

HISTORY OF FORMATION OF CHURCH

(Reprinted from the 1981 Wharehuia Church Jubilee Book)

The history of the Church goes back a year before it was built, to 1910. At the time parishioners attended services at the Stanley Road School, which was built in 1895. Sunday School was also held there.

At a meeting held on 27 July 1910, it was proposed by Mr Peter Wellington and seconded by Mr J Jago, that they endeavour to build a United Methodist Church. A committee consisting of Messrs P Wellington, J Jago and RG Fischer was appointed to secure a site on which to build a Church. On 7 September 1910, the committee reported having secured a site on Mr Peter Wellington's property, opposite the Stanley Road School, the price being the cost of surveying the land.

Tenders were called for the erection of the Church on 21 September 1910. Tenders closed in October 1910. The following tenders were received -

Mr J Martin - £195. 0.0
Mr JW Boon - £180. 0.0
Mr A Davis - £163.12.0

It was proposed by Mr RH Witt and seconded by Mr P Wellington that the lowest tender be accepted, that being Mr AJ Davis. On Easter Sunday, 11 April 1911, the Church was opened for worship, the two ministers stationed at Stratford, the Rev B Metson (Primitive) and the Rev CL Harrison (Wesleyan), each conducting a service.

The little country Church of Wharehuia has the distinction of being the first Church in New Zealand to be erected for the United Methodist Church. In 1921 an effort was made to raise funds for the Church to be enlarged and renovated. This cost £218.0.0. Pews were also purchased, these cost £80.0.0. The first hymn-books to be used in 1911 were the Sankey Hymn-books. In 1913 four dozen hymn-books were purchased for 19/- and a further six dozen were purchased for £1.7.0 in 1921.

In 1925 electric lighting was installed. Under the directorship of Mr V Hosking the Church was repaired and painted free of charge in 1936. Again in 1962, £90.0.0 was paid to repair the Church. In 1968 an estimated cost of £70.0.0 was given for work done on renovations to the Church. The Church has also been painted. From information in the minute book this was the last time the Church had work done on it.

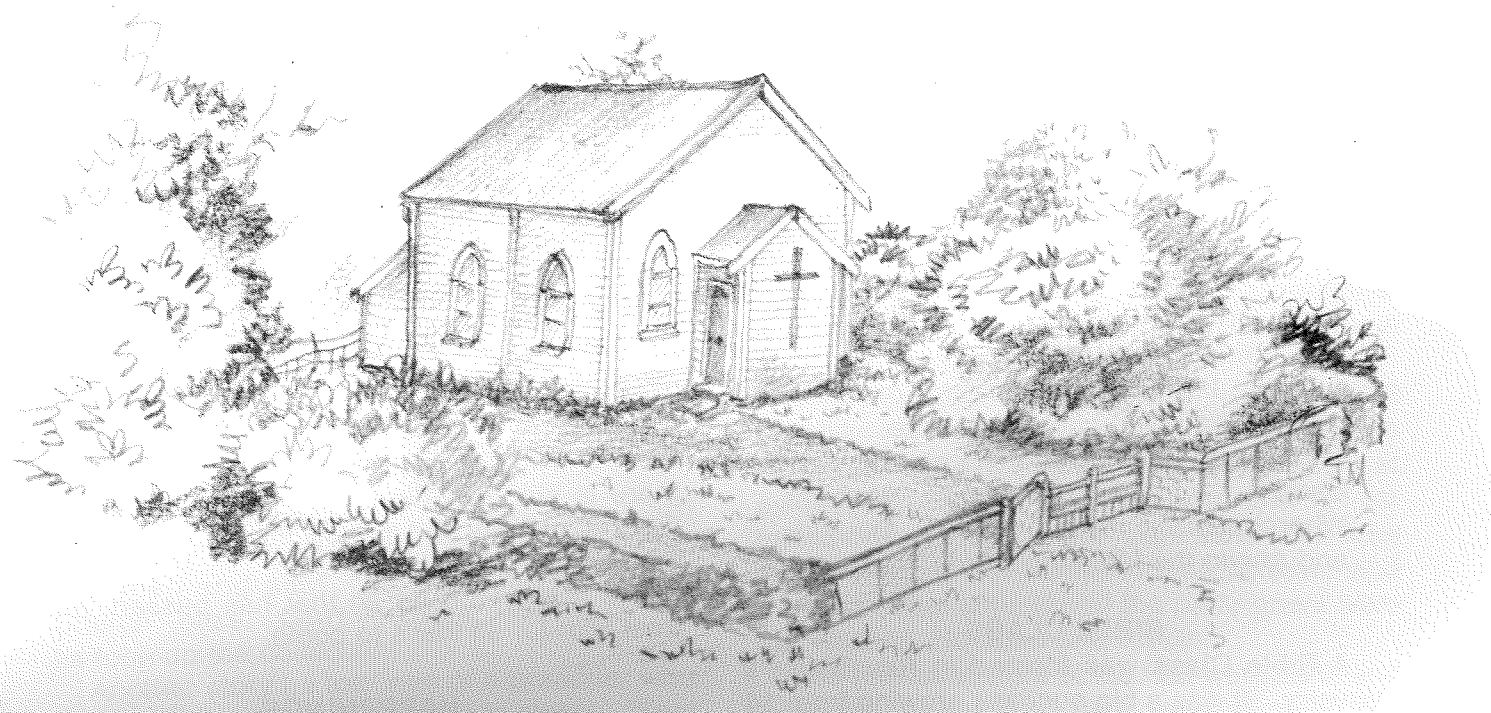
One of the first weddings, if not the first, was a double wedding, that of Hazel and Sillah Saywell to WD Knowles and SB Hall. It has also been said that Mr Len Jago was the first baby christened.

Over the years the Church has held some very fond memories for a number of people.

One of the loveliest Christian graces of the early Church was charity. Today we pay a heartfelt tribute to these pioneers of the Church.

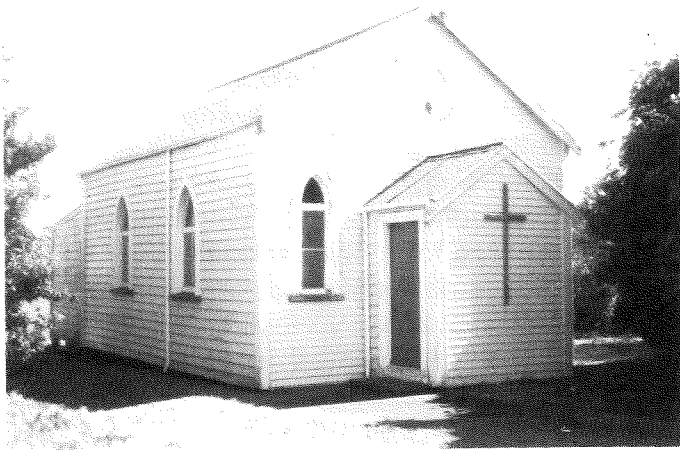
"Today as yesteryear, the Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord".

May we dedicate ourselves afresh to witness for Christ as they did of old.



Janet Marshall's sketch of The Little Country Church

WHAREHUIA CHURCH



Wharehuia Church - 1995

From native bush and virgin soil, Wharehuia had its beginnings. From its timbers a School was erected. This served as School and Church. At a later date, 1911, a Church was built. It stands as a Sentinel on Guard overlooking the District and as a Monument and a reminder of those pioneers who built this Spiritual Altar, and worshipped Sunday by Sunday, knowing that here their strength was found to counter the trials and ills that would befall them. We bow to their wisdom and foresight to know their new world was not complete without their worship, and thank God for bringing them this far.

We have been fortunate in the Ministers who served this Church.

MINISTERS

Over twenty Ministers have served the Church, five of these becoming Presidents of Methodist Conference of New Zealand -

Rev L B Neale BA FRGS
Rev R B Tinsley
Rev C O Hailwood
Rev G R Peterson
Rev Dr K Rowe BA BD STM STD

LOCAL PREACHERS

Again we had preachers of great calibre, Mr McKee being of outstanding ability due to his conversion from a drunkard to a preacher of strength. We loved him with his fire.

There were seven preaching places in all -
Cardiff Huiroa Midhirst
Wharehuia Tuna Douglas
and one in the Manning Home, Makahu

BIBLE CLASS

A Bible Class was formed in Rev Skuse's Ministry. It was a big success growing from 14 students to 35 in a very short time.

The 4 square ideal was developed -
physical social mental spiritual
Six local Preachers went from this group, one becoming a Minister. We learned about our Heritage, how John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" at a Quaker's Meeting.

Result - the Methodist Church was founded.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

There was a rich harvest of Sunday School pupils from the beginning -from one teacher to three in my Sunday School days; devoted teachers giving talent and time happily to the children.

We celebrated wonderful Sunday School anniversaries, teas and concerts.

I remember vividly two wonderful stories told by visiting preachers -

"Jesus is our measuring stick"
"Ideas have legs"

LADIES GUILD

Mrs Skuse felt the ladies needed some social life away from the farming environment. The Guild activities were greatly enjoyed by all who attended. Each Minister's wife became the leader, with the exception of Mrs Peterson who was helped by her husband.

WHAREHUIA FIRESIDE FELLOWSHIP

This Fellowship was born from a falling off of the Methodist women, years later when some had died, others retired to town. It was turned into a Fellowship of ALL Denominations. When we left the District in 1968, Mrs Audrey Johnston (Presbyterian) took over the Presidency and Mrs Marj Hosking (Baptist) was Secretary.

We also invited the Presbyterian Church to share our Church and they held services once a month. We felt we had passed a milestone, as we had Church Union in our little District while other bigger Churches were still talking about it.

It is sad to know that all these functions have now ceased. With the advent of the motor car and the modern pattern of our Church, the members now worship at the Mother Church at Stratford. The "Little Country Church" still stands tall and gives out its message that there is still a God, there is still a Christ (Saviour) and there is still Salvation. In this sin sick world there is still love and there is still hope and there is still faith.

We thank God for all that has passed, and trust Him for all that's to come.

HAPPENINGS

A visiting Minister, taking the Sunday School

Anniversary service, used five bread rolls for his story about the five loaves and two fish. His little two year old son was kept in the pew by his mother. He grew restless and as the address was nearing the end, she let him go. He immediately went up the aisle to his father who sat him in the pulpit chair. He went on with his story and to the amusement of the congregation, a little hand came over the top and took the roll, climbed back into the chair and ate it!

At an evening service once, a visitor from England staying with the Merrifield Family, was upset at the service and at the door when shaking hands with the Minister, complained that he hadn't prayed for those on the sea, and fainted into his arms.

In Charlie Baunton's time, he was known to say that he had never taught in such an honest and clean spoken School before. He attributed this fact to the Sunday School and Church influences on their lives. Mr and Mrs Bird and Ron were converted under the influence of Rev Lionel Fletcher on a radio service. This made a big change in their lives and they became real faithfuls of the Church. Ron became a local preacher and later went to Hawkes Bay among the Maori's with his projector and films. Mrs Bird regularly did a text with the petals from the Phlox flower for the Harvest Festivals. Mr Bird was just full of his new found faith and his face glowed with the joy of it.

Roy Wellington had a miracle healing with his Polio leg, and after the healing had to take off his caliper and put on his normal boot. He gave his caliper and irons to the Stratford Methodist Church.

Rev Harry Moore said the gardens at the Wharehuia Church were the best he had ever seen at a country Church.

Rev Chas Hailwood broke tradition when he took each twin in turn down the aisle after christening them and showed them off. The congregation were delighted. This was an unheard of practice in those days.

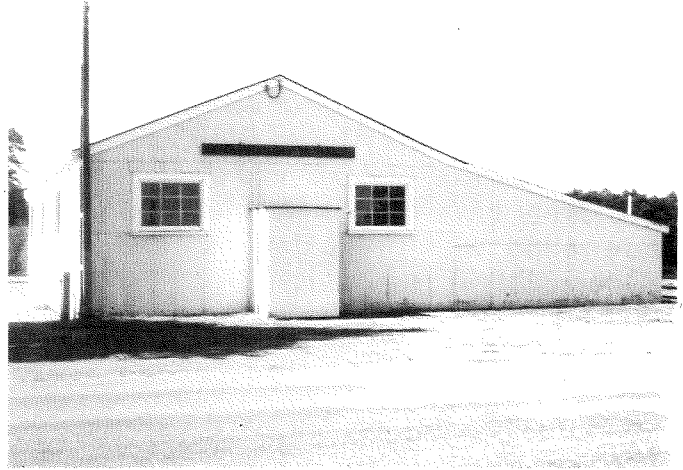
At the 70th Jubilee of the Church, Mr Wickham, an ex local preacher, was given the honour of speaking to a packed Hall. He was in good form and started off by saying he was 58 in reverse. He spoke for a while, and told a story of three men in a boat and a storm arose. There was sheer panic. One man said, "Can't somebody do something?" and he addressed one man and said, "Bill, you have been to Church - once. Can't you do something?". So he took up the collection!

Another story he told was of a preacher who was boring and Len Jago went to sleep. "That wasn't so bad", he said, "but he snored". "That

wasn't so bad but he woke everyone else up".

Gwen Jago

THE WHAREHUIA HALL



Wharehuia Hall - 1995

On 29 November 1935 a householders meeting was called to discuss the erection of a Hall. The Committee formed at that meeting were -

H Gibbs, B Richmond, A Kivell, Messrs Strack, Mackay, Wellington, Jackson, Caldwell and Sherriff.

In May 1936, the Taranaki Education Board gave permission for the Hall to be built on its present site for an annual rental of 5/-. A condition of this grant was that the School have free use of the Hall.

To raise money for the building of the Hall, many functions were held such as dances, gala days, card evenings and raffles. A bazaar was another very successful event with activities such as nail driving, chain stepping, butterfat, shooting, putting, bran tub, sewing, darts, sweets, raffles, sheep guessing, taipo, and stalls for produce, cakes, aprons and meat. The sum of £146-14-8d was also collected in the form of subscriptions from the original meeting held. Tenders were duly called for a 50'x 30' shell with no plumbing.

The Hall was subsequently opened on 2 October 1936 at a total cost of £323-6-1d. To celebrate this event, a Grand Ball was held at an entrance fee of 3/- for gents and 2/- for ladies. Regular dances were held with free buses running from Stratford via Midhirst and the bands that entertained the party-goers were the Vinsens, Hookers and Attrills.

The first caretakers of the Hall were Keith and Noel Wellington, and they were allowed free entry to all functions held as payment for their