

JUBILEE OF CHURCH

METHODISM AT HAWERA

SIXTY YEARS' PROGRESS

CELEBRATIONS TO BEGIN

It is now more than 63 years since the first Methodist minister began his work in South Taranaki. From the start the religion, then 140 years established, was well supported by the settlers. The first Methodist church at Hawera was built in 1876, and the diamond jubilee will be celebrated this year, commencing to-day with a reunion of older parishioners. In response to an appeal for funds for foreign missions last year the jubilee was postponed from the date on which it fell.

The church, the first to be built at Hawera, was said to be the prettiest between Wanganui and New Plymouth. The opening service was held by the Rev. Martin, Presbyterian, on the morning of September 6, 1876, and in the evening the Rev. T. J. Garlick came from Marton to preach.

The first minister to come to the district was the Rev. Thomas Reeve, a Gloucestershire man aged 29, who in February, 1874, commenced the organization of a circuit which was to extend from Waitotara to Normanby and later as far north as Opunake and Ngaere. Until April there is no record of his work, but services were held at Waitotara, Waverley and Patea at the end of that month and a week later services were conducted at Manutahi and Hawera.

Service in Block House.

The Hawera service took place in the Block House on the first Sunday in May, 1874. The site is now occupied by the public library. About 30 people were present, including Mr. and Mrs. W. a'Court, the Douglasses and the Bayleys. The Rev. Thomas Hammond, who accompanied Mr. Reeve, has recalled also the welcome given by the Constabulary staff at the old Waihi camp near Normanby.

There was no lack of support for the church by the settlers, almost all of whom were glad to have the ordinances of religion established in their midst. Many who were later connected with other churches supported the early Methodist services and work. The first quarterly meeting of the new circuit, called the Carlyle circuit, was held at Patea on July 6, 1874. A church was built at Patea in the following year and five years later it was enlarged. The Rev. J. Law, a native of Lancashire, succeeded Mr. Reeve in 1876.

Plans for erecting a Methodist church at Hawera were prepared by Mr. George Syme early in 1876 and on May 27 a meeting of the church building committee was held in the Block House, Messrs. Law, W. and R. Dingle, W. a'Court and S. J. Tocker attending. A new plan was adopted and in July, after a half-acre site costing £15 had been procured, tenders were called. The final cost reached £277.

Cause Furthered.

In 1878 the Rev. P. W. Fairclough was appointed to the circuit and he remained until 1881. Possessed with marked originality, widely read and having a capacious memory, he furthered considerably the Methodist cause. A considerable part of the church's indebtedness was cleared, mainly by money raised from lectures given by Mr. Fairclough. In 1882 two ministers were appointed to the circuit, the Revs. J. A. Luxford and T. P. Jones, the latter being stationed at Hawera as second minister. He was thus the first resident minister at Hawera.

It then became evident that the church was becoming too small, and on July 17, 1882, a meeting was held at Mr. M. D. King's residence, Hawera, to consider alteration or rebuilding. The two ministers and Messrs. King, G. Godber, C. Hockings, G. Syme, I. Nicholas and J. A. and W. a'Court were present. It was resolved to build a new church on the same site to seat 250 persons. On May 24, 1883, the foundation stone was laid with Masonic honours, the cost being £530. It was opened for worship on September 2, the preachers being the Rev. J. J. Mather, who had succeeded Mr. Jones, and the Rev. Luxford.

Opunake was at this time included in the district, but owing to travelling difficulties and the small staff it was decided to appoint a resident minister. This was difficult because of a large exodus of people from Patea and the consequent straitening of the church's finances, and the Rev. Mather took charge from Hawera, where the pulpit was supplied by local preachers. From 1884 to 1886 no minister was appointed at Hawera, the Rev. W. L. Salter, Patea, being in charge of the circuit.

Separate Circuit.

Hawera was constituted a separate circuit in 1887 by the Auckland conference, and the Rev. R. S. Bunn, a Victorian minister who came to New Zealand in 1863, was appointed to the circuit. There was a circuit debt of £74 at the time of separation, and this was divided between Patea and Hawera, the latter thus commencing with a debt of £37. In April, 1888, the Rev. C. E. Barley succeeded Mr. Bunn. Shortly after commencing he became ill and died in October. The Rev. W. J. Watkin gave help until the Rev. J. G. Chapman came as supply. In the meantime the Rev. Mr. Hammond, for many years superintendent of the West Coast Maori Mission, bore the whole burden of the Patea circuit and greatly aided the Hawera circuit.

At this time Eltham and Ngaere were detached from the Hawera circuit and with Stratford and Midhurst were constituted a home mission station. The Rev. Chapman supplied at Hawera until April, 1889, when he was appointed second minister, remaining until July, 1890.

The Rev. T. N. Griffin, a Cumberland man, was appointed to the circuit at the same time as Mr. Chapman. The circuit then comprised Hawera, Okalawa, Te Roti, Eltham, Ngaere, Patea, Kakarames, Alton, Opunake, Manala, Otakeho, Pihama, Rahotu, Oponui and Kaponga. About that time a church was opened at Kaponga. A quarterly meeting in 1890 decided that Opunake should constitute a separate circuit comprising Opunake, Kaponga, Pihama, Otakeho, Eltham Road and Manala, the circuit debt of £200 to be apportioned between the two circuits. The Rev. C. E. Beecroft was appointed to Opunake. The Rev. R. J. Murray, second minister to Hawera, lived at Opunake until it was constituted a new circuit.

In 1891 Stratford, Midhurst and Wai-puku were added to Hawera, a home missionary living at Stratford. The Rev. W. Connell succeeded Mr. Griffin in April, 1892. During Mr. Connell's ministry a church was built at Okalawa. In the following year Ngaere, Eltham and Cardiff were cut off from the circuit. The Rev. C. H. Laws succeeded Mr. Connell in 1895. The church membership was then 95, with eight on trial, and the Hawera Sunday school had 110 scholars and teachers. In June of the following year the erection of the parsonage on South Road was begun.

Attendance now began to show a marked increase and within two years it had risen by 35 per cent. It was then decided that the circuit, although carrying a debt of £80, should be self-supporting and should do without any further grant from the Home Mission fund.

NEW CHURCH BUILT

FIRST SERVICES IN 1906

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

MANY VALUABLE GIFTS

Shortly after the arrival of the Rev. C. Porter from Ballarat, Victoria, the collection of funds began for the erection of the present Hawera Methodist Church, which was built to seat 330 persons in 1905, the total cost being over £1500. The first services were held in it on April 15, 1906.

Later in 1906 Patea was separated from the Hawera circuit, the Rev. Mr. Abbey being appointed to Manala as second minister in 1907. In the meantime Mr. Porter was succeeded by the Rev. Samuel Gibson, formerly a Fiji missionary, and he was followed by the Rev. F. W. Boys. The financial position was improved, the church grounds were laid out and heavy expenditure was incurred in improvements.

In 1913 the Rev. E. O. Blamires was appointed. He remained at Hawera until 1918, and during his period a new organ was installed at a cost of £500. In 1917 a site was purchased at Turuturu for a Sunday school. A young women's Bible classroom was erected in 1917.

The Rev. Arthur Liversedge succeeded Mr. Blamires for a five-year term, and a motor-car was obtained for the minister for the first time. A concrete wall was erected on the Regent Street frontage from a bequest in the will of Mr. T. H. Foy, and a stained glass memorial window was given to the church by Mr. A. Perkin.

The 50th anniversary of the opening of the first church was held on June 5 and 6, 1926, and sufficient money was raised to clear all the church's debts, except £250 in the bank. In October



THE REV. C. H. LAWS, B.A., B.D., former Methodist minister at Hawera, who will speak during the jubilee celebrations.

of the following year a memorial tablet was erected in honour of Mr. C. A. Bates. In November an electric blower replaced the old water blower to supply air to the pipe organ. In 1928 the Rev. E. S. Emmett took up office.

Many legacies came to the church during the next few years. In 1930 an anonymous gift of £50 was received to paint the church. In the following year the late Mr. C. H. Lillierap bequeathed £500 with which to build a new Sunday school. A further anonymous gift of £120 came in 1932, the object specified being the making of a hard tennis court for the young people.

In April of 1933 a new minister was appointed, the Rev. Basil Metson, and he is the present minister. In the same year a section at Ohawe was presented to the church by Mrs. S. Catras. A legacy of £200 was bequeathed to the church in 1935 by Mrs. Lillierap. Two memorial tablets will be erected shortly in the church to the Rev. T. G. Hammond and the Rev. Robert Haddon, both men having been closely associated with the church for many years.

In 1898 the Rev. J. Dukes was appointed successor to Mr. Laws and under his ministry the church made still further advances. The Hawera church was cleared of debt and the church site at Normanby with the Salvation Army building was purchased and renovated for £50. The section occupied by the Hawera Sunday school also was purchased for £180.

The Rev. W. J. Oxbrow was appointed to the circuit as second minister in 1901 and was stationed at Patea. In the same year the circuit's balance-sheet showed a credit for the first time.

Following Mr. Oxbrow's appointment a home mission grant of £20 was made to the circuit, but after six months such steady advance had been made that the grant was declined. In the next year the old church, now used as the Sunday school, was moved from the Regent Street frontage to its present site, extra classrooms being added.

THE MONTAGUE SHOW.

NEW PLYMOUTH SEASON.

Box plans will open on Monday for the Montague Show's first production, "Let's Go Places," which Sir Benjamin Fuller will present at the New Plymouth Opera House from Wednesday next. This company comes direct from London and is unique so far as New Zealand is concerned. It is the only West End revue ever to be presented in the Dominion, and every performer is an international "headliner." One of the principal performers is the English comedian George Doonan. He is well known in the West End as a famous representative of the modern school of "dress-suit" comedians. The leading lady and comedienne will be charming Barbara Vernon, a young American actress who made a remarkable personal success in the name part of "No, No, Nanette," when that musical comedy was revived at the London Hippodrome last year. One of the most original and fascinating acts ever to be seen on this side of the world is the Darmora Ballet of 12 beautiful Hungarian girls. This is under the direction of Madame Darmora herself. These young ladies have a special clause inserted in their contracts stating that the entire ballet must be returned to Budapest as they have an important engagement to fill in the Hungarian capital next season. The ballet are bringing with them all their own costumes, which are estimated to be worth £16,000. The marvellous ostrich feathers used through the entire production gained the admiration of the Press in South Africa. Other performers will be The Two Rogues, comedy specialty act, and Jimmy Jewell and Ben Harris, English comedians. The Two Rogues are knock-about dancers who have been featured in many British films, including "Brewster's Millions" with Jack Buchanan and "Evergreen," starring Jessie Matthews. There will also be The Dawn Sisters, American eccentric dancers, and The Blenders, an outstanding male quartette. The revue "Let's Go Places" is well named because in it the whole company literally do "go places," using a huge ocean-going liner to do so. They visit Madeira, New York, Russia, Hungary and Egypt.