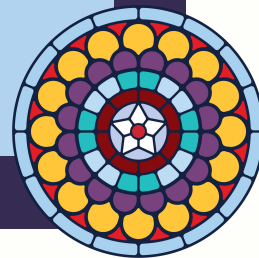


# WESTMINSTER UNITED CHURCH HISTORY



The soaring spire of Westminster United Church has been a landmark on the main street of Orangeville since 1879. It was designed by Guelph architect Cornelius J. Soule, who also designed the county buildings on nearby Zina Street. The building was constructed of local materials – brick from town brickyards and stone from the quarries of Hockley Valley. The work was contracted to Orangeville builders Hugh Haley, carpenter/contractor, and Robert Hewitt, bricklayer and stonemason. The cornerstone was laid in August 1878. The opening church service was June 22, 1879. The architect's original list of specifications, right down to the paint colours to be used on the decorations outside, are in the church archives. Some of the original glass from the first windows survives in the tops of the large bishop's eye windows and lancet windows on the east and west landings.

Today's congregation is the descendent of some of Orangeville and the district's earliest Christian endeavours. The Presbyterians formed a congregation in 1837 under the leadership of Rev. Alexander Lewis. The Methodists, while receiving the services of missionaries and "saddle-bag preachers," did not organize a local congregation until 1849. From these two early churches, three more developed. From 1858, there were two Presbyterian churches and three Methodist churches in the village. In 1880, Bethel and Zion Presbyterian joined to form Saint Andrew's congregation and opted to use the building we now call Westminster. In 1884, the three Methodist churches joined together and worshipped as Orangeville Methodist Church at 6 First Avenue.