

History of Knox Ottawa

Knox Presbyterian is one of the earliest churches in Ottawa, founded in 1844 when the city was a small, unruly lumber village called Bytown.

Before 1844, there was one church each for the Anglicans, Catholics, Wesleyans, Methodists, and Presbyterians. After a debate among Presbyterians in Scotland regarding state interference within the church, the controversy spread to Canada. In sympathy with this Free Church movement, a small group decided to leave St. Andrew's Presbyterian and start a new church. This congregation took as their name, Knox Presbyterian Church of Ottawa.

Knox Ottawa's first home was at the corner of Daly Avenue and Cumberland Street in a plain frame building measuring 40 by 60 feet. Seating was increased three times in the first 15 years.

In 1865, part of the congregation left the overcrowded church to form what is today Dominion-Chalmers. These considerable growing pains finally forced the congregation to the realization that it needed a larger building.

Although some church members opted to remain behind in what is today St. Paul's Eastern United, land was acquired and a new church built on the former City Hall Square. Opened for worship in 1874, the new stone church was one of the most beautiful places of worship then in the city, its bold central gable flanked by two towers and three entrances across the front, each with its own steps and parapets. The interior featured 12 stained glass windows. Making no mistake this time about size, seating was provided for 1,150 people.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King's dream for a more beautiful nation's capital led to Knox's relocation to our third and current home. A wider Elgin Street was key to Mackenzie King's vision and Knox was awkwardly in the way. The church was expropriated and demolished. The current building, designed by architect Henry Sproatt, was opened for worship in 1932.

The 150th anniversary of this congregation was celebrated in 1994 with a commissioned piece by Canadian composer Gerald Bales. It can be heard on the CD by its name *Laudate Dominum* recorded by D. Mervyn Games with the Senior Choir of Knox and Barbara Clark, C.M. and the Rideau Lakes Brass Quintet, in October 2007.

With God's blessing, Knox Church looks forward to celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2019.