Turnbull department store heirs turned to religion

GORD YOUNG, SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

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Elwood Jones's recent story on Turnbull's department store was, (as all of his historical stories are), quite interesting.

There is, however, a wonderful side story to John C. Turnbull, beyond his business success, and the much remembered store collapse which has tended to obscure the more important story of Turnbull.

J. C. Turnbull, in addition to being a successful merchant, was the treasurer of what was then called "the Bethany Mission" of the new evangelical denomination, the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

As treasurer, he oversaw the building of what was, until recently, the Church of the Open Bible.

In its original form the Bethany Tabernacle was reported to be a downsized version of Bradburn's Opera House, which the congregation had rented as its first location.

Famous preachers came to the new church where their voices could be heard clearly to the back row.

Richard Birdsall Rogers, who designed and oversaw construction of the Peterborough Lift Lock, notes in his diaries attending a special meeting held at Bethany.

A point of interest is that, "the Bethany Tabernacle was built and opened without a mortgage or any sizable debt . . . beyond a few miscellaneous bills yet to be tendered and paid for . . . John Belcher architect," according to the Peterborough Examiner in March 1899

It is believed to be the first church in Peterborough built and opened without debt.

What is most interesting is that with the recent re-opening of what was once the second Turnbull department store as the "Turnbull Medical Building" the Turnbull saga has come full circle.

All of John Turnbull's sons gave up careers in the department store business and became ministers and/or missionaries with the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Walter Turnbull became a famous teacher at the Alliance Theology and Missionary school at Nyack, N. Y., while the other brothers were pastors or missionaries.

Some served their entire lives in individual countries (Louis in India, John, an evangelist to many countries), meeting the needs of the suffering and poor besides the usual pastoring.

Now immigrants from the several countries that the Turnbull sons went to have come to call Peterborough home and likely are using the Turnbull Medical Building and its services.

One thinks that John C. Turnbull would be ever so pleased.

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<http://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/2009/08/08/turnbull-department-store-heirs-turned-to-religion>

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