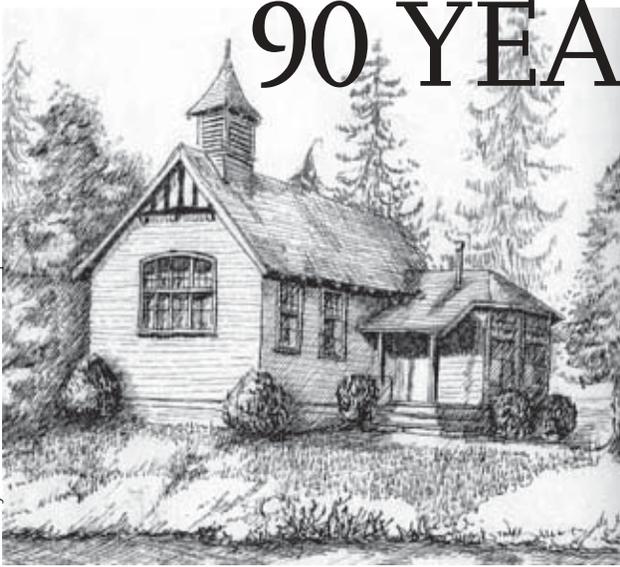


WHONNOCK UNITED CHURCH 90 YEARS OLD

© Harry Blackwell. Used with kind permission of the artist.



In 1914, a Church of Presbyterian faith was built on land donated by John Brodie. Following plans drawn by R.A. Hamilton, contractor-carpenter Olaus Lee constructed the building with volunteer help. The church was dedicated on Sunday, 13 September 1914, in the presence of the Reverend Dr. Alexander Dunn, Whonnock's first Presbyterian minister.

In 1925 the Presbyterian and Methodist churches in Canada amalgamated and Whonnock Presbyterian became Whonnock United Church.

The above is a detail of a drawing of the church by Harry Blackwell. It is shown on the Heritage Plaque attached to the church on the occasion of its 80th anniversary in 1994.

INVITATION

Please join us any Sunday for 11:00 AM worship service followed by coffee and fellowship.

The congregation of the Whonnock United Church welcomes everyone to join the "Heritage Celebration Event" planned for Sunday, 12 September 2004. A church service, lunch, choral presentations will be part of a fascinating afternoon. There will also be a historical "show and tell" and we would like to hear from you regarding any past associations with our church. Please come in heritage attire if you can.

WE NEED HELP TO PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE

Our small congregation urgently needs volunteer labour and donations in kind, and money for the upkeep of the buildings. We are asking the assistance of the community. Anyone who can help us preserve our past please call.

Phone: Jean Ruttan 604 462 7794
Marg Norman 604 462 7519

The Reverend Alexander Dunn & Whonnock

The land where Whonnock United Church stands was once owned by Whonnock's first Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Alexander Dunn.

The story of Presbyterianism in Maple Ridge starts with the Reverend Robert Jamieson, who came from Ontario to New Westminster in 1862 and conducted the first Presbyterian service at the McIvor homestead that year.

In 1875, straight from Scotland, the Reverend Alexander Dunn was assigned to carry on the work began by Mr. Jamieson. Mr. Dunn lived in Langley and for a decade he served the settlers on both sides of the Fraser River from Yale to Eburne (Marpole), including Maple Ridge.

Mr. Dunn married Annie Kern from Ontario in 1882. The couple left Langley in the spring of 1886 and, after a few months of "rest and change," in Ontario, Mr. Dunn began a pastorate at Port Alberni. Two years later, in the spring of 1888, the minister and his wife returned to the mainland.

At that time the people at Mount Lehman and Port Haney were completing their own church building, and each of the two communities would have welcomed the well-respected Mr. Dunn as a resident. He, however, moved to Whonnock although there was no church building there and only a small number of Presbyterians.

Before he left Langley for Port Alberni the Reverend Alexander Dunn had purchased 80 acres of land—the core of Whonnock—from another "Old Kirk" man, Robert Robertson, the first white settler in Whonnock. The coming of the railroad in 1885 and the fact that Whonnock had a station were good reasons to invest in land in Whonnock. Mr Dunn knew Robert Robertson because, from the minister's arrival in British Columbia the Shetlander had rowed him tirelessly up and down the Fraser between Mission and Eburne and "Robbie" would continue to do so after Whonnock became the centre of Dunn's pastorate.

Radiating out from Whonnock the Reverend Alexander Dunn started serving the settlements on the north shore of the Fraser between Yale and Whonnock as well as Mt. Lehman and Aldergrove. Around 1890 [1892?] his field included St. Andrews in Port Haney. The Reverend and Mrs. Dunn lived in Whonnock until 1905, when the minister retired. By that time they had sold their 80 acres land, reaping the rewards for their confidence in Whonnock's future. *fb*

A brief history of the Presbyterian Church in Whonnock before 1914

During the almost 18 years of his stay in Whonnock, the Reverend Alexander Dunn conducted Sunday worship. From an old diary we know that he preached every month in Whonnock and that people from the Stave River area and from across the river joined the Whonnock residents in the small schoolhouse on the edge of the Fraser River to hear Mr. Dunn speak.

The school seems to have been a satisfactory location for the minister as well as his pioneer flock, however, after Mr. Dunn's retirement in 1905 a wave of new settlers moved to the area and in 1910 a small group of these new residents, dedicated Presbyterians, met at the school "to discuss the local management of the church" in Whonnock. They committed themselves "towards the furtherance of the Gospel in connection with the Presbyterian Church at Whonnock." The men's names were: John Brodie, R. Aikman, Hugh Steele, R.A. Hamilton, J.P. Thompson, J.S. Black. Also present was one woman: Mrs. Brodie. A little later, in January 1911, the gentlemen formed a "managers committee," including James Rolley, the only committee member who had been a long-time Whonnock resident.

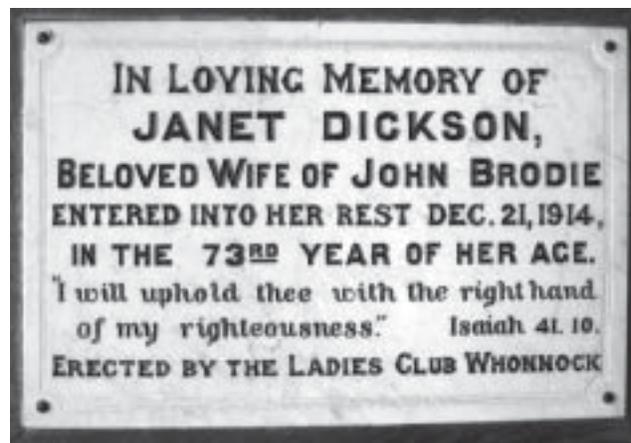
In the spring of 1912, the sections Whonnock, Ruskin, Albion, and Silverdale were removed from the Haney congregation and the Reverend George Fisher was appointed to the new field. He started giving weekly services to Ruskin and Albion and fortnightly services to Whonnock and Silverdale. However, as the number of newcomers joining the church in Whonnock kept growing, in 1913 Whonnock asked for and was granted a weekly service as well. Added to the roll were the names of Mrs. F. Pullen, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Graham, Capt. and Mrs. E. Reid, Mr. and Mrs. E. Cuthbert, Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Wright, Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Graham.

In 1913 the Ladies' Aid Society of Whonnock Presbyterian Church was formed, with Mrs. Captain Reid, Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Cuthbert, and Mrs. Gott at the helm. (Mrs. Gott moved away in the fall of that year.) The society's object was to further the financial and social interests of the church and community. The ladies immediately went to work. A home cooking sale at the newly built Ladies Hall was their first activity followed by a plethora of other money-generating projects: sewing (it is amazing how many aprons could be sold in a small community like Whonnock), knitting, musical programs, lantern slide lectures.

Up to this time the school was still being used, for the small fee of 25¢. However, as the number of new members increased the congregation began to think about a

proper church building. At an annual "business and social meeting" of January 1914 Mr. Brodie suggested to build a church and a motion directed the "managers" to "take steps towards the erection of a church to cost \$500." The amount was guaranteed by Mr. Brodie and according to him already subscribed.

A few months later the congregation assembled once more, this time to hear that the cost for material and labour for the building of a church seating 100 was estimated at \$800. The women of Ladies' Aid were prepared to borrow and repay the difference up to \$300 to assure that the church would be built. The congregation agreed to borrow the amount, but Mr. Aikman did not want to see the congregation going into debt and resigned as a manager. It proved to be a heavy burden for the congregation; the final cost of the church and its furnishings would be \$1,129.10. But sufficient money was raised, mainly by subscription, and the debt was cleared off by 1918. Special thanks went to Mr. John Brodie, convener of the building committee, and to Ladies' Aid. *fb*



This tablet, attached to a wall in the vestry of the church, was presented by the "Ladies Club" formed in 1911 (not Ladies' Aid) who built the Ladies Hall—completed in 1912—later known as Whonnock Memorial Hall.

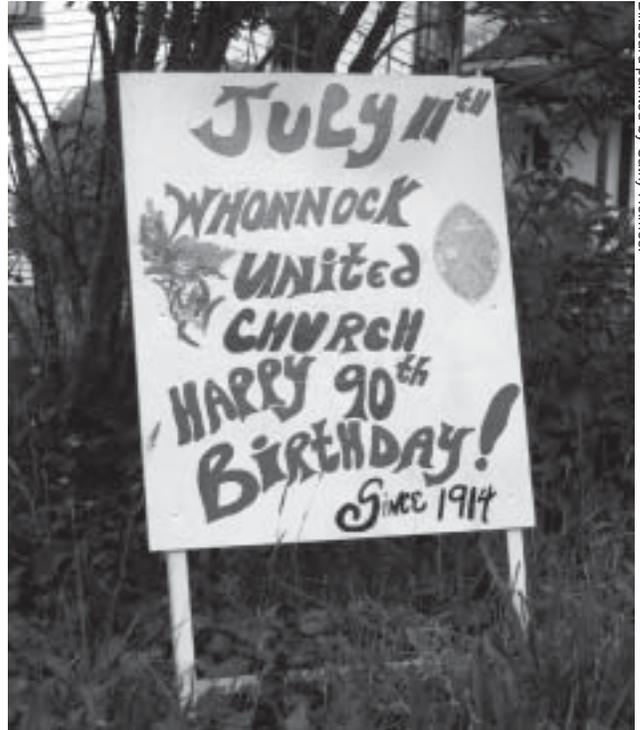
Janet and John Brodie were clearly the driving force behind the building of the church. They gave their personal guarantees for the financing of the building of the church and donated the land on which the church stands. John Brodie never lost his interest in the church and its wellbeing. He remained active in the affairs of the church, until he retired as senior elder and superintendent and treasurer for the Sunday School at age eighty. After John Brodie died in 1938 his house became today's Christian Education Building



The beautiful pews in the United Church were purchased in 1927 by the Ladies' Aid Society from Valley City Seating in Dundas Ontario for an amount of \$349, including freight. "They were shipped to us in the flat with all the equipment for setting them up. Mr. Drewry brought them from the station and undertook to put them together and place them. Mrs. Drewry was the assistant as it required two people." At the following congregation meeting the managers extended a very hearty vote of thanks to the Ladies' Aid "for this most acceptable gift."



At a special meeting in June 1933 the congregation agreed to build a church hall adjacent to the church. The work was assigned to a Mr. MacBryer of Whonnock for \$357. This photo from the 1930s shows the hall to the right of the vestry. The extension was made possible by subscriptions and volunteer services.



Billboard painted by Cathy Holmes.

The date is now 12 September 2004.



The Brodie house is now the Christian Education Building.



Entrance to the Whonnock United Church, 2004. The vestry to the right. The steeple was added in the 1930s.

A brief history since Union in 1925

Immediately preceding union there were fifty members on the communion roll and some thirty families interested in the work. Our minister at that time was Rev. Wm. Burton. There were a very active Sunday School and Ladies' Aid.

Following Church Union in June 1925, Rev.C.H.Daly was our minister, the work progressing as before with approximately the same number of communicants. At this time an official board was formed for the government of the charge; that being Haney, Albion, and Whonnock.

In 1927, Rev.P.Henderson took over the pastorate. During the year pews were installed in the church building—a gift of the Ladies' Aid.

By 1929, our membership had decreased to forty-two due to several members moving to other centres. In June 1930 the Rev. T.R.Peacock took over the field. At this time there were forty-five members and about thirty-five families interested in the work. During Mr. Peacock's ministry the field was rearranged, combining Ruskin, Whonnock and Websters Corners. At this time a fund was started for the building of a church hall.

In June 1933, Rev.H.S.Hastings came to us and during his ministry the church hall was completed. In 1935, Mr.John Brodie retired as Sunday School Superintendent, having served in that capacity since 1913.

In June 1936, Rev.F.H.Stevens came to us; this representing another change in the field—it now being Haney, Websters Corners and Whonnock. In June 1937, with the field being again rearranged, we were served from Coquitlam by Rev.W.A.Guy. During this time the church was presented with air organ by Mr.& Mrs.Waters. The organ was first purchased in Canada sent to England and finally returning to Canada and eventually arriving for use in our church.

Again in June 1939, the field was re-arranged and Whonnock attached to Hatzic, Dewdney and Clayburn with Rev.A.Mackay as minister. The membership had dropped to twenty-six at this time, some having moved to other fields and others being removed by death.

In June 1943, Rev.R.W.Hibbert came to the field and the work progressed as usual with twenty-six members and about thirty families interested. During Mr.Hibbert's stay with us, Mr.L.C.Muston retired after some twenty years service as organist.

In June 1947, Rev.Dr.Norah Hughes came to us. This was our first experience as a congregation of a lady minister and it was a very worthwhile experience and one we will long remember.

In June 1949, Rev.W.A.MacIntosh came to us and is our present minister. There are seventeen active members on the roll — some other names are still on but the mem-

bers are non-resident. About twenty-five families are interested in the work of the church. At present there is no Sunday School.

In the course of the twenty-five years, we have lost three elders by death. At present we have two elders. It is interesting to note our senior elder, Mr.Robert A. Hamilton was the architect for our church building which was erected in 1914 with voluntary labor under the supervision of a carpenter.

There are five or six members of the official board. The present ones have served for some years with only minor changes. We have had thirty-two baptisms in the twenty-five years.

Compiled by the late Mary (Drewry) Elliot in 1950

Recent past in brief

In the 1950s the church property entrance was changed and the front grounds were raised. During the 1960s and 1970s carpets were installed and the roof was replaced.

In the 1980s the Education Centre was furnished, carpets and linoleum for the kitchen and bathroom were installed with the aid of a grant from the Old Age Pensioners Association.

In the 1990s the late Reverend Gary Dickson presided over the congregation and when Whonnock United Church celebrated its 80th birthday he was instrumental in obtaining the Heritage Plaque. It was erected on April 17, 1994 in the presence of the Mayor of Maple Ridge, Mr. Carl Durksen, and the community. The dedication, a program of the Heritage Advisory Committee, was a joyous occasion for anyone with connections to this rich community. During the latter part of the decade, several extraordinary ministers built a thriving membership.

Reverend Anna Christie (1998–2001) is best remembered by Art and Soul, brightening young lives with music and theatre.

The Reverend Clayton Arkesteyn-Vogler has been ministering at Whonnock United Church since 2001. At 11:00 AM, every Sunday morning, the congregation begins by sharing their stories of the week, their joys, concerns, introductions and announcements. Words of assurance and prayers for the people are enveloped in hymns that are delivered with cheerful, if not rustic, enthusiasm and praise. *Cathy Holmes*

Original church records are kept at the Maple Ridge Museum and Archives, and the United Church of Canada British Columbia Conference Archives in Vancouver. Katherine H. Loewen and Lillian A. Collins collected copies of many original records and transcribed others. These are available at Whonnock United Church. Copies of some records are kept at the Whonnock Archives.