



The Eighty - Three

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Area 83 Archives Newsletter

Our Area 83 history through the eyes of those before us... A legacy of gratitude

Remembering our Beginnings

History of AA in Area 83 – 2015 Version – taken from the files of Robert E, Delegate to Panel 35

In Alcoholics Anonymous, the international borders do not exist. Canadian AA is represented proportionally at the General Service Conference and on the Board of Trustees; and GSO in New York serves AA in both countries equally. This partnership benefits AA in both countries equally. AA's from the US were often a help in the spread of the program across the border. And the healthy, vigorous brand of AA in Canada breathed spirit into American AA. For Canada's soil has proved especially fertile for the Fellowship. In many of the provinces strong service structures developed, producing dedicated leaders at the conference level and on the General Service Board. As Bill W said in 1951 of Canada, "No finer AA exists...When US travellers return from Canada, they report how much more they brought away from Canada than they took in."

AA began in Canada in 1940 when the Reverend George Little of Toronto, a zealous temperance worker, read a book review of Alcoholics Anonymous written by Dr. Emerson Fosdick, of the Rockefeller's church. Dr Little ordered a copy of the Big Book to show an alcoholic who had resisted all other attempts at rescue. The AA book turned the trick and the two men went to work introducing this new way of life to other Toronto drunks. Dr. Little had to order five more copies of the book. (Quite independently, early in 1941 a Torontonian, Laurie C. returned home after finding AA in New York and Gordon B, who had found his sobriety in Chicago AA, also came home. Although the two were put in touch with each other by the New York service office and diligently tried to carry the message, there is no record of any results.)

Dr Little gave a copy of the Big Book to Rev Percy G. Price, of the Metropolitan United Church, who was concerned with the problems of alcoholics and their families. Dr Price was so impressed that he began recommending AA principles to alcoholics with whom he came in contacts. And it was at his suggestion that a group of six alcoholics meet for dinner with Dr. Little and himself. This, then was the first AA meeting in Canada, at the Little Denmark Restaurant on January 13, 1943. They decided to meet weekly and when the good news was reported to the New York office, Bill W was delighted that AA "is now established in Canada."

When the membership had increased to 36, they leased a clubroom at 160 Bloor Street. Soon this too was outgrown and an unused bank building at 1170 Yonge Street became the new meeting place and a well-known AA haven. Growth and accompanying growing pains came along in 1945, which brought about group #2.

Also in 1943, a drunk in Windsor, got tired of drinking and contacted AA in Detroit, right across the international bridge and began attending meetings there. Three months later, he had reached out to an-

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other Windsor alcoholic and was bringing him to meetings across the border. After being joined by a third, they decided to begin a meeting in their own city. Their first meeting was on October 22, 1943 with support from the Detroit group. A meeting place was found in the Norton Palmer Hotel, and the coffee shop at Woolworth's became the gathering place for AA's every morning. A few years later, a Thursday morning meeting was inaugurated at the second-floor offices of an AA contractor. Originally intended for night workers, it soon attracted other early birds and may have been the first morning AA meeting in the US/Canada. From Windsor, AA spread to Leamington in September 1945 and from there to Tilbury, Chatham, Kingsville and Wallaceburg.

In mid-1941 Dr. Little gave one of his Big Books to Canon Quintin Warner in London. Canon Warner read it and gave it to a hospitalized alcoholic friend who made a decision to stay sober and he and the Canon began to try to help others in the London area which resulted in a group starting on November 26th, 1943 with six Toronto members present to lend their support.

The first big AA banquet in Ontario was held on December 16th 1943 at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. Eighty people attended and AA spread rapidly in Ontario in the next two years, first in Ottawa and then Hamilton. The first meeting in Hamilton was held on October 26, 1945 after an alcoholic from that city contacted New York and was referred to Toronto AA. Ottawa was started thanks to the efforts of Father Cornelius Herlihy, a Roman Catholic priest and the early members in Ottawa. Jack F contacted the Toronto Club by letter on Apr 19, 1945 and after several conversations and meetings with members from Toronto, the first meeting was held on Oct 30, 1945.

The Beginnings of General Service in Ontario

In the very early years, around Southern Ontario and in the USA south of Lakes Ontario and Erie, the AA members attempted to form some kind of organization in order to communicate with each other and cooperate in the administration of their affairs.

The structure of AA as it exists began with a Central Committee being established in Toronto for the existing ten groups in October of 1947.

Feb. 7-8, 1948

Lois and Bill W. came to Toronto to attend what was called a Regional meeting.

March 3-4, 1951

The meeting at the Royal York Hotel was called "the Regional Conference." Bill W. came to this to present his case for establishing the General Service Conference structure.

The outcome was the election of the first delegate for the Province of Ontario, Adam C., Panel 1.

Alternate Delegate: Art L. Toronto

Treasurer: Walter M. Hamilton

Secretary: George D. Toronto

The committee representing areas, what are now called districts:

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Don N., Haileybury, Morey S., Owen Sound, Neil M., Port Hope, Glen G., Toronto

Up to this time there had been a loose knit structure which may be seen from the use of the terms above, such as Regional and Conference.

The letterhead used for the correspondence and bulletins of the 1951 "Regional Conference" at the Royal York Hotel read as:

NEW YORK STATE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO NORTHERN PENNSYLVANIA
A.A. REGIONAL CONFERENCE
ROYAL YORK HOTEL

April 20-22, 1951

The structure of AA as it exists through this Assembly commenced formally with the April 20-22 General Service Conference held at the Commodore Hotel in New York City. There were 37 delegates representing Panel 1.

Even in 1952 there was a program which has recently (spring, 1997) been obtained. It read:

In 1952
AA Regional Conference
Saturday and Sunday
May 3-4, 1952
Hotel Seneca
Rochester
New York

The logo on the letterhead was the same as the one used in Toronto the year before. However, this was the closing out of an era. The General Service Conference was in place and the informal groupings were no longer needed.

In April 1952, the second General Service Conference took place in New York with 38 delegates on Panel 2 in addition to the 37 delegates on Panel 1 for a total of 75. The delegates were elected for a 2-year term which means that there is always a Panel with one year's experience.

Until 1964, the Assemblies took place during the Ontario Regional Conference at the Royal York Hotel. All delegates and committees were elected there. A point of interest was that the delegates elected at the Ontario Regional Conferences which were held in late March or early April had only a few weeks before they went on to the General Service Conference.

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April, 1956 - Whit H., delegate for Panel 5, made a request at the GSC for a 2nd delegate for the Province of Ontario.

Nov., 1957 - A 2nd delegate for the Province of Ontario was elected at the London Conference for what is now known as Western Ontario Area 86. He was Leander John Joseph G. from Kitchener, Panel 8. The area is roughly the same geographically as it is today. The rest of Ontario was the other area.

From the date the 2nd delegate for the Province was elected a Committee came into existence which has continued under different names until the present.

The names:

1958 - The Ontario Committee - General Service Conference

1966? - The Ontario General Service Committee

1980 - The Ontario Provincial Committee

1990 - The Ontario Delegates Committee

It consisted of all the delegates in Ontario and their alternates. At times it had a Secretary, a Treasurer, and other committee members such as Public Information and Institutions.

March 24-26, 1961 - Al B. was elected delegate, Panel 11, at the Royal York Hotel. He took a bid for the 1965 International Convention to be held in Toronto to the GSC. He also took a request for a 3rd delegate to for Ontario, and it was granted.

April 6-8, 1962 - This assembly was still at the Ontario Regional Conference at the Royal York Hotel and Al B. was still the delegate. A 3rd delegate was elected for the area which was to be all of Northern Ontario. Areas 83 & 86 were roughly the same as today. The odd thing here was that Jack K. from Sault Ste. Marie was made the delegate for the north but he was on Panel 13, which meant that he took office for the years 1963 and 1964, but he was also given permission to attend the 1962 GSC. The reason, apparently, was to keep the numbers of members of the panels approximately the same.

Oct., 1964 - The 1st area Assembly held away from the Royal York Hotel took place at Belleville and Alf McG. was elected as delegate for Panel 15. The incumbent delegate was Harold F., Panel 13, from Kingston.

July 2-4, 1965 - The 30th International Convention was held in Toronto. Alf McG. was the current delegate. The theme as introduced by Bill W. was "I am Responsible."

1964-1978 - It would seem that all of the Assemblies were held in Belleville either at the St. Thomas Moore Hall or Nicholson College, but mostly at the former.

Oct. 20, 1974 - Peter W. name was forwarded as a nominee for the Eastern Canada Regional Trustee and he was elected at the GSC in April 1975. He served 4 years.