

## Sinnamon Memorial Uniting Church - its Significance



The surviving heritage-listed Church building on Seventeen Mile Rocks Road, now known as Sinnamon Memorial Uniting Church, has a long and rich history. Originally built by the Primitive Methodist Connexion in 1888, it was a focal point of both religious observance and social life for a considerable section of the Seventeen Mile Rocks farming community for many years. The Church's existence and survival,

despite challenges over the years, testify to the importance of religious observance to the district's pioneers who cleared the land and established homes, farms and a close-knit farming community.

The surviving 1888 building replaced an earlier building that was established and built by the Bible Christians in 1869, then sold to the Primitive Methodist Connexion in 1880. With Church amalgamations, in time the Church came under the Methodist Church of Australasia and later, under the Uniting Church.

Local records were a driving force for erection of the new building in 1888 as illustrated in the central Primitive Methodist records. The Church depended not only on visiting Ministers but also on individual local residents being prepared to fill the roles of steward, Sunday School teacher and Sunday School superintendent; and on financial contributions from residents to the building and to ongoing services. Residents such as the Maurer family and Sinnamon family also undertook to collect the Minister from Oxley Railway Station and transport him by buggy to the Church for services and provide a midday meal before return to the station.

Events in the Church, including recitations, musical and singing performances, while held primarily for fundraising, also provided welcome social activity for the hard-working farming community. The Church was packed on occasions such as when, in late 1896, the West End Church choir visited: after enjoying a picnic in the area, the choir provided a concert in the Church in the evening.

Much later, in 1960, Doris Eason and Joseph Counihan, two local residents, were married in the Church: this was featured briefly in television news. Years later, their eldest daughter was married in the same church.



Church picnics were a popular, well attended event. Participants included local residents who were not members of the congregation, as illustrated in this large group in this 1909 photo (image courtesy of Phil and Norm Henry).

The Church continued to be well used for many years. It

was commonly packed with 60 people at Sunday services in the 1920s/30s.

### **Heritage Listing**

After first being listed on the Register of the National Trust of Queensland on 24 November 1980, the Church was included on the Queensland Heritage Buildings Protection Act (1990) schedule, the Queensland State Heritage Register (October 1992), and the Brisbane City Council Heritage Register (2000).

The State Heritage listing (no. 600235) recognizes the Church's significant role in the social and spiritual evolution of the Seventeen Mile Rocks farming community in the second half of the 19th century. It also recognizes that the building is an example of a late 19th century small rural chapel building; and that, together with other late 19th century and rural era buildings in the close vicinity, the Church contributes to a rare surviving rural landscape in the midst of a highly planned late 20th century suburban district.

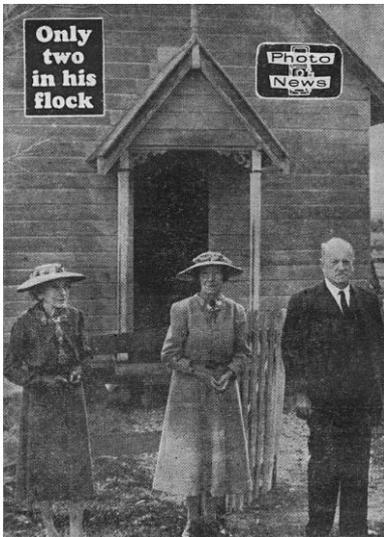
### **'Riding the Waves'**

The Church has survived against the odds at times.

Early challenges arose from sometimes fluctuating services by Ministers in the early years. This appears to have been connected with the central Primitive Methodist Church's concern to receive adequate financial contribution from residents. As there was never a resident Minister, the additional burden of travel to the area - by horse or rowboat in early years, by a combination of train then horse and buggy later - may have contributed to periods of gaps in service. Although the Church always belonged to Brisbane Circuit no. 2, the late Sir Hercules Sinnamon stated that at one time, a Minister used to travel by rowboat from Ipswich to conduct services. This likely occurred during a period when the central body had discontinued service to the area.

The strong support from the local community in the late 19th century and the first few decades of the 20th century, including members of the Henry, Maurer and Sinnamon families

in the late 19th and early 20th century, no doubt contributed substantially to the survival of the Church in that period. The Church appears to have received additional support after it came under the jurisdiction of the Darra Home Mission Station (of the Methodist Church) during the 1920s. Individuals in the Sinnamon extended family continued to support Church activities for many years.



Later, as lifestyles changed and some families moved away, attendance dwindled - to one period when there were only two in the congregation, Misses Isobel and Edith Sinnamon. This attracted the attention of media: an article in the Telegraph of 1957 and a 29-sec. feature film in 1959 on its status as the church with the smallest congregation in Australia. However, the numbers attending weekly Sunday services subsequently increased somewhat with attendees from nearby Darra.

There were also physical threats to the Church. It is believed to have been knocked off its stumps twice in cyclones during the 1940s. Additionally, the Church was at risk of removal when the Centenary Highway and Jindalee overpass were constructed as it was originally located near the corner of Seventeen Mile Rocks Road and Goggs Road. The late Sir Hercules Sinnamon came to the rescue, donating a small parcel of his land on Seventeen Mile Rocks Road to the Uniting Church so that the building could remain in the area. (This accounts for the current name. The Church was originally variously named Seventeen Mile Rocks [Primitive Methodist/Methodist/Uniting] Church).

The photograph below shows the Church in its original location on Goggs Road near the current access ramp to the Centenary Highway: **source of image - State Library of Qld.**



Since suburban development, monthly services were conducted in the Church for a number of years by a retired Uniting Church Minister. Unfortunately, at the time of writing these services have been discontinued due to the Minister moving away from the area.

**Further information about the history of the Church is in our book, *When River Was Roadway*, Chapter 1.5.2.**

Meg Gordon, Centenary Suburbs Historical Society, Sept. 2016.



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