

Trinity Methodist Church: Dungarvon Building

38 Main Street E, Almonte

Dates: Built in 1887

Style: Gothic Revival

Architect: M.B. Aylesworth (Toronto)

Current Owner: Chris Loosemore (2012)

Construction: This building was built as a Methodist church in 1887 from locally quarried limestone. The building was constructed in the “most modern style of the time”, a style that is reflected in many other Methodist churches in the province. Since it was a church, it was built with the traditional nave, transept, and apse configuration. Many of the original features of the exterior building remain, but there have been some alterations as well. The total footprint of the building is 75 x 50 feet. It originally had a 90 foot tower at the South corner, which has been reduced to 60 feet. A small turret has also been removed from the facade opposite the tower (see images). It had a circular loft area behind the apse which extends the outer walls a further 8 feet behind the building. This building has four large lancet windows along its length on either side (south east (street) and north west side). Each window has nine panes and a (boarded up) triangular section at the top. Only the northern most window on the street side has 12 panes. All of these windows were stained glass at one time. There is a large trefoil window above the main doors at the Union Street entrance. It is also boarded up in several places and has been redone with rectangular panes. One pane is missing entirely. There are two main doors at what was the main entrance to the building from Union Street north. Each is a set of double doors with simple tracery and a quatrefoil window above, set into a gothic arch in the stone. The arches around the doors and windows are accented by an arched course of darker stone. On either side of the main doors there are thinner double arched windows as well. The tower also has a number of thin arched windows. The building has a large slate shingled gable roof with two small trefoil gablets on the street side. A large chimney rises from the back of the building at the north end. The building has a roomy basement with high-ceilinged rooms that were once used as classrooms, a kitchen, and a cloakroom and were later used to build heavy machinery. A side door with ramp access has been added to the Main street side of the building to help with access to this lower floor. The rear of the building, on the north side, has been remodeled as a condominium apartment. There are two levels of apartment with an entrance at the street level and a flight of metal stairs leading to another entrance at the back of the building.

Notable Features: The notable features of this building include the stonework, the original slate roof and eavestroughing, and the windows. Although the tower has been truncated, it is still a recognized part of Almonte's skyline.

History: *Please note that this is an abbreviated history. This building has a very rich and interesting history that could be the subject of a much longer and more in-depth report.*

The Almonte Methodist church, also known as the Dungarvon building, has had a long and diverse history. The first Methodist church in Almonte was a frame building built in 1860 at Princess and Union Streets, just down the street from where the Dungarvon building stands today. Almonte's new Methodist church was dedicated on June 19, 1887. It was built on the site of the old parsonage, which had been relocated. Eventually, a parsonage was built next door on Union Street in a similar style.

Many prominent Almonte citizens, William Thoburn for example, were involved in the fundraising and planning for the new church, indeed most of the \$10 000 needed to build the church was subscribed by congregation members. Many of the congregants lived in the section of town adjacent to the church which as nicknamed “piety hill”. The architect hired to design the building was Mr. M.B. Aylesworth of Toronto. This building is consistent with the style of Aylesworth's other buildings from that time. Other churches that he designed in Ontario are also in the Gothic Revival style and use similar windows, cladding, and towers. A brick dwelling designed by Mr Aylesworth has recently been designated a heritage property in Collingwood (see notes below). Mr. Aylesworth was subsequently commissioned to design several more buildings in Almonte including William Thoburn's home at 161 Union Street. The masons on the project were William Willoughby along with his sons George and Richard, who subsequently built the Old Town Hall in 1885 and the stone arched bridge across the gorge by the power plant. The Willoughbys also built St. Andrews Church and the masonry for the original iron bridge across the Mississippi in Carleton Place.

At the time of construction, the sanctuary could seat 450 people, with the addition of sliding seats at the end of each row of pews (a feature that was subsequently prohibited by the insurance brokers around 1900). Standing room doubled the capacity of the church. One very popular preacher, the Reverend Dr. Douglas, “the blind orator of Quebec protestantism” from Montreal, preached to over 800 people in the 1880s. At the time of construction, the interior walls were a light stone colour and the moulding was pink. Adam Scott of St John's painted murals on the interior walls in a “very artistic manner”. These murals were still visible in the 1980s and presumably are still visible today.

In 1925 the Protestant churches united and the Methodist church became a part of the United church. This building became known as the Trinity United Church at that time. Although services continued to be offered at the Trinity church, many people decided to attend the Bethany United Church on Elgin street in Almonte instead. The congregation at Trinity United began to shrink and by 1951 it comprised of only 112 members total. The church closed that year. The remaining congregants were forced to begin attending services at Bethany united which eventually became known as Almonte United. This must have caused some sadness and concern as many of those members had been baptized and married in the Trinity church building. In 1940 a crack had appeared in the 90 foot tower and an inspection in 1943 by Raymond Jameison and George Willoughby (mason) resulted in the top 30 feet of the tower being removed for safety reasons. The church was sold in October 1952.

In 1952 H.J. Erikson, owner of Wiring Devices Ltd. of Ottawa purchased the building and intended to employ between 20 and 25 men after converting it into a machine shop.

By the 1960s, the building had been purchased by the Dungarvon Company, a manufacturer of large forestry equipment. Many enormous machines were built in this building. The April 13, 1978 Ottawa Citizen ran a small piece with a photo about a huge machine built by Dungarvon in Almonte. It was the largest machine of its kind in the world at the time, capable of loading full trees to remove them from the bush (no second loading machine was needed). It could handle more than 100 trees at a time. It was built for the North Western Pulp and Power Company in Hinton, Alberta. The photo is of a small boy sitting in one of the 2500lb tires!

Construction History and Current Building

Please see the above section for details on the construction history of this building. The current building, as noted above, has been altered from it's original state but continues to retain many original features. Recently the building has been the subject of municipal scrutiny rising from perceived structural concerns. A report presented to the town by engineers John G. Cook and Associates in May 2012 recommended that the owner “*budget for a multi -year (multi-phase), million dollar conservation programme that would include the replacement of the roof cladding, the*

rebuilding/rehabilitation of the exterior stone masonry, and replacement of wood cornices and windows. No further interior restoration work should proceed until exterior work is complete. The amount of water/moisture infiltration currently getting into the building envelope needs to be addressed immediately.” The alternative suggestion was to demolish the building and sell the stone. A portion of Main street was closed off in the Spring of 2012 due to these concerns. Although the street has now been reopened, the sidewalk remains closed to pedestrians (Fall 2012).

Images



Trinity Methodist Church showing the manse beside.

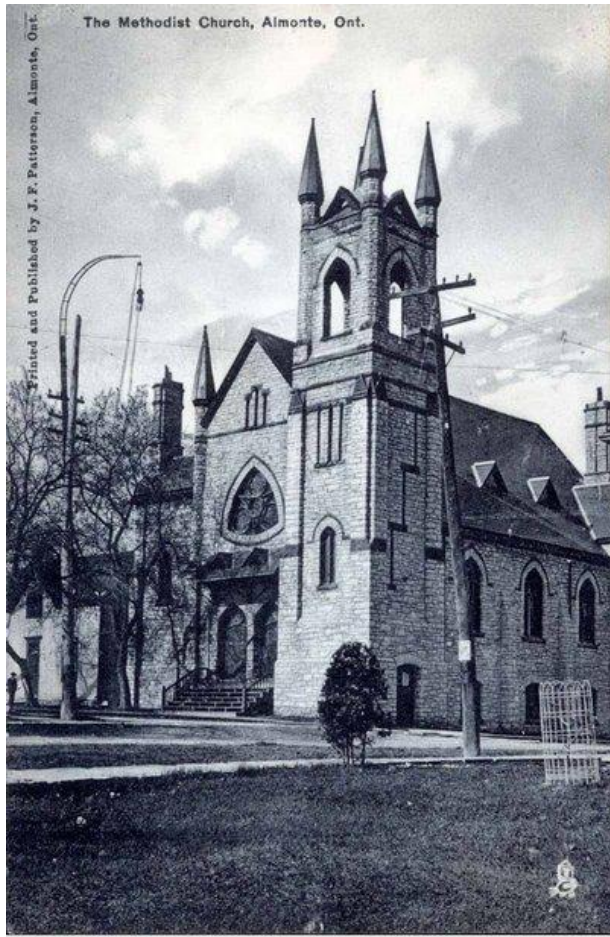


Photo Credit: Nic Macenling

Trinity Methodist circa 1930.



Dungarvon Building Summer 2012.



Dungarvon building Main Street side view Summer 2012.

Sources:

MacIntosh, Winston A., *The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth: A History of Almonte United Church and Its Roots, 1821-1981*. Almonte, Ontario: Almonte United Church, 1989.

Kelly, John King, The Doctors of Almonte ... In the First Half of the Century *Almonte Gazette*, Thursday, June 3, 1971.

Obituary: Marshall Benjamin Aylesworth, www.heritagetrust.on.ca

Ottawa Citizen, October 1, 1952

Ottawa Citizen, April 13, 1978

Brown, Howard M., Mississippi River Main Factor in Industrial Growth, *Carleton Place Canadian*, 21 March, 1957.

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com

www.millstonenews.com

Note: See the following in which a building designed by the same architect was designated in 2011:
<http://www.collingwood.ca/node/4429>

**Research completed August 2012 by Linda Hamilton
for the Mississippi Mills Heritage Committee.**