

Silver Trowel

from the laying of the Bethany Township Hall cornerstone



Trowel used to lay the original
cornerstone at the Bethany Township
Hall, c. 1876
CKL Artifact Collection, 2023.010.001

Manvers Township was originally surveyed between 1816 and 1817 and was originally part of Durham County, which was created as a geographic entity in 1792.

The location of council meetings was not consistent during the early years. The earliest record of where the township council met appears in 1857, 7 years after the formation of Manvers Township Council, when they met in Bushell's Inn Lifford, William Fallis' Tavern and Benson's Inn in Ballyduff. A dedicated building was not constructed until 1865, when a township hall was built in Lifford.

Records from the 1860s and 1870s are limited, but the township's municipal government continued to develop and mature through this period, taking responsibility for a range of local services including taxation, roads and other infrastructure and education funding.

In 1876, the township administration moved to Bethany where a new Township Hall was built that year.

On October 19, 1876 the Manvers Standard announced the official opening of the Bethany Township Hall,

"The Most Worshipful Grand Master, Lt. Col. Mackenzie Bowell, MP., Grand Master of the Orange Association of Canada, having accepted the Invitation of the Council of Manvers to lay the Corner Stone of the New Township Hall at Bethany, on Thursday, Oct. 26, 1876."

In the same article, an invitation to all to attend the opening reception,

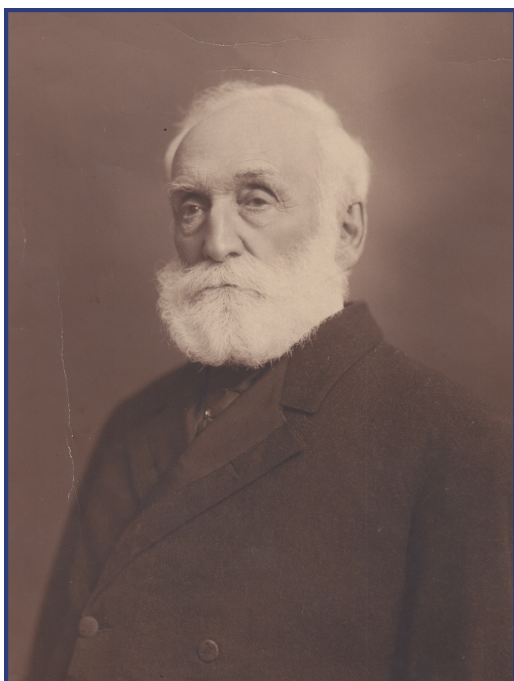
"A number of talented speakers are expected to be present. A Public Tea, to be served in the Music Hall; commencing at 1 o'clock P.M. Admission 25 cents."

One week later, the Bethany Township Hall was opened just to the east of where the present building stands.

The removal of the township offices reflects the demographic growth of the township which was substantially focused around Bethany in the second half of the nineteenth century. By this time, the population of the village had grown to around 400 people and it had become a thriving railway community that provided a commercial and administrative hub for the surround agricultural area. The 1878 map of the township which shows its farms and settlements clearly identified Bethany as its largest settlement and the removal of the township's administrative office and council seat to Bethany made sense.



The engraved text on the top of the trowel reads: 'Presented to Lieut. Col. M. Bowell, M. P. G. M. O. A., on the Occasion of Laying the Cornerstone of Township Hall at Bethany, October 26, 1876.'



Community Archives of
Belleville and Hastings
County, HCO4624, Mackenzie
Bowell

Sir Mackenzie Bowell was born in Rickingham, England on December 27, 1823 and settled in Belleville, Ontario with his family in 1832. Bowell was a Canadian newspaper publisher, teacher, militia officer and politician, who served as the fifth Prime Minister of Canada from 1894 to 1896.

After Bowell's abrupt and controversial prime ministerial end, he remained in politics until his retirement in 1906 but kept his seat in the Senate until his death in 1917.

Bowell died of pneumonia on December 10, 1917 and is buried in Belleville.

In November 1911, the hall, along with a substantial amount of downtown Bethany burnt in a large fire that engulfed the south side of King Street (now Highway 7A). This included a number of businesses and homes. There was no fire protection in the village and the fire moved quickly throughout the community and drastically changed the face of Bethany.

It took several years to reconstruct the lost structures, and even so, many of the buildings were not replaced. The Township Hall, was rebuilt very quickly in 1912 and occupied a much larger lot than previously and was not constrained on either side by commercial structures.

The new township hall was designed by William Blackwell Sr. of Peterborough and appears to be one of only two town halls designed by Blackwell, and the only one still standing.



South-East Side of King Street in Bethany, 1910
Photograph courtesy of the Manvers Historical Society

The above photograph depicts Thomas Jackson's store on the corner, Levi Sisson's grocery and barber shop, the post office, the old Town Hall, Charles Reynold's furniture store and the undertakers parlour.

Manvers Township remained a part of Durham County until 1974. With the dissolution of the County and the creation of the Regional Municipality of Durham, which was formed from the merger of three townships in Durham County, Ontario County and Victoria County. Manvers Township was transferred to Victoria County.

The former Manvers Township municipal offices, that were located in the Township Hall, now host the Bethany Branch of the Kawartha Lakes Public Library that opened March 12, 2003.



Bethany Township Hall,
Before November 1911
Courtesy of the Manvers Historical
Society



Bethany Township Hall, c. 2004
Courtesy of the Manvers Historical
Society

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Thank You

Emily Turner, Economic Development Officer- Heritage Planning
The Manvers Historical Society