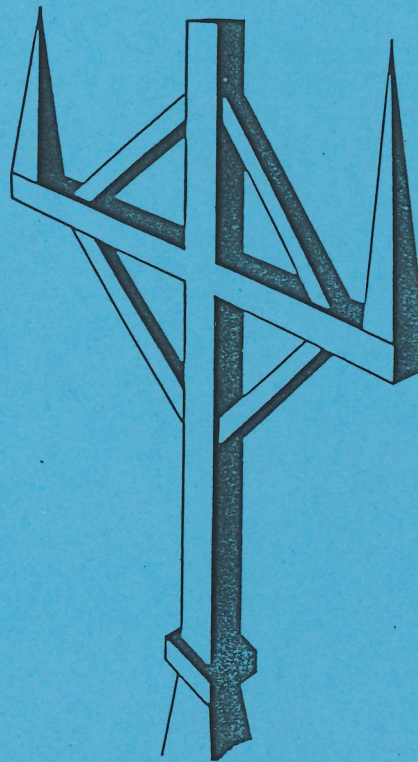


A SOUVENIR HISTORY  
OF THE HISTORIC  
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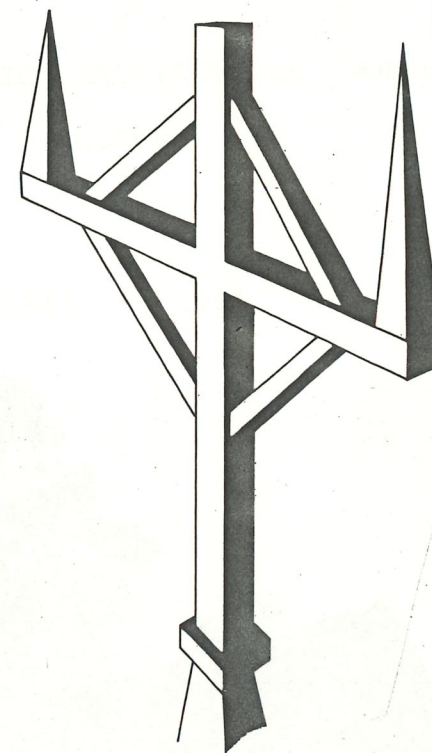


1881 — 1981

BY ENID MARY SEYMOUR



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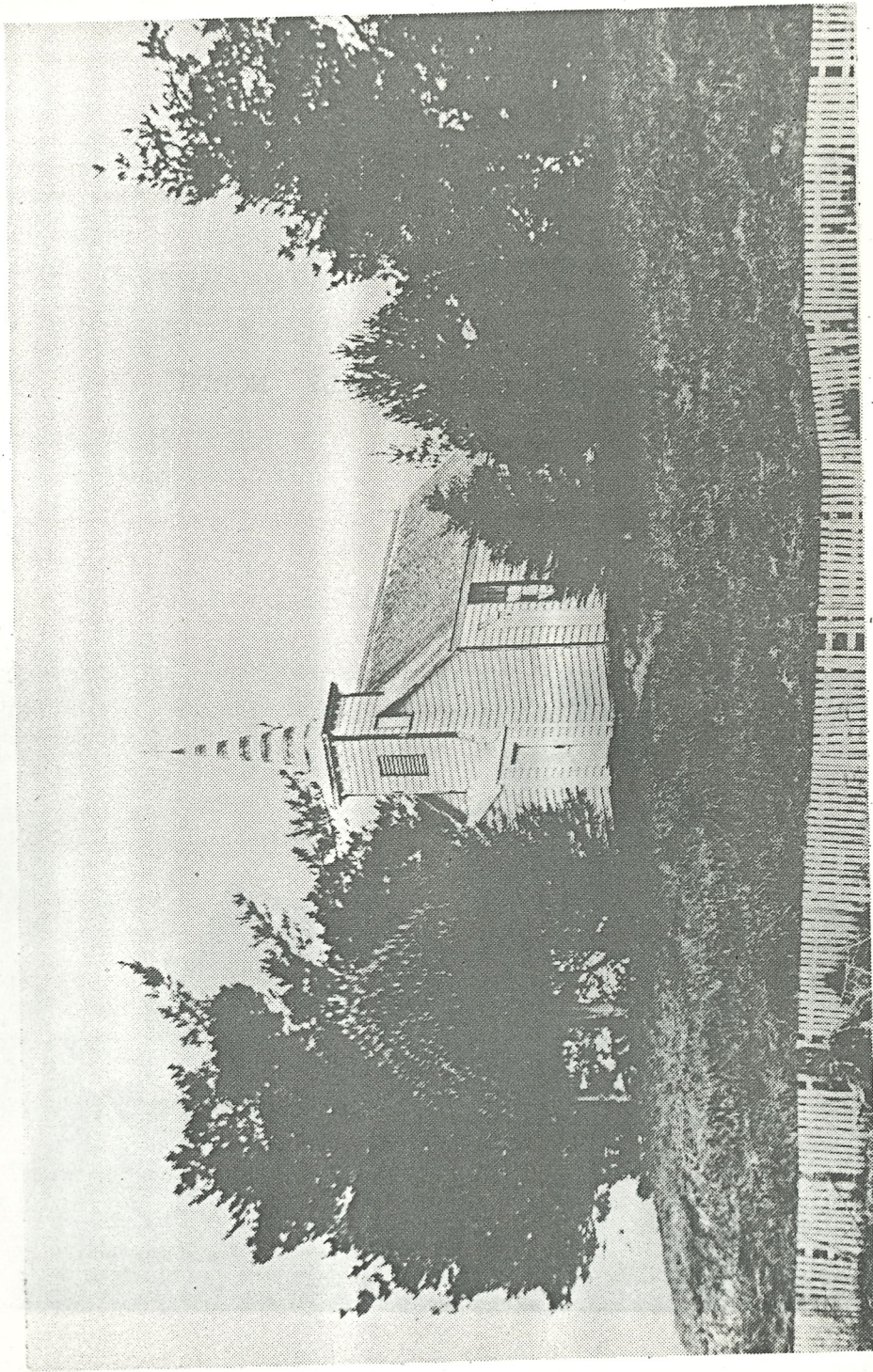


SOUVENIR STORY  
OF  
THE HISTORIC MAURICEVILLE NORTH  
CHURCH

1881 - 1981







Earliest photograph of the Mauriceville North Church taken not many years after it was built.

Dedicated to my Dear Husband  
 Claude Stanley Seymour  
 1914 - 1977

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Who, because of his excellent memory,  
 intimate knowledge of, and very deep  
 love for the Mauriceville North Church,  
 planned to dictate its story to me to  
 write for you all, during the two years  
 preceeding its centennial in 1981.



# PREFACE

This is the story of a small church of historical significance established one hundred years ago in the small North Wairarapa valley of Mauriceville North. The Church building is modest. It stands on a hill surrounded by old gravestones and grazing sheep. It is build of pit sawn timber and measures only 30 feet by 18 feet. During this one hundred years, the Mauriceville North Church has been the social centre of the valley and adjoining district of Hastwell, It has always been profoundly important to the many people who lived there.

The Church also has historical significance that reaches beyond the concerns of those with direct links. It is the first church built in North Wairarapa, on the "Forty Mile Bush" as the area was known - an area extending from Kopuranga to the Manawatu Gorge.

The Mauriceville North valley lies approximately 18 miles north of Masterton, and nine miles south of Eketahuna. The district was settled by Norwegian immigrants during the 1870's. On the original map of the Mauriceville North settlement thirty sections are found. Each one had as its frontage the roadside, with a house or slab hut built close by. The population in the area of that time was extremely concentrated as most families had many children. Today, along the same road only three homes are left - six children between them. Services at the Church are held perhaps three times a year.

The little Church on the Hill was originally registered with the American Methodist Church - Mother Church of the Norwegian

Methodist Church - "Possibly the only Methodist Church in New Zealand to be so affiliated", writes the Rev. Len Willing of Hawera. Later it became part of the New Zealand Methodist Church within the Eketahuna "Home Mission Station". Today the Church is part of the "Ekatahuna Union Parish" - a union between Methodist and Presbyterian Churches.

Local participation in Church administration has been in the hands of elected Trustees. The first Trustees of the Church were chosen by the people at a meeting on 24 July, 1882. They were Hans Larsen, Thorsten Larsen, and Neils Andersen. From that time onwards, rent from the Leasee of the small piece of ground outside which they fenced off (only five acres), was paid into the Church Trust Account. To this day the account is still administered by local Trustees of the Church for the maintenance of its building. As early Church records were lost, it is not known who first leased the land nor what sums of money were paid. However, we do know that never, at any time, has the Mauriceville North Methodist Church been one of wealth.

Today the long term future of the Church building is under threat. While there is still much interest from descendants and the few local residents, there is an insufficient regular congregation to ensure its continued upkeep. This story was completed in early December 1980 and I discovered, with deep thanksgiving that the New Zealand Historical Places Trust may now take over the supervision and care of the Mauriceville North Church. During my lifetime in the district I advocated and hoped this would come to pass. This building belongs to generations yet to come. It is a living symbol of our everlasting faith in God, and the courage, enterprise, and perseverance that characterized so many of our forebears.



The compiling and writing of this story has been, since the death of my husband, a task of devotion to him. I have endeavoured to present as true a recording as is possible. My sincere thanks go to the many people who have helped me, in any way, with my work.

Enid Mary Seymour

## BEGINNINGS

Any church is conceived in the minds of people before its birth and growth. The Mauriceville North Church had its beginnings in America about the year 1849 when a young Norwegian sailor, Ole Peter Petersen, heard an evangelistic sermon preached by a Methodist Minister in New York. He was so inspired that he finally trained as a Minister of that faith, before returning to Norway. In that year 1856 he was instrumental in organising the first Methodist Church in that country at Sarpsborg.

In New Zealand in 1870 Julius Vogel and members of Parliament required settlers of fine character and certain skills and capabilities to open up roading through a huge area of bush, which formed a barrier between Wellington and the Wairarapa provinces, and those of Hawkes Bay and Rangitikei.

Sea roving Scandinavian people from 1860 onwards were finding conditions in their homelands overcrowded. Previously, much migration had taken place to America, but adventurous spirits began to look to more distant lands. Needs of the old and new worlds coincided. The New Zealand Government sent men to Scandinavian countries to enlist people for immigration. Ultimately, a group of hardy, healthy, adventurous people arrived at Port Nicholson in the sailing ship "England" on 9 March, 1872. Some of these people belonged to the new Norwegian Methodist Church.

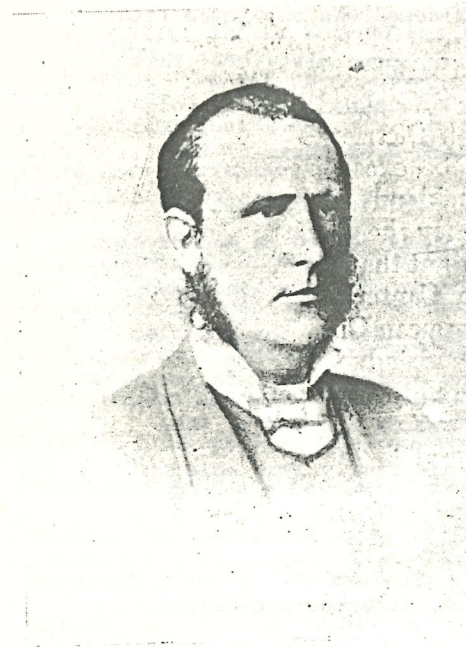
Thirteen men, chosen from the group of settlers, set out on foot from Wellington to reach that site of land which became known as



"The Camp" at Dryerton, now called Kopuranga, on April 10, 1872. These men erected a group of rough dwellings to house their wives and families and those of the rest of the ship's immigrants. Later that year, and during the following years, other ships "Hovding" and "Ballarat" to Napier, and "Farfarshire" and "Halcione" to Wellington, brought more settlers to join their fellow countrymen at the Camp.

It was not until March of 1873 that a group of people, mainly Norwegian, were able to take possession of their allotted land of forty acres each. The men, as soon as they had settled at Dryerton, had been busy doing what they had come across the world to do. Gradually the road moved northwards. It generally followed through dense bush the path of the Kopuranga river up the valley from the Mauriceville area to that one formed by the Makakahi river. From this newly formed road a rough walking track was cut through what was known as the "Maori" bush, into the Mauriceville North Valley. This place was isolated from the other Scandinavian settlements by a high ridge known as the North Hill. It was not roaded for several years. Because of these isolating factors the new settlers were a national unit, with the Norwegian language, of course, dominating in the valley.

All Scandinavian peoples had a very deep love of their religion. It was as much part of their lives as eating and sleeping. Back at home in Norway a certain young man, a Methodist Missionary, had it "laid on his heart" to follow his countrymen to New Zealand so that they "might not be without a shepherd". Pastor Edward Neilsen, born at Rakkrstad in Norway in 1842, with his wife and family arrived in Auckland early in 1874. Shortly after, a Methodist



Conference in that city appointed him a Home Missioner to the newly founded Scandinavian Methodist Mission of Palmerston North. From there, Pastor Edward Neilsen was able to visit the Scandinavian people and it was not long before he travelled to the settlements of his people at Norsewood in Hawkes Bay and Mauriceville in the Wairarapa.

In the valley of Mauriceville North, from time to time, since early 1873, passing ministers of various denominations had stayed

Pastor Edward Neilsen at homes in the community to conduct services which most people attended. It was said that any man who wore a collar "back to front" and carried a Bible, was always a welcome guest in the community. What a welcome Pastor Edward Neilsen must have received upon his arrival! It did not take much encouragement from him to make the people realise that they needed a Church of their own.

On 2 August, 1879 a site of five acres, two roods of land was bought by the community for thirty five pounds from a section owned by Neils Neilsen. The place was ideal, reminiscent of sites for Churches in their homeland, Norway. Even though some of their own allotments were still not clear, these good people set to work. The dense bush on the Church land was soon felled by voluntary labour.



In the year 1880 Pastor Otto Christoffensen was appointed Methodist Home Missioner to the Mauriceville North district. This man was architect and main builder of the Mission House which he was to occupy with his family. Aided by members of the community a cottage of five rooms, at a cost of one hundred and fifty pounds was very soon erected. Trees felled on the section were hauled to a pit below, near the roadside, and hand sawn into slabs carefully planed before being used in the erection of the house. Shingles were adzed and prepared from fallen trees to cover the roof of the dwelling. Towards the end of that year Pastor Otto Christoffensen with his family were able to move into their new home.

Next, this talented young man designed, directed and helped to build on top of the hill, a small Church, thirty by eighteen feet, to seat seventy people. Voluntary labour for the task was willingly given by those deeply religious people of the valley. The timber for this building, which cost two hundred pounds to erect, was cut from trees growing on the property of Mr Ole Amundsen. Like those for the cottage, logs were hauled to the same pit to be sawn into slabs. The Church was built on typically Norwegian architectural lines. The steeply shingled roof, twenty-two feet high, tapered upwards towards the sky. A shingled bell tower, topped by a very original Norwegian cross, pointed far above. The surrounding hills were a perfect background to form a picture so satisfying to homesick adherents!

Although small, this new building contained a pulpit and full communion railing. The bell tower was constructed behind a gallery which was to hold the Church choir. Seats for the

congregation in the body of the Church, and the gallery were all built from pit sawn timber. The whole of the painting of the the Church, inside and out, was done mainly by the wife of Pastor Otto Christoffensen!

A white Norwegian china bowl, ringed at the top in blue, was used to hold water for baptism at the first, and all future christenings. A much revered Silver Chalice, donated to the people of the district in the year 1878 by Pastor Edward Neilsen, has remained with the Church from the time it was opened. The original Church "collection" plate of metal, covered by what was once bright red velvet, has been, and still is, used at all services for its original purpose. On the wall of the Church, behind and above the pulpit, still hangs today, in its original frame, a now fading printed text in old Norwegian. I made a copy of this not long after I came into the district in 1940 and had it translated by a scholar visiting New Zealand from Norway in 1974.

#### *Footnote One*

*The first baby to be christened at Mauriceville North was Adolf Larsen, eldest son of Lars and Mary Josephine Larsen. To date, the last baby christened was William David Buick - son of Julie Ann Buick (nee Doyle) grand-daughter of Adolf Larsen - on May 20, 1979.*

#### *Footnote Two*

*The first couple married in the new Church were Lars Larsen and Mary Josephine Amundsen, in September 1881. The last couple to date to be married in the Church were Frederick Seymour (great-grandson of Hans, older brother of Lars) and Vanessa Farland, in January 1969.*



Saturday, 9 July, 1881 was set aside by the Community for the official opening. Fortunately, it was a beautiful fine sunny day. Early in the morning visitors and friends were invited to the Mission House for tea. A beautiful spread of many goodly things, provided by the ladies of the district, were enjoyed by all. The party proceeded to the Church where, it is said, 120 people crowded into the new building. Traditional seating took place as the crowd filed slowly into the Church - men and older boys to the right, women, older girls and children to the left. The trained choir climbed the steep stairway to take their seats in the gallery. Pastor O. Christoffensen offered a prayer which was followed by the singing of a hymn then an excellent address. Rev. John Dukes, a Methodist Minister from Masterton, spoke in English on "the Universal adaptation of Religion in Christ". Mr W. Bayliss from Eketahuna next addressed the gathering on "the common aims and sympathies of colonial settlers". He congratulated the people on having built the *first Church in the forty mile bush area.*

After a meal at noon, a special service of thanksgiving was held. At three o'clock, a third most important service was led by Pastor E. Neilsen, who had travelled from Norsewood, where he was stationed. He was given the honour of placing a Memorial stone box containing important documents pertaining to the Church, under the building beneath the centre of the Communion Railing. This box was unearthed by Church Trustees, Cecil and Claude Seymour, Mick Manihera, and helpers about the year 1960. Alas, it contained, when opened, only unreadable fragments of what could have been priceless documents. The box itself can be found today behind the Church porch entrance door.

Before the closing of that momentous day, yet another service was held in the evening. There were four services, occupying eight hours, attended happily by all residents in the Valley. Then it is recorded that next day, on Sunday 10 July, 1881, there were three more services of thanksgiving. Prior to the weekend a small debt of eleven pounds remained on the building. At the conclusion of that glorious time the hardworking people of Mauriceville North had succeeded, not only in erecting their Church free of debt, but found they had two pounds, seventytwo pence to the good. This sum became the foundation of the Church Trust Account.



EARLY YEARS

From 1881 to 1883 Pastor O. Christoffensen served in the work of the Church, preaching on Sundays, performing marriage and christening ceremonies, and regularly visiting the local people. In the year 1883 Rev. Edward Neilsen, the much beloved former Pastor, came to live with his family at the mission House. He cared for his people and Church until 1886 when he left for a similar position at Norsewood. Pastor O. Christoffensen and his family returned that year to Mauriceville North but only for three more years. On Easter Monday of 1889 the people of the district farewelled their much loved Pastor O.

Christoffensen and his family, who left them and New Zealand for America - back to the country to which their Church was affiliated!

Mauriceville North and Eketahuna, now a thriving centre in North Wairarapa, were, early in 1891, constituted a "Home Mission Station" with their agent Mr T. S. Smith based at Eketahuna, in charge. Because of pressure from a younger generation, taught to speak English at school, services at the Mauriceville North Church from 1892 onwards were conducted in that language. A new era dawned for the Church. The Norwegian language, so pleasant to the ear with its soft "singsong" rhythm, gradually became lost. The Church house no longer occupied by a minister, was let to members from the community.

On October 21, 1893, in the Mauriceville North Church, a sacred concert was held to aid funds. This was organised by Mr McCaffery, choir leader, ably helped by Miss Duff, the local organist. Refreshments provided by local ladies were served halfway through the entertainment, in a large tent erected at the rear of the building. Addresses were given by Rev T. J. Smith, Rev Christiansen, a Lutheran Minister from Mauriceville West, and Messrs Pratt, Johnstone and Chisholm - chairman of the local trust. It is of interest to note that money collected amounted to eight pounds.

May 12, 1884, saw another crowded Church. A Social was held at Mauriceville North for the purpose of raising funds to aid Rev Edward Neilsen, now living in Palmerston North, who was in poor health. Mauriceville North friends, who dearly loved their first Pastor, were determined to help him in his time of need. The handsome sum of ten pounds was collected. Alas, a short time later, on June 12, 1894, Rev E. Neilsen died, at the early age of fifty-two, in Palmerston North, where he had retired with his family.

The year 1897 was one of importance to the Church. During its earliest days services in the building had been supported by a well trained choir of beautiful voices. Later, an organ was lent by a member of the community and played by Miss Duff from Westport. Church members and officers decided it was necessary to purchase an organ of their own. On October 9, a sacred concert organised by Mr W. Chisholm, was held to dedicate the new organ, which was made by Bell of Gvelph of



Canada. In a very short time, with a series of concerts, enough money was raised to pay for it. This organ still holds pride of place in the Church where it has been used for all services and ceremonies to the present day.

On May 7, 1898, a social was held to welcome the newly appointed Minister, Rev W. Dawson, who soon became a great favourite with the people. Later that year, in September, due to his enthusiasm, and the help of all his congregation, the foundation of the Methodist Church at Eketahuna was laid.

Later that month, on September 24, a large gathering was held in the Mauriceville North Church, to farewell their organist, Miss Duff. It was of interest to read that she was presented with a writing case, a pair of gold sleeve links, and a golden stud!

Towards the end of the century it was obvious that great progress had been made in roading throughout the Hawkes Bay, Manawatu and Wairarapa areas in New Zealand. The men from Scandinavian countries had fulfilled the purpose for which they were recruited. Close settlements such as that to be found at Mauriceville North gradually changed. Men from there saw different opportunities elsewhere. The land they had owned was bought by settlers who were content to remain in the district. As their farms increased in area, men were able to give up work away from home and devote their full energies to the land they now owned. Families living in the Mauriceville North valley became fewer. Services held in the little Church on the hill were now conducted by Ministers travelling from Eketahuna once each

Sunday, usually during the morning. After each service it had become the custom for the Minister to enjoy the hospitality offered by local families and for those families these events became the highlights of the week.

On April 20, 1902, a young man, Rev V. Worboys, who had "just taken to himself a wife" preached his first sermon in the Mauriceville North Church. He made a decidedly favourable impression. During the month of May, under his direction, a Social and concert was held in the Church. Proceeds were used to purchase Hymn Books and Bibles for Church and Sunday School use. Most of these can still be found in the original wooden "Corner cupboard" at the right hand side in the front of the Church.

June 17, 1902, saw an overcrowded Church upon the occasion of a Farewell Social for Mr and Mrs Chisholm and family after fifteen years of faithful service. The family moved onto Auckland. Mr Chisholm had been a local preacher, Sunday School Superintendant, and Church Trustee. Mrs Chisholm had been a Sunday School teacher and a great help to the community in times of sickness. I must draw attention to the many men too numerous to mention by name, who have, through the years, served the Church as local preachers. They gave freely and unselfishly of their time to take the place of their Ministers in the pulpit when they were unable to carry out their duties. Rev G. Marshall, on 8 July, 1907, asked Mr Gibbard to have the Communion Railing in the Church shortened by three pillars each side, as the full length was no longer needed. This shortened railing is to be found today as it was from that time.



The old Church house, leased for most of its lifetime, was finally on 14 October, 1911, sold to a local man. Money from this sale was used for improvements to the Church and grounds. Not long afterwards the house was burnt down, fences around it removed, and the land area incorporated in the leased ground.

We know that at the beginning and during the early years of the Mauriceville North Church all members of each family attended all services held there. It was perhaps the happiest time of all for the Church. From the nineteen hundreds onwards it became the custom for menfolk with their older children and young people to attend most services. Mothers and very young members remained at home. It was the duty and pleasure of the women to provide special dinners for their large families after morning services.

Old Mr Gray, accompanied by his sons, (later alone), travelled across the hills each Sunday morning, wet or fine, from Dryers Rock. Mr Giles from Mangamahoe drove his horse and gig to attend the morning services at Mauriceville North. Attendance at services was so important that one man was found present in a state slightly "under the weather". Rev J. J. Pendray, one Sunday morning, must have been startled and not a little disconcerted to have each statement of his, throughout that service, qualified from the back of the Church by a voice calling "Hear, Hear, Mr Pendray".

### THE WAR YEARS

As the years passed, world events, with the threat and final reality of war, naturally had a great impact upon the life of the community. Several young men from the area left to take their part in the 1914-18 war - Jack Elliott, George and Mick Halberg, Jacob Isacksen, Alex Larsen, Charles Matthews, Dick Olsen and Jim Swensen. Girls and women were busy with war work. Despite all this, services continued to be held regularly in the Church. A Choir was maintained under the leadership of Mr Gibbard, who lived at the Hastwell corner. He also held Sunday School at his home each Sunday afternoon. In this he was aided by young ladies from the district - the Isacksen, Seymour and Halbert girls being among them. During these years the wife of Rev G. B. Jordan (a trained nurse) also gave freely of her valued services.

Mr George Amundsen of Wanganui recalls his memories of these times. "All my grandparents are buried around the Church - the first in April 1882. Several uncles, aunts and cousins are also in the Churchyard. I remember the Church itself in my lifetime, was not used much for children's activities. The Sunday School, Band of Hope and other meetings were all held in the Hastwell Hall, which was attached to the store and Post Office, then operated by a Mr and Mrs Hibbard. This was probably the most central spot for children to gather and served those from the Mauriceville North as well as from the Hastwell area. In my time, I left Hastwell in 1915, the Church seemed to be the special responsibility of Lars Larsen and his family. His wife was my father's sister and in my childish



way, I wondered whether Uncle Lars had some proprietary interest in the Church to which he gave so much time. One thing impressed me as a small boy. Often I stayed with relatives opposite the Church, and the wind used to sigh (not blow) through the pine trees round the building. To a small boy this was a most mournful sound, speaking of loneliness and sadness, of death as it sighed over the graves of so many known to us who lay there. I do not have that reaction to wind sighing in pine trees today, but, whenever I hear it, that little Church on the hill at Mauriceville comes at once to mind."

The year 1918 saw the end of war and the return of its men to the Mauriceville North district. But the influenza epidemic which followed brought death and trouble to the valley as it did all over the world. Memories of the older people of today recall children compulsory gargling with "condys crystals" - that awful taste in the mouth! They remember also the horrible choking sensation caused by the burning sulphur on shovels containing hot embers. This was considered necessary for fumigation purposes. Children stayed at home from school and each family, as much as possible, kept to itself. It is told that a baby of Adolf Larsen grew no hair until she was seven years of age because she had been so ill as an infant.

In the year 1919 it was reported that, with much regret, the Mauriceville North Church was to be closed for an indefinite period on account of small attendances and scarcity of ministers. "The circuit has become dear to few only remaining in the Scandinavian settlement." Fortunately, this black period did

not last long, although the early nineteen twenties were not easy years. Following the War more families had left the district. Those who remained in the valley consolidated their positions. This decade was also a time of sorrow for many people living there. During that time six pioneer settlers were buried - more than at any period in the whole of the history of the Church. To help cheer everyone, Rev S. S. Green (described by most as a "real live wire") in the years 1922-23, ran a series of community song gatherings. These were especially designed for younger people and were followed with satisfying suppers provided by local ladies. Afterwards everyone played organized games in the Church grounds. Edna Gyde was official organist for all functions, sometimes replaced by Mrs Palmer from Mauriceville West. Church funds benefited considerably from the activities.

Also about this time there was a bequest of fifty pounds from the estate of Lars Andersen Schow of Mauriceville West. This good man had been a most unusual character. He was a poet of some note. It is said that he had built his whare around a huge tree stump, which he used for many years as a table. For chairs he used sawn off lengths from a tree trunk. He wrote and carved on a large headstone his obituary, leaving space at the bottom for the date of his death to be added.

Early in 1928 large branches from the big trees nearby blew down over the entrance to the Church. Norman Larsen, Henry Amundsen, and Ivan Larsen cleaned them up and carted away the wood. These same trees, swaying and creaking in heavy winds, would, at times, make it difficult to hear the preacher. It



was during this year that Mr Curry of Eketahuna was engaged to paint the Church, cream and chocolate, for the sum of sixteen pounds. His work was so good that he received a bonus of thirtyone shillings!

At a social gathering on 29 October, 1929, a gift was presented to Miss Edna Gyde, prior to her marriage, in recognition of services for eleven years.

The late twenties saw the establishment of Harvest Festivals as a means of providing funds for the central church at Eketahuna. During the chosen Harvest Month each church in the area would ask its congregation to bring produce to a special service. At Mauriceville North the event was one of the highlights of the year. On the Saturday afternoon before the chosen day Church Trustees and helpers collected gifts from each household in the valley and nearby district. These were arranged before the Altar in the Church in readiness for the Sunday service of dedication. On the following day the goods were transferred to the Hastwell Hall in readiness for an Auction Sale which would take place that evening. The Hall would be crowded. Eketahuna Church members came in carloads with a Programme of Entertainment. Any local talent nearby would be recruited. Mention must be made of the lovely voices of Mr and Mrs Harry Smith and daughter Muriel, Mr Harold Baillie and his wife, Netta Pike, Eva Fairbrother and Rev H. and Mrs Spenser. Remembered also are the Auctioneers, Mr Vic Fairbrother, Dick Farrow, Bob Gallagher and Len Brannigan, ably assisted by locals Cecil and Claude Seymour and Mick Manihara. Older people will not easily forget the delicious apples from the Elliott

orchard, the cream puffs made in the Isacksen household, the home-made bread of Mrs Richard Gyde, and the pears and plums brought from Eketahuna to be sold that evening for eating on the spot!

In the year 1929 electric power came into the valley at Mauriceville North. Things became so much easier for everyone. The oil burning lamp was no longer needed in the Church after electric light was installed there. However, it remained in its original position, a reminder of earlier times, until in 1976

some unknown thief removed it.

In January of 1930 one hotpoint was installed in the Church at a cost of eight pounds. This has

since provided comfort to Church members of warmth from a heater donated by the Seymour family.

The Napier Earthquake of February, 1931, sent waves of shock throughout New Zealand. At least two men from the district, Mick West and Henry Preston, went north to help. On February 8 a very large service was held in the Mauriceville North Church to raise funds for relatives of earthquake victims.

In March of the same year evening services began at the Church on the Hill. These were conducted by Rev H. Benny. That



Photograph of the old Oil Burning Lamp which always hung in the Centre of the Church until stolen in 1976. Shown also is the wooden framed text in old Norwegian which hangs in the centre of the back wall above the pulpit.



year brought to New Zealand the start of the worst depression it has ever known. Rev H. Benny, to help his Church, cycled round his large circuit from Eketahuna. Two visits a month to each district! It is said that he visited once a month each house in every district that had a Methodist living therein. During his visits to Mauriceville North, he was once forced to stay overnight in the valley, as it was snowing heavily. His hostess for the night was impressed by his thoughtful consideration for his wife when he insisted on telephoning her before removing his coat. Another story tells of a certain man in the district who had, for many weeks, been trying to get his huge front hedge topped. Came a fine calm Sunday morning when several menfolk of his family were at home, Grandfather could not resist an ideal solution. Work went well till suddenly someone up a tree noticed a cyclist rounding the corner. It was Rev Benny. There was a swift scramble. All disappeared except one unfortunate man who was caught up the large tree nearest the gate. Scarcely had Rev H. Benny passed through the gate when, preceeded by an ominous crack, a hugh branch fell just behind him. Revealed up the tree was the unfortunate Cecil Seymour, still clinging to his saw.

Early in 1932 at a meeting of Church Trustees it was moved by Mr Swinn that fifty trees be planted along the road frontage of the Church. The cleaning of Church grounds and maintenance of these trees would be the duty of Cecil Seymour who leased the Church land. The trees were planted and grew so well that in a few years they obscured views of the Church from the road. Eventually it was decided they must be removed. Gradually they were cut, a few prior to each Christmas, as they made

lovely trees for festivities at that time.

The early thirties, despite hard times, were a very happy time for the Church. Ivan Larsen recalls that the Harvest Festivals held each year were a grand source of enjoyment. Singsongs at the Church itself, and at the Hall in Hastwell, provided pleasant entertainment. "From the very first", writes Mr Larsen, "strong singing of hymns and songs were a feature at the Mauriceville North Church. The Larsen family in particular provided good leaders - Hans and Lars, foundation members, Alex with his strong voice - Annie, Maude and May Larsen, Tot Fredericksen with her powerful voice, and Hazel Seymour with her sweet voice. Later the voices of the Adolf Larsen sisters were a great asset."

On 26 August, 1933, a Methodist Concert party and choir from Rotorua and East Coast areas presented wonderful entertainment at the Hastwell Hall. Members were billeted with local people. Sunday 27 saw the little Mauriceville North Church once more full to overflowing. It was a lovely happening!

At morning service on Sunday 25 May, 1935, Rev H. Benny preached the King's Jubilee Service and a presentation was made to Miss Sybil Allan, organist, on her approaching marriage.

In November, 1935, Mrs Dorothy Seymour was appointed official organist to the Church. She held the position for twenty five years and during that time she also took upon herself the task of cleaning the Church building in readiness for all services.



In 1939 the reality of the Second World War brought further changes to the valley of Mauriceville North. From the district came the departure of Brian Dick, Albert and Jeff Elliott, Dennis and Alan Crookenden, Francis Evans, Albert White, Joe Wright, Phil Riley and Bert Kerr. Women of the district banded together to send parcels to men overseas. Money for the war effort was raised. However, life in the Church was not drastically changed. Attendances at monthly services remained about what they had become. Some families thought they may not, because of travel from a distance, be able to attend services regularly. But despite petrol restrictions, somehow most of the usual congregation managed to get along.

If the war didn't bring many changes to the running and organisation of the Church, it did affect people's attitudes, especially the relationships between ministers and their congregations. Perhaps to illustrate this I can tell a story. In June, 1949, I became a member of the Mauriceville North Church after my marriage to Claude Seymour. The minister at that time was a young man, Rev Ian Hopper. One Sunday one of my sisters in law was helping me re-organise the very large gardens at the old home. We had been working hard all day shifting plants and shrubs and were both extremely tired - at the "giggling stage" - never far away with the Seymour girls. We had been trying to move a large shrub across a path, It was so heavy we collapsed on the path, convulsed with giggles. Suddenly the gate clicked and we beheld our new minister. We three took one look at each other, then, simultaneously, burst into peals of laughter!

Rev I. Hopper recalls his visits to the Church at Mauriceville North:- "The situation of the Church was well chosen. Its elevation enabled it to stand out from its surroundings and its spire pointed upwards to things unseen and eternal. The architecture of the building provided an atmosphere which assisted worship and fellowship. After holding services in public halls it was refreshing to worship in a church. We appreciated the flowers and music especially. Congregations were small, but the sincerity of members helped to provide a devotional atmosphere. We are grateful to the pioneers who, by sacrificial service and generous giving, built the Church which helped to point people to God and to provide a place of worship for many generations. As a former Minister, I wish to thank those who co-operated so faithfully and cheerfully in the work of the Church at Mauriceville North. Mrs Hopper joins me in expressing our thanks."



### THE POST WAR YEARS

Church repairs for many years had been done by J. F. Baillie and sons from Eketahuna. From the 1930's onwards nearly all maintenance was carried out by the Larsen and Seymour menfolk. On September 17, 1949, the Mauriceville North Church Trust received the second donation in its lifetime - from the estate of James Elliott came the sum of fifty pounds. Later that month at a Church Trustee meeting, it was decided to put iron on the roof and carry out general repairs. For this work on 26, 27 and 28 April, 1956, Ivan Larsen, who had been farewelled on 3 June, 1955, returned from Featherston to help a working bee of Trustees and members.

A photograph of the Mauriceville North Church taken about 1960. Note that wooden tiles still covered the steeple on the tower.



June 3, 1956, was a very special day in the history of the Mauriceville North Church. The seventy-fifth Anniversary drew a huge gathering to a service of Thanksgiving to celebrate the renovation of their beloved Church. People attending were, in the main, descendants of the Larsen family. An interesting ceremony on the day was the baptism of two great grandsons of Mrs Eli Larsen, founder of the family. Graham John Payne and Peter Murray Doyle were received into the Church by Rev R. E. Fordyce. He conducted regular monthly services at the Church during this period (1954-56) and wrote "It was a pleasure to conduct services at Mauriceville North and bible lessons at the Hastwell and Mauriceville West schools. I greatly appreciated the kind hospitality given by so many folk as I visited amongst them. At the Mauriceville North Church I remember conducting a family celebration for the Larsens. Many of this family's forebears were at rest in the cemetery around the Church. A Centennial celebration should cause us to review the past and thank God for the memory and work of the pioneers, who, because of their real and deep faith in God, after building accomodation for their families, courageously raised funds for a place of worship, which has lasted for the past 100 years."

In the school holidays of the Christmas period of 1957 Mrs Violet Fairbrother, a descendant of the Larsen family, with her granddaughter Jan, visited the little Church on the hill. Jan delighted her grandmother and friends with her playing of hymns on the old organ. Many such, from time to time, through the long years, have visited the Church at Mauriceville North to relive pleasant memories and show the young where they worshipped long ago.



As the years passed population in the Valley of Mauriceville North gradually declined. Financial difficulties in the Central Church at Eketahuna became a burden. On 14 June, 1959, leaders brought into the district the "Wells Organisation" - a group of men came to organise the congregation into making annual monetary pledges. It was a controversial move, something completely foreign to the people in the Mauriceville North valley. Nevertheless, most Church members saw the advantages of regular planned giving, and responded generously.

Early in the year 1960 Mrs Dorothy Seymour, now Mrs Dorothy Ratford, left the district. Mrs Shirley Neighbours from Mauriceville West was appointed official Church organist.

On July 20 of the same year, Edward Seymour was given the lease of the Church ground for ten years at four pounds, ten shillings per annum, plus rates. His wife Kay, took over Dorothy Seymour's cleaning and caretaking role, and generously provided hospitality to many visitors.

At a special Church Service on 25 February, 1961, long term congregation members Mr and Mrs Manihera were farewelled prior to their retirement to Masterton. Later that year on 9 July Rev Henderson conducted the 80th Anniversary service at the Church. This gathering was made especially memorable by the beautiful voice of Shirley Neighbours who sang and played that afternoon.

During the years 1962 and 1963 Church services dwindled to three monthly, with Anniversary services held, as always, each July. Rev Wallis Browne was minister at the period. He writes

"I have vivid memories of my first Anniversary Day. It was sunny, but cool, and I had donned all my University clobber to grace the occasion. A baby descendant of the settlers had arrived from somewhere to be baptised. Of course, Ted's sheep still grazed in the Churchyard to keep the grass down, and, as I made my dignified way up that steep slope, some of the inevitable end product of the sheep's digestive process attached itself to my shoe. All went well until I turned by the front pew to mount the little pulpit. Then - disaster! My feet skidded forward and I sank in disarray to the floor, sermon notes fluttering in all directions, to be hastily gathered by trusty Harold Baillie. So much for dignity!"

I remember too, the time Claude, Ted and I spent in painting the inside of the chapel. To cover the ceiling and rafters, we had to position the uprights of an extension ladder on each of the rafters down the apex of the nave, and it was hair-raising to be perched up there with no safety net.

Apart from these two events the major remembrance is of warmth and hospitality of the people who loved their little Church, and welcomed a bumbling, gawky, untrained person like me, into their homes."

The next minister to serve in the area was Pastor Ron Simpson. With the approval of Church members in the area he instituted monthly evening services. These met with an enthusiastic response and were well attended.

In April of 1966 Mr Dick Ratford was employed by Trustees of





Photograph of the Mauriceville North Church taken from the back in 1969. Note the iron covered steeple done by Church Trustees and helpers in 1966.

the Church to paint the outside, at a cost of forty pounds. About the same time a working bee of members covered the Church steeple with iron. It was a difficult and dangerous task. They also cut down and disposed of a huge tree on the south side of the Church and Mr Wilton cut down the three largest trees on the North side.

From 1967 to 1969 Rev Russel Marshall - now M.P. for Wanganui - travelled from Masterton to take services. He wrote "I remember with warmth the times I used to come to Mauriceville North for afternoon services."

Also at this time major changes took place at the central church at Eketahuna. Both Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Eketahuna were profoundly affected by diminishing congregations and neither could continue much longer on their own. After many meetings it was decided in early 1969 to form the "Eketahuna Union Parish". The combined church was named St Pauls and it was to use the newer building which belonged to the Presbyterians. The first minister appointed was Rev Geoff Harding, a young Presbyterian. He very quickly endeared himself to the folk living in the Mauriceville North area. He visited the area as frequently as possible and often helped people with their work- be it shearing, milking, fencing or anything else. He also joined in games with the young, so was better able to help them with their problems. Rev G. Harding was a most unusual man. He wished to help his Church by earning, with his hands, most of the money to support his family, and ministry activities. This he was not permitted to do. He wrote from Gisborne that the Mauriceville North Church "Invoked in one a sense of history and a link with the past."

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During the last decade of the life of the Mauriceville North Methodist Church services have been held three times a year. Congregations have been small but enthusiasm maintained. Each year, as always, a special Anniversary service has been conducted during the month of July. People often came many miles for the pleasure of attending. After the service congregations visited the Hastwell Hall where local residents provided a welcome afternoon tea. Stories, reminiscences, renewed friendships and meetings with relatives have given much pleasure to



old and young. The little Church on the Hill was, and always will be, of vital importance to many.

On 11 October, 1970, the Trustees renewed Edward Seymour's lease of the Church grounds for another ten years. However, their major concern was for the long term future of the Church building itself. For nearly a century the Mauriceville North Church has provided the most important focal point of the community. Now it was very old and upkeep would present problems both monetary and organisational. A special solution was needed if this important historic building was to be preserved. With these thoughts in mind, it was decided in 1973 to approach the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Unfortunately, owing to circumstances at that time, the Trust replied it was unable to undertake care of the building.

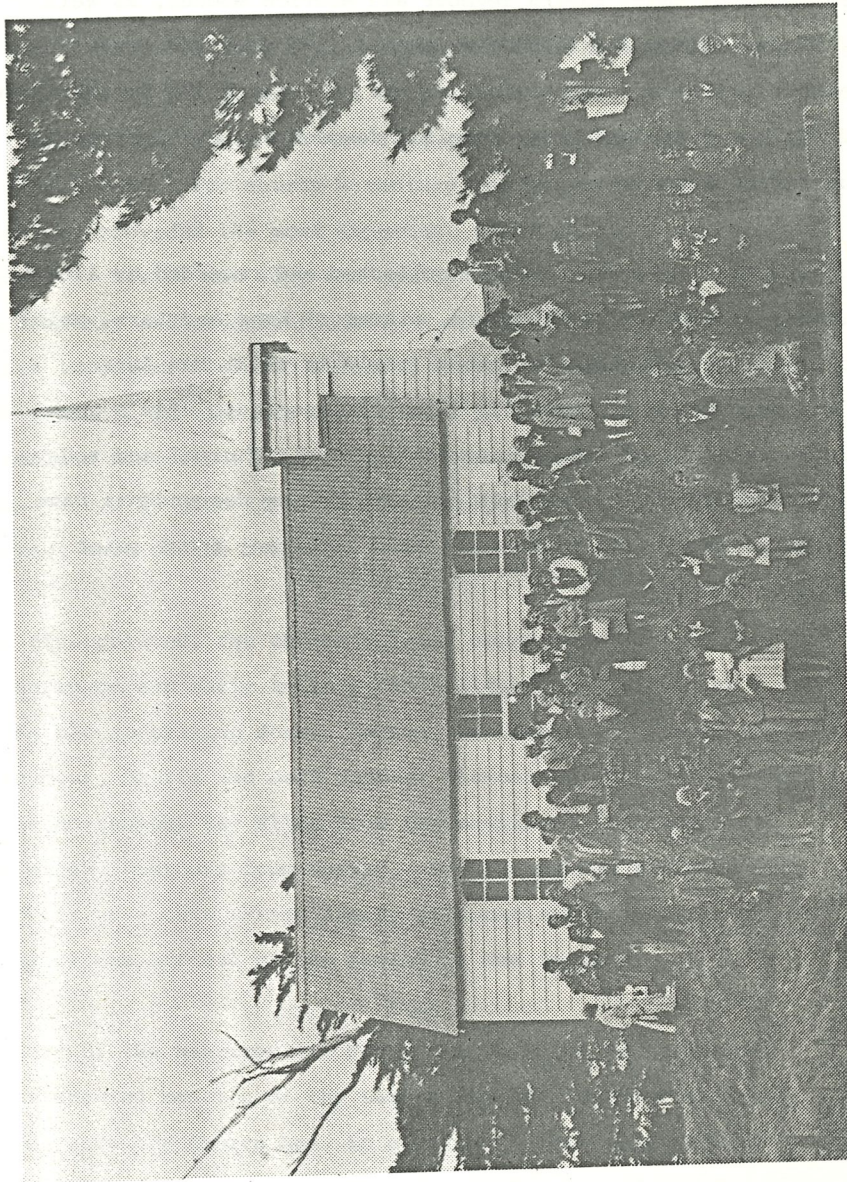
While disappointed, the church's loyal supporters decided they must carry on and early in 1976 the building was painted by a working bee comprising Norman Larsen, Len Amundsen, Claude and Ted Seymour, Maurie and Jeff Godden, Michael Mangham, Keith and Shirlie Mortensen, Rev Slinn from Eketahuna, and Kari and Arild Vigerhaugen, visitors from Norway. Everything was finished just prior to a huge Larsen family celebration to mark the centennial of the arrival of the family in New Zealand.

The story of the Mauriceville North Church would be incomplete without special mention of the Larsen family. Throughout its hundred years the Church has, in every way, been supported by its members. Hans Larsen was an original Trustee of the Church, serving in all thirty-six years in that capacity. He was followed

by his younger brother Lars, in turn followed by his son Alex, then his son Richard. Today, serving on the Trust are the great grandsons of Hans, Edward Seymour and Maurice Godden, as well as Graeme Larsen and Shirley Mortensen, grandson and granddaughter of Lars. During the life of the Church the largest part of its congregations have comprised descendants of this family who farmed in the area.

Much of the family history was collected and recorded by Albert Dawson, descendant of Elizabeth, sister of Hans and Lars, prior to 1954. Then two decades later (early in 1973) Max Larsen, a grandson of Hans, began his intensive research. Max's work further stimulated family interest in "their Church" and today, as throughout all of the last century, Larsen descendants have travelled many miles to re-visit this important focal point in their history.





Photograph of the Mauriceville North Church taken in 1976 at the Larsen Family Anniversary Service.

# ROLL OF CHURCH MINISTERS

Pastor Edward Neilsen	Home Missionary	From 1875
Pastor Otto Christoffensen	Home Missionary	From 1880
Rev. Edward Neilsen		1883-1886
Rev. T. J. Smith	Home Missionary	1892-1893
Rev. W. F. Birks	Home Missionary	1893-1894
Rev. S.H.D. Perryman	Probationer	1894-1895
Rev. L. J. Ryan	Probationer	1896-1897
Rev. William Dawson		1898-1900
Rev. T. Trestrail		1900-1901
Rev. J. H. Worboys		1902-1904
Rev. G. . Marshall		1905-1907
Rev. J. J. Pendray		1908-1911
Rev. Angus McBean		1912-1915
Rev. C. B. Jordan		1916-1917
Rev. J. W. Parker		1918-1921
Rev. S. S. Green		1922-1923
Rev. H. Spencer		1924-1927
Rev. J. H. Bailey		1928-1930
Rev. H. Benny		1931-1935
Rev. S. Hindmarsh		1936-1937
Rev. R. P. Keal		1938-1940
Rev. I. K. Hopper		1941-1943
Rev. H. V. Utting		1944-1946
Rev. L. V. Willing		1947-1949
Rev. W. J. Henderson		1949-1954
Rev. R. E. Fordyce		1954-1956
Rev. H. Prowse		1956-1958
Rev. P. S. Barker		1958-1961
Rev. W. F. Browne		1961-1963
Rev. M. Macguire		1963-1966
Pastor Ron Simpson		1966-1967
Rev. Russel Marshall - Rev. Ian Norwell		1967-1969
Rev. C. G. Harding		1969-1973
Rev. Stewart Slinn		1973-1978
Rev. Keith Allen		1979----



ROLL OF CHURCH TRUSTEES

## Mauriceville Church and Parsonage Trust

24th July 1882

Hans Larsen -	Farmer, Mauriceville	Resigned 1918
Neils Andersen	Farmer, Mauriceville	
Thursten Larsen	Farmer, Mauriceville	

22nd January 1898

Thomas Avery Weston	Farmer, Mauriceville	Left
Walter Chisholm	Storekeeper, Mauriceville East	Left
Hans Larsen	Farmer, Mauriceville	Died 1918

20th October 1905

Lars Larsen	Farmer, Mauriceville	Died 5/11/27
Caleb Gibbard	Storekeeper, Hastwell	Left 5/11/27
Thomas Giles	Settler, Mangamahoe	Died 3/8/36
Joseph Whiting	Settler, Mangamahoe	Left

21st October 1922

Charles Martin Larsen	Farmer, Mauriceville	Left 13/11/29
Ole Amundsen	Farmer, Mauriceville	Left 11/11/29
Richard Charles Gyde	Farmer, Mauriceville	Resigned 13/8/36

24th October 1927

Alexander Larsen	Labourer, Hastwell	Died 13/12/58
Albert George Swinn	Labourer, Mauriceville	Left 29/9/44
Henry Joseph Amundsen	Farmer, Mauriceville	Left 13/11/29

29th October 1929

Harry Elliott	Farmer, Mauriceville	Left 25/8/50
Cecil Barondon Seymour		
	Overseer, Mangamahoe	Died 17/12/58

30th July 1936

Victor William Caseley	Farmer, Hastwell	Left 29/9/44
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23rd July 1944

Arnold Ashworth	Farmer, Hastwell	Left 15/8/56
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5th November 1949

Ivan Larsen	Farmer, Mauriceville	Left 17/8/58
Tutanekia Joseph Manihera		
	Farmer, Hastwell	Left 4/3/71

4th August 1956

Claude Stanley Seymour	Farmer, Hastwell	Died 6/6/77
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27th September 1958

Edward Barondon Seymour	Farmer, Mauriceville	
Richard Lewis Gyde	Farmer, Mauriceville	Left 4/3/71
Richard Charles Larsen	Farmer, Hastwell	Resigned 4/3/71

17th November 1970

Robert Walter Bruce	Farmer, Mauriceville	Died 7/12/72
Graham Ernest Timmins	Farmer, Hastwell	Left 7/6/72

2nd November 1977

Shirley Gladys Mortensen	Farmer, Mauriceville	
Graham Percival Larsen	Farmer, Masterton	
Maurice Henry Godden	Carpenter, Masterton	



ROLL OF ORGANISTS

Organ bought 9th October 1897

Miss Duff	from Westport	Till 1898
Mr C. Collins		
Mr Avery Weston		
Olive Isackson		
Edna Gyde		from 1919-1929
Evelyn Seymour		
Sybil Allan		from 1929-1935
Mrs R. Palmer		
Mrs Dorothy Seymour (now Ratford)		from 1935-1960
Mrs Shirley Neighbours		from 1960 ---

ROLL OF GRAVES IN CHURCHYARD

1882	Bertha Amundsen
1883	Amelia Amundsen
1887	Jacob Isacksen
1888	Bergith Neilsen
1896	Eli Larsen
1901	George Elliott
1907	Connie Larsen
1908	Karen Larsen
1909	Gunnerius Christiansen
1910	John Swensen
1913	Andrew Olsen
1915	Eli Swensen
1915	Albert Elliott
1918	Hans Larsen
1922	Hans Jacob Isaksen
1923	Ole Christian Amundsen
1923	Ida Christiansen
1927	Lars Larsen
1928	Ole Olsen
1929	Johanne Olsen
1930	Agner Elliott
1933	Karen Isaksen
1934	Karen Olsen
1941	James Elliott
1945	Mary Josephine Larsen



LEASE OF CHURCH HOUSE AND GROUNDS

1895	Hans Peter Hansen	paid £3 rent for House £3 rent for Ground
1899	Lars Kjair	paid £3.10 rent for House £3.10 rent for Ground
1900	Stephens	paid £3.10 rent for House £3.10 rent for Ground
1911	House sold	
1950	Cecil Barondon Seymour	lease for 10 years at £4.10 per acre per annum and rates
1960	Edward Barondon Seymour	lease for 10 years at £4.10 per acre per annum and rates
1970	Edward Barondon Seymour	lease for 10 years £20 per acre per annum and rates

PAINTING AND REPAIRS TO CHURCH

## First Painting

Wife of Otto Christoffensen, 1881

From 1900

Both done by J.F. Baillie & Sons  
of Eketahuna

1928

Repairs and painting Church  
chocolate and cream for sixteen  
pounds, plus thirtyone shillings  
(good work)

During 1930's, 40's and 50's

Repairs and painting carried out  
by Larsen and Seymour menfolk.

1956

Iron replaced roof tiles, repairs  
and painting by Trustees and  
helpers.

1966

Painting of Church for forty pounds  
by A. Ratford.  
Church steeple covered by iron  
by Trustees and helpers

1976

Church repaired and painted by  
Trustees and helpers.



HE IS RISEN!

HEAR YOU PROUD ONES WHO MOCKED HIS GOD  
YOU UNYIELDING ONES WHO CAUSED THE DEATH  
OF GOD'S CHILD  
YOU ARE UNDER JUDGEMENT.

HE IS RISEN!

HEAR THE SONG YOU WHO DOUBTED  
IN THE WORD OF THE CROSS  
YET THIS IS STILL A BLESSED NOTE  
GOD THE MIGHTY. OH HE'S RISEN.

OH GREAT JOY, OUR JESUS IS RISEN

DEATHS TIES COULD NOT HOLD HIM, OUR SAVIOUR KING.

LOOK HE IS RISEN

RAISE TO HIM YOUR JOYFUL HANDS.

COPY OF THE OLD NORWEGIAN TEXT IN THE WOODEN FRAME HANGING BEHIND THE PULPIT IN THE CHURCH

San er opstanden  
horer det 3 Stofte!  
Som Spottede hans Gud  
Forfardede! Imis Gudharn Døden voldsle  
Sur Gud den selv ham underlagt! Ende Magtige, Øham opstod!

San er opstanden horer det 3 Stofte  
Som Dømt i Livet ved Forbets Død  
Endnu der er et Saligt Svabillige

1 Salig Øynd vor Jesus er opstanden.  
San holdes ei af Dødens Bann  
For Øvelses Øyeste Ser han er opstanden  
Så er dig lil ham min glade Mand!







