

A Good Place to Meet

The Mount Hamilton Horticultural Society moved to a new location in January 2019. It might be interesting to survey all the places at which the Society has held meetings in the past. Since September 1953, there have only been three main meeting places. The move to Immanuel Christian Reformed Church will be the fourth. Prior to 1953, however, the venues were much more numerous

The Society was formed at an organizational meeting held at Brown's Hall on 18 May 1927. As was noted in the previous article, the precise location of Brown's Hall on Concession St. remains a mystery. City directories of the time do not list any building with that name.

For the first twelve years, general meetings were arranged haphazardly. There was no real advanced planning. The directors would have a meeting and then decide that a general meeting would be held, usually within a week or two. A speaker was arranged and a location to have the meeting would be procured. A notice was then mailed to members.

Some of the locations at which the Society met in its early years were Brown's Hall, Lloyd George School, Mission Hall, the Mountain Library, St. Stephen-on-the-Mount Anglican Church Parrish Hall and Lyceum Hall, all on Concession St. The latter still exists today under the name, Zoetic Theatre, at 526 Concession. Another venue was Chalmers Presbyterian Church, on Mountain Park Avenue, where the Society held some of its annual dinners in the early 1940s.

The date and locations of two general meetings from 1933 are known. One was held at Mission Hall on 31 March, the other in the Parrish Hall of St. Stephen-on-the-Mount Anglican Church on 29 September. On both occasions, Dick the Amateur Gardener was the speaker. People had to be turned away from that first meeting, and that is why they went to a larger hall when Dick came back in September. He was a skilled gardener and radio personality who had a gardening show on radio station CKOC 1150 that, for several years, could be heard weekdays at 12:30 p.m.

By 1938, the directors of the Society started to think about the growing west mountain and planned to have a general meeting in the 'west end' in May 1938. It was held at Olivet United Church, located at 40 Empress Avenue, a block and a half east of Upper James. That was considered the 'west end' in those days. Another meeting was held there in May 1939.

Except for the Annual General Meetings (AGMs) in January, there are no surviving minutes of the general meetings prior to 1939. Only rarely is a date and location known, but things started to change. At the 10 January 1939 directors' meeting, it was suggested that the "Society try and arrange meetings ahead of time, say 3 or 4 months ahead".

A general meeting in Nov. 1936, several in 1937 as well as the 1937 and 1939 AGMs were held at the Dale Community Centre and it, along with Jolley Hall, would become home to most of the MHHS's meetings from the late 1930s through 1947. The vast majority of these were held at Jolley Hall.

The Dale Community Centre was originally a stone house built by James Jolley in 1864 at the corner of Concession and (East) 15th St. It was known as Bellemont, and yes, it is the same Mr.

Jolley after whom the Jolley Cut is named. Jolley died in 1892, and the building passed through several owners before it was bought by the Dale Community Club. After renovations, it opened in March 1936 as a community centre. There was a barn at the back of the property. It was renovated in 1940, also as a venue for community groups, and it was known as Jolley Hall.

In late April 1947, the Director of the Dale Centre, a Miss Jennison, informed the executive of the MHHS that if they wanted to stay at the Dale Centre/Jolley Hall they would have to pay more rent, change their 3rd Friday of the month meetings to another day and would have to undertake some sort of beautification project on the Dale Centre's grounds. The Society was not willing to abandon the 3rd Friday of the month as a time to meet, so they moved.

The MHHS spent 1948 at Lloyd George School on Concession and used five different venues in 1949. Five of those meetings were held at the newly built Queensdale School, in the 'west end', a few blocks east of Upper James. The Society would continue at that location until June 1953. They had to move by the Fall of 1953 because the school's auditorium was being converted into classrooms. Where to? Several venues were considered, but Olivet United Church's offer of free rent for the rest of the year facilitated the Society's decision to move there. They would stay for 30 years.

By 1981, things started to change. The January 1981 Bulletin, which is what the Society's newsletter was called in those days, reported that, due to a rescheduling of the rooms at Olivet United Church, the MHHS would have to hold its Friday meetings in the upstairs meeting room and not in the downstairs gym. Members now had to walk up to the third floor. The membership was not happy. In the June 1981 Bulletin, there was a questionnaire. Members were asked three questions: 1). Do you want to stay on the third floor and continue to have meetings on Friday nights? 2). Do you want to return to the gym downstairs and meet on Wednesday nights? 3). Do you want to look for a new location with a meeting place on one floor?

The Nov. 1981 Bulletin reported that a vote on where to meet in 1982 was held at the Oct. 1981 general meeting. For the first time in the club's history, meetings were no longer held on the third Friday of the month. The members chose to have their meetings in 1982 in the downstairs gym on Wednesday nights, the only option available to them if they wanted to avoid walking up three flights of stairs.

No executive meeting minutes survive from 1982, but one can only assume that there was a concerted effort to find a new location so that the Society's aging membership would not have to deal with a lot of stairs and so that meetings could return to Friday nights.

The goal was achieved because the January 1983 general meeting was held on the third Friday at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, located at 120 Fennell Ave. E, one block east of the plaza at Upper James and Fennel. The Jan. 1983 Bulletin stated that the move was made "for the convenience of our members. This church is all on one floor, and there are no stairs to climb."

The MHHS stayed at Holy Trinity until October 1999. In Nov 1999, President Helen MacPherson oversaw the move to Chedoke Presbyterian Church on Mohawk Rd. W. at Magnolia Drive. President Kathy Spiwak ushered in a new era when the Society moved to Immanuel Christian Reformed Church for its first meeting in January 2019. The new venue has proved to be very

popular. It's brighter, it's warmer, and the acoustics are superb. We are hoping that it is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Written by Stephen J. Kostyshyn