “Covenanted (i.e. Calvinistic) Baptists.”)

Black spent only four years working in Aldborough before moving on to Halton County, but he made an impact on the community. Blacks Lane, now Blacks Road, cf. the first north-south road west of Furnival Rd. in Aldborough, was named in his honour.

(The sign “Black’s Road” can be seen today where it passes over the 401 Hwy!)

69. New Glasgow is at the center of this early pioneer development.

70. On Hwy #3, known in the area as Talbot Line, just east of New Glasgow, is this evidence of the memory of the early McKillop family, no doubt belonging to Duncan McKillop.

71. In New Glasgow is the “Pioneer Cemetery” in which are found markers with the names that have become familiar to this journey.

72. The plaque reads: “NEW GLASGOW PIONEER CEMETERY. This is the first cemetery in the district where rest many pioneers of Aldborough and adjoining townships who migrated from the Scottish Highlands in 1817 and also those who followed after from other parts. It is recorded that in 1818 Dugald McLarty and James Ruthven who were drowned as they attempted to land at what is now Port Glasgow were the first two white people buried here...” Two families of Ruthvens appear on the 1820 Assessment Roll, Hugh and Collin Ruthven.

73. Here is a small sample of the many pioneer graves that are located in the New Glasgow Pioneer Cemetery, including that of Duncan McKillop (perhaps son of the Duncan McKillop mentioned earlier), and two Campbells, all of whom are listed on the 1820 Roll.

74. Beginning as early as 1820 and during the following decade various families left Aldborough, in part it is surmised because of the autocratic methods of Talbot, and moved northward to Lobo Township in Middlesex County.

75. Names such as the following appear in the records as Scottish Baptists who made the move to Lobo: John McKellar and his wife, Euphemia, Alexander McKellar and his wife Mary (Muir), William and Catharine Paul, Dugald McColl [McCall], John and Alexander Sinclair and their mother, Mrs. Nancy Sinclair, and the widow, Sarah McCallum. John McKellar provided leadership during this period, and was assisted by the brothers, John and Alexander Sinclair. And periodically, e.g. “twice a year,” Donald McVicar conducted services for the group. The first baptism was of John Gray, about 1827 and was administered by Donald McVicar.

76. Dugald Sinclair, pictured here in later life, as we have noted previously, immigrated to Canada in 1831 and headed directly to Lobo. The record indicates that his brother, Donald, was by then a member of the Lobo congregation, suggesting one reason why Dugald would choose to go Lobo. That Sinclair travelled with sixteen members of the Lochgilphead congregation suggests that perhaps other Argyllshire residents also became part of the Lobo congregation.

77. The Sinclair family stayed with John Sinclair while their log house was being built. In 1831, services were conducted in “the old log school house on the corner of the 7<sup>th</sup> concession of Lobo Township and the townline.” “The band continued worshipping in school houses and private houses for eleven years before the coming of Dougald Sinclair and for twenty-three years afterwards. The old shed where some of the big meetings were held is still standing on the McKellar farm.” With the arrival of a fully qualified Baptist pastor, Elder Dugald Sinclair, the congregation was organized in 1831 and John McKellar was appointed deacon.

78. Dugald and Christiana [sometimes, Christina] Sinclair had eight children, three born in Scotland, Dugald (1826, pictured here), Maria Donalda (1828), and John (1829); and in Canada, Malcolm (1832), Colin (1834), Mary Ann (1836), Archibald (1838), and Duncan (1840). Dugald, Colin, and Archibald followed their father in preaching.

79. In about 1826, settlers moved from Aldborough to Mosa Township. Included were those of the Scottish Baptist faith. They began to meet in homes and barns and would not be organized until a number of years later. When Dugald Sinclair arrived in the area and began to develop his circuit ministry, Mosa was included.



80. The place of meeting was described as near the village of Kilmartin, about 7 or 8 miles north of Glencoe. One of the leaders of the early Mosa congregation was Archibald McKellar, son of John McKellar, later of Lobo, who together with his father are identified as early settlers in Aldborough. Archibald was married to Janet, a younger sister of James Black. The McKellars may have arrived in Mosa as early as 1830.

81. A present reminder of a rich pioneer past, this historic farm identifies the presence of the McKellar family in the early days of the Highland community located in the northern tip of Mosa Township.

82. All that remains of Kilmartin village today is Presbyterian Church and the extensive Kilmartin Cemetery, truly a pioneer cemetery. The history of this congregation parallels and is informative of that of the Mosa Scottish Baptist/Disciples.

83. In the Kilmartin Cemetery are a number of graves of McKellars. This stone identifies and Archibald McKellar, 1776-1848. Could he be the “Archibald” of our interest?

84. In about 1829, settlers of the Scottish Baptist faith from Aldborough moved west to Howard Township in Kent County. It is reported that Donald McVicar sometimes preached for them.

Early names associated with this gathering include Malcolm Campbell who arrived in the area from Scotland in 1830 with his family of 3 sons, Neil, Peter, and Duncan, and two daughters, Mary and Isabella. One of Neil’s children was Flora who married Colin Sinclair.

85. Howard Township, situated south of the Thames River, was still a wilderness in the in the 1810s. In 1817, the site of Morpeth was pioneered and in following years farms were settled along the Talbot Road.

A D. Campbell, writing from Harwick [Harwich], 16 Jan, 1853, to the *Christian Banner*, reports, “Regarding us as a church, we are only about fifteen or sixteen members between Howard and Harwick. We hold D. Sinclair of Lobo as the under shepherd to feed the flock of Christ. As we have no regular House of worship, we meet weekly at one of the brethren’s houses to worship the Lord.” The *Christian Banner* (Nov. 1856) reports that 16 “were gathered” at Morpeth PO, and that this group was included in the “Sinclair Circuit,” and preaching was also done occasionally by Colin Sinclair and Edmund Sheppard.

86. With Dugald Sinclair’s arrival at Lobo in 1831, and with his territorial consciousness gained through his mission work in the Highlands, Sinclair became aware of the groups of his Scottish brethren in the surrounding districts of Mosa, Howard, and Aldborough and began to reach out to them in a preaching circuit.

87. From Lobo to Mosa...

88. From Mosa to Howard...

89. From Howard to Aldborough...

90. And back home, a distance of over 150 km as the crow flies, or almost 100 miles round trip. This would be on trails through wilderness woods, on horseback or carriage, over pioneer roads that could be axle deep with mud in the spring and with dust in the summer!

Thus, 35 years passed—from about 1818 to 1855, the approximate year when Dugald Sinclair led his congregations into the fellowship of the Disciples. Only four small fellowships of reforming Baptists, after the English order, can be identified during this period—Aldbrough, Lobo, Mosa, and Howard. The believers in this assembly had been drawn from a small Highland fellowship of Baptists that had emerged only a few years earlier, i.e. 1801. They had settled in a region dominated by the Presbyterian faith. No doubt the arduous demands of pioneering during this early period preoccupied these families—even Dugald Sinclair farmed. Outreach and significant expansion would await a more convenient season.

91. Our virtual tour of southwestern Ontario will now pass through the time of 1850-1900, the Settlement Period, the time of the Disciples.

92. The influence of the Disciples movement came fully formed into southwestern Ontario with the arrival of Edmund Sheppard in South Dorchester Township of Elgin County in about 1848.

93. Edmund Sheppard, pictured here in his later years, came to Canada as a 20 year old in 1843 and began teaching school in Pickering village. He had earlier become a member of the Disciples church in Nottingham, England. He thus associated with the Disciples church in Pickering Township. Here he became acquainted with Elder Randall Bentley and his family. He would later marry his daughter, Nancy Bentley. While at Pickering he did his first public speaking. In 1846 he went to study at Bethany College. Upon his return, possibly in the spring of 1848, he found his way to South Dorchester Township, perhaps because the Bentleys had moved there. In 1849 he was teaching school in Mapleton Village. As well, he preached and it is said that a number of Baptists joined him.

94. The small group that Edmund Sheppard had gathered held their meetings during the summer.

95. David Oliphant Jr., editor of *Witness of Truth*, was also present for the 1850 opening of the South Dorchester church building.

The first building served for 22 years.

By 1854 the membership numbered 49. By 1860 a membership of 159 members was reported.

96. Alexander Anderson and James Kilgour, from Eramosa in Wellington County, and frequently serving the “co-operation” for evangelism of that county, came to South Dorchester periodically to conduct meetings. This strengthened the Disciples’ influence in southwestern Ontario.

It became the custom of the S. Dorchester church to conduct annual meetings in June. The 1857 meeting included the use of a large tent from Ohio, as well as visiting American preachers, Leonard Southmayd, J. C. Stark, and A. B. Green, all from Ohio. Dugald Sinclair was also present and led one of the worship services. Some 2,500 people were in attendance.

97. A white brick octagonal shaped meeting house was constructed in 1872. Benjamin Franklin, editor of the *American Christian Review*, and leading American preacher, was

present for the dedication service. In the meeting that followed that Franklin conducted, 57 additions were realized bringing the total to 274.

Franklin returned to Dorchester in 1874 for their annual meeting.

98. During 1874, S. Dorchester reported 66 additions, the largest of any congregation in Ontario.

The present building was opened in 1904.

99. Through the efforts of the S. Dorchester congregation and the work of Edmund Sheppard, congregations were established at nearby Yarmouth Heights and St. Thomas.

100. A well-kept cemetery, the "Necropolis," is maintained by the S. Dorchester church. In it are found a number of pioneer graves.

101. Included is the grave stone for the Sheppard family. Edmund Sheppard had a distinguished record for preaching both locally and across Ontario during the forty-five years of his ministry. While faithfully conducting his ministry, he had to bear the grief of the loss of a number of his children. These are chronicled on this marker.

102. Also recorded on the family marker are names of eight children who lived from only one day to 19 years of age. Their son, Edmund Ernest lived to enjoy a distinguished career in Toronto as a journalist, and the founder of the *Saturday Night*.

103. Edmund was out of the pulpit only one week when he died in 1894 in his 72<sup>nd</sup> year. His wife, Nancy, preceded him by ten years, living only 54 years.

104. The Mapleton church continues to serve and is celebrating its 159<sup>th</sup> anniversary year this year.

105. Of interest in this area is the small community of Lyons, 2.5 km east of the Mapleton church that became the home in later years of Joseph Ash who became a member of the S. Dorchester church.

106. Ash was the founder of the first "Disciples" church in Ontario, at Cobourg in 1836. He is remembered for his "Reminiscences," a history of the Restoration movement in Ontario, which were published in 21 installments in the *Christian Worker*, between 1882 and 1884, which he began when he was 74 years of age.

Ash had left Oshawa where he had served for many years in about 1865 following the passing of his wife. He settled first at Rond Eau near Blenheim but travelled ten miles to the east to Ridgetown where he held his membership. By 1875 he had moved to a farm near Lyons and attended the Mapleton church. Then in 1883, he moved again, this time to Rodney.

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108. The building was located “about a mile southeast of the spot where the present [Poplar Hill] stands,” on the land of Alex Gray.

This comment was made, “. . .and the members called themselves by those names that are given to the people of God in the Scriptures and conducted worship accordingly.” Thus, in 1853 or 1854, this group of Scottish Baptists began to identify as Disciples of Christ.

As indicated earlier, Sinclair was present to dedicate the S. Dorchester building in 1850. In August 1852, the Disciples preachers, Edmund Sheppard and James Black, conducted meetings for Sinclair in Lobo. However, as widely circulated, it was Sinclair’s meeting with Alexander Campbell during the latter’s tour of Ontario, in London in 1855 that convinced him. “On Sinclair’s return to his church he stated to his people his agreement with Campbell’s teachings and said that thereafter the name of the church would not be ‘Scotch Baptist’ but ‘Disciple of Christ.’”

109. The location of the early meeting houses was, as noted, on the Gray farm, the area pictured here as seen today. The first building was replaced in 1875, this time by a frame building. During the period, 1853-1886, such Disciples as James Kilgour, James Black, and C. J. Lister came to conduct meetings. During that period 103 were won to the faith.

110. W. D. “Willie” Campbell, “a son of the Lobo congregation,” became one of the most effective preachers in Ontario in the late 1800s, serving throughout southwestern Ontario and the rest of the province, and with distinction in Toronto and Detroit in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His first work was to organize a church at the nearby village of Appin, Ekfrid Township, Middlesex County, in 1883.

111. In 1905, the rural Lobo church moved into the village of Poplar Hill.

112. A commodious auditorium serves worshipers even today.

113. Three nearby cemeteries are the resting places for many of the believers of the Lobo church.

114. The Hume Cemetery contains the marker of John Sinclair, mentioned earlier is this tour.

115. Nearby is the Ivan Cemetery.

116. One of the Ivan Cemetery markers is for Christina McVicar, one of many McVicars located in these pioneer cemeteries.

117. In the Poplar Hill Cemetery is found the marker of Dugald Sinclair and a number of his family.

118. Dugald Sinclair passed away on Oct., 1870, at age 93, having been absent from the pulpit but two Lord’s days. Shortly before his death he said to his son, “ When I was baptized it was as a Disciple of Christ, and when I met a people so designated I united with them at once.”

Upon Sinclair’s passing, his son, Archibald Sinclair, took the lead of the congregation as elder.

119. Among the Sinclair family buried in the Poplar Hill Cemetery are the sons Malcolm and Duncan.

120. Our tour now returns to the congregation in Mosa.

121. The Mosa church building was opened in 1862 and the congregation organized with Dugald Sinclair, Donald B. McKellar, son of Archibald McKellar and nephew of James Black, and Alexander Ferguson, named both as trustees and elders. Alexander Dewar and John Munro were the deacons. The 1862 records describe the church as “the society of the order of Christians or Disciples of Christ.”

122. Alex Ferguson was a leader of the Mosa church, one of its first trustees and elders, when it organized in 1862.

The Mosa congregation was the location for the 1873 “June Meeting” held in southwestern Ontario. 500 people were in attendance of whom 150 were Disciples of Christ. The chief speaker was John F. Rowe, an editor with the *American Christian Review*. He reported, “We never saw such eager and willing listeners, patiently sitting through two sermons on Lord’s day, of one hour and thirty minutes each, and apparently never tiring. Nearly all the brethren in this region of Canada are Highland Scotch, many of whom, especially the older ones, can speak the Gaelic language well, if not better, than English...”

123. Donald B. McKellar, grandson of the noted John McKellar, son of Archibald and Janet (Black) McKellar, was described as a “chief speaker and elder at Mosa.” He was listed as one of the “wardens and trustees” when the Mosa church organized in 1862.

124. As the century advanced, the rural-urban shift resulted in the decline of numbers of this pioneer church. However, Mosa engaged in mission activity, establishing a church in Glencoe to the south in Mosa Township in 1892, in which D. B. McKellar took a lead, and in nearby Alvinston to the west in Brooke Township, Lambton County in 1897.

125. Returning to Howard Township in Kent County, where believers were scattered over the Townships of Harwich and Howard from as early as 1829, gradually numbers came together in the leading community of that area, at Ridgetown. (The Ridgetown community began developing in the mid 1820s but was not incorporated as a village until 1877. Reaching a population of 2,100 in 1882, it became a town.)

126. The believers in Ridgetown were organized as a church in about 1850 by the Ontario preachers, James Kilgour, James Black, and Edmund Sheppard. Thomas Sissons and Archibald McLarty were the first elders.

127. The first minister to work with the Ridgetown church was Colin Sinclair, son of Dugald Sinclair. He had come to Ridgetown to teach at Green’s School and married Flora Campbell, daughter of Neil Campbell, one of the earliest settlers in the area. He served the Ridgetown church until 1883. C. J. Lister, writing in 1875 (in the *Bible Index*) stated, “He is doing a good work; he travels some 5,000 miles a year, preaching at different stations. Immerses quite a number through the year.”

128. The first meeting house in Ridgetown, a frame building, was opened in 1869, (pictured here in 1896), and dedicated by Edmund Sheppard.

129. Two young men who were members at Ridgetown went on to fulfill roles of leadership in the fellowship:

George Munro, who became co-editor of *The Ontario Evangelist* (1886-1889) with T. L. Fowler, and editor of *The Canadian Evangelist* (1889-1896). Hugh McDiarmid attended Bethany College, returned to Canada to become editor of several papers, including the *Bible Index*, and later went on to become president of Bethany College.

130. James Lediard served Ridgetown from 1884 to 1888, followed by Edmund Sheppard, 1888-1889.

131. A work was begun at Selton to the north of Ridgetown In 1898 when an unused Anglican building was purchased and services were conducted by ministers from Ridgetown.

The Ridgetown meeting house was remodeled in 1905 and an educational wing was added in 1958, and is in use today.

132. Joseph Ash, living at Rond Eau, near Blenheim, reported in 1873 a few disciples of the Lord living in the area, but who attended at Ridgetown as did he. In 1885 James Lediard reports conducting meetings at Blenheim and the establishing of regular meetings. Later, in 1890, Duncan Sinclair reported that the Blenheim church had been “without a meeting for about a year.” A sixteen week meeting was conducted and 17 conversions recorded; thus the work was revived, but shortly faded again.

Harwich, ten miles west of Ridgetown, was another outreach work of the Ridgetown congregation. In 1883, R. R. Bulgin, the minister at Ridgetown, held successful meetings at Harwich. The location continued to be a mission point from Ridgetown until the fall of 1893 when Bulgin moved to Harwich and organized the church with a membership of 19. From Harwich, in turn, a number of preaching points were begun: at Northwood, on the CPR line a few miles east of Chatham, which became a separate church in 1894; at the School House, No. 9, 1897; and at Bridge End.

133. Returning to Aldborough Township, the Scottish Baptist believers were scattered over the region. Meetings were held in various areas as ministers were available, from the Lake shore in the south to the Thames River in the north. Eventually, out of these developed four Disciples congregations, at Eagle, 3<sup>rd</sup> Concession (on Furnival Rd., ”The Plains”?), Rodney, and West Lorne.

134. Eagle village on Talbot Road was the larger community in the area in the mid 1860s when the decision was made to build a union church to serve the needs of the Disciples, Presbyterians, and Methodists. It was constructed in 1865. Disciples made use of this building on into the new century, but with the opening of churches at Rodney and West Lorne, the Eagle congregation finally concluded services early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

(About the same time as the building at eagle a meeting house was provided for worship on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Concession (at Furnival Rd), in the northern area of the township, identified, it is believed, as “The Plains.”)

135. In the area of Rodney, directly north of New Glasgow, descendents of the early settler families, e.g. McKillop, Ferguson, McVicar, and Munro, for a number of years met in homes, barns, and public buildings. And in the mid-century some worshipped at Eagle.

136. Finally, in 1875 a building was erected in Rodney, a community that was growing because of being on the new railway line. The group at the time was known as the “Baptist Disciples of Christ.” The first building was replaced in 1919 when the Methodist church building was purchased (for \$600). This building had been built during WWI when brick was unavailable, and hence concrete blocks were used.

Ministers who worked with the church in its early days are the well known Colin Sinclair, D. B. McKellar, James Kilgour, T. L. Fowler, and W. D. Campbell.

137. T. L. Fowler, a graduate of Bethany College, and who had been ordained by Edmund Sheppard and Colin Sinclair to serve the church at Yarmouth Heights in 1880, began in 1881 to serve both the church at Rodney and the larger fellowship throughout Aldborough. Fowler would become the first principal of the St. Thomas College, in 1895.

138. Samuel Keffer, who would later become a champion of the conservative cause among the Disciples, served the Rodney church from 1884 to 1887.

139. The church at West Lorne, directly north of Eagle, was an outgrowth of the Aldborough (3<sup>rd</sup> Concession) and Eagle churches. The first regular meetings were held in McKillop’s hall in 1887. Percival Baker, originally from Sherwood, in Vaughan Township, York County, fresh from College and his marriage to a Miss Page from Toronto, began serving this West Lorne as well as at Eagle and Rodney. He served until 1891. He was followed by R. M Ainsworth, then Archibald Sinclair (a brother of Colin Sinclair), T. L. Fowler, and in 1895, George Munro.

140. The West Lorne congregation accepted responsibility for the Eagle services. In 1899, there were 43 members total from the two groups.

In 1900, while an anniversary service was being conducted, a fire broke out two buildings away. Flames reached the upstairs hall where the meeting was being held with the result that the church was without a meeting place.

Finally, in 1905, with funding from the American Christian Missionary Society, a building was erected and dedicated by T. L. Fowler.

141. We now return to the area of influence of Edmund Sheppard, Yarmouth Township, lying adjacent to S. Dorchester to the west.

Joseph Ash writes, “The St. Thomas church was at first made up of members of the Dorchester church, and met at first at Yarmouth Heights, about 3 miles east of the city. They built a good meeting house and sheds. Edmund Sheppard was their principal preacher for many years” (112).

This work began in 1864, on Lot 10, Concession 8, that is on Talbot Street, Yarmouth Township, Elgin County. The building was constructed in 1865. A number of the S. Dorchester congregation were part of this new work and Edmund Sheppard ministered to their needs.

142. Isaac Errett, editor of the American periodical, the *Christian Standard*, and John Sweeney held meetings for the Yarmouth Heights congregation. By 1879, after fifteen years of activity and with a congregation of 85 members, and the decision was made, although opposed by some, to relocate within St. Thomas, a community that had advanced speedily as “a great railway center.”

143. The first building in St. Thomas was dedicated Sept. 14, 1879, located on “Railway St.,” now Princess Ave. Edmund Sheppard moved to town with his family and ministered to this church for three years. T. L. Fowler, returning from Rodney in 1882, served for a year, followed by Rufus M Stevenson in 1883, and Colin Sinclair in 1886, T. B. Knowles in 1888, and W. D. Cunningham 1894. During Cunningham’s ministry, the membership grew from 142 to 415.

Outreach activities were conducted with a preaching point opened in Iona, about ten miles west of St. Thomas, on the western edge of Southwold Township. The church was organized there in 1896, utilizing a building made available by the Free Baptist trustees of the building for the price of repairs, i.e. \$300. Also, a Sunday School program was begun at Yarmouth Heights in 1895.

144. Plans to replace the 1879 building began in 1905

Z. T. Sweeney, leading American evangelist, was present to dedicate the new building that was opened on Princess St. , April 28, 1907, built on the site of the previous building.

145. The new St. Thomas building was more elaborate than Disciples buildings up until that time, with stained glass windows...

146. ...ornate lighting...

147. ...box pews...

148. ...and an elevated pulpit.

149. In fall of 1895 the College of the Disciples was opened in St. Thomas. The choice of this location seemed appropriate as the St. Thomas congregation was the largest of the Disciples in Ontario at that time. The principal of the new college, T. L. Fowler, who had served earlier efforts in Christian education in Toronto and would be its first principal was from this area. He held this position until 1903 when he left to become president of Fairfield College in Nebraska.

The College building was opened February 1897.

The school remained a “small college” during a time that the small college was losing favour. Nevertheless, its preacher students spread across the territory of our “virtual tour” and served both new preaching points and the older struggling rural churches. Around 1900 it was reported that 9 students were preaching regularly at 14 different points.

150. A sample diploma contains the name of H. Alice Pearce, who graduated in April 1901, with an English Ministerial Course completed. Butchart refers to a Mrs. Thomas Pearce, of Iona, who encouraged the College students. Perhaps this is Alice’s family!

151. In 1906, the College was renamed Sinclair College, in honour of Dugald Sinclair.

The College closed in 1909, and the building was put up for sale in that year.

152. Pictured here is a contemporary sign that is located on the eastern outskirts of the present city of St. Thomas and that identifies the location of the early small community outside of the village of St. Thomas.

However, in 1895, the St. Thomas church began a Yarmouth Heights Sunday School and in 1905 a building was provided for that work, and later a mission was maintained in this locality, resulting in a congregation that secured a meeting house in 1954.



153. Malahide Township is adjacent to Yarmouth to the east and to S. Dorchester to the north. Two points are of interest here: Springfield and Aylmer.

154. In September 10-12, 1874, a debate of some significance was held in the small community of Springfield between representatives of the Baptists and the Disciples. The debate was on the differences between the Baptists and the Disciples. The Baptist position was presented by a Mr. Crawford, professor of Theology at the Baptist college at Woodstock. The Disciples position was presented by John S. Sweeney of Kentucky, “a hero of some 65 debates”! Hugh McDiarmid presided. Edmund Sheppard both arranged for and published the debate.

155. In February 1882, a meeting was held as an outreach by the Dorchester congregation about three miles east of Springfield in which seven responses were made. A congregation of nine began meeting at that time.

156. As a result of the Crawford-Sweeney debate, an opportunity opened in the nearby community of Aylmer. Edmund Sheppard published three discourses that he preached in the town in 1875 were published in the local paper. Also, in that June of that year a debate was conducted in Aylmer between Professor A. O. Burgess of the Northwest Christian University of Indianapolis and Mr. B. F. Underwood of Boston, Mass., on the reliability of the Scriptures, i.e. a debate between a Christian and an Atheist.

Yet, it was not until 1885 that W. D. Campbell was able to organize a congregation of Disciples in Aylmer.

157. In that year (1885) Willie Campbell conducted a meeting and drew together 15 members to begin the congregation, including members of the Inglis, Sherk, and Ballah, and Bradt families. The church met for a year in the town hall, then rented an Anglican church building (built in 1860-61), which it was able to purchase in 1889. Campbell continued to work with this church until 1891. In 1893, this newly renovated building burned to the ground.

The building pictured was built in 1905 during the ministry of Randall W. Ballah (1901-1907).

158. It was not until 1891 that a Disciples congregation was organized in the region’s largest community, London. H. Z. Leonard, Consul for the United States, when he arrived in the city determined that a congregation be planted. A frame building was purchased from the Bible Christians, on the corner of Elizabeth and Dundas, in July 1891 and opened the next month. In December of that year, Robert Moffett of the American Christian Missionary Society, led in organizing the church with a membership of 26. T. L. Fowler led the congregation beginning January 1892. by the middle of June 1894, there were 122 members, and 165 by the next year. Difficulties arose so that at the turn of the century the church numbered about 100.

The building pictured was opened in 1925.

159. ---

160. ---

161. ---