



A subscription list, for a school and meeting house in Willoughby, dated August 30th, 1824 had nine names, paid in pounds, shillings, pence. It was built of logs on Lot 6, River Road, between Black Creek and Chippawa, and in 1858, when the side road was opened, it was moved to the corner of Lot 7 - the Elias Sherk farm.

This school was to be opened, and closed with prayer.

December 4th, 1826, Rob Grierson agreed to teach a well conducted school, at the rate of twelve shillings per quarter for each scholar, to be paid every three months, and during the winter months to teach an evening school two nights each week, without any expense to the parents.

The inhabitants agreed to board and lodge the teacher, according to their respective proportion of scholars, and to contribute their quota of wood, for the supply and comfort of the school.

signed by Rob Grierson

A Library was opened in this school April 23rd, 1826.

Z.M. Miller

Picture and information courtesy of Miss Z.M. Miller.

"FAITH OF OUR FATHERS"

FIRST CHURCH IN WILLOUGHBY

The River Side church was built in 1824. In a subscription list of 35 names of settlers contributing money and materials for a meeting house and school, 60% of them were Mennonites. To quote from M. G. Sherk, grandson of Michael Gonder in "Early Pioneer Life of Upper Canada" that "The early Mennonite Settlers being like the Quakers, a non fighting class of people, we think they might properly be called United Empire Loyalists. They must not be classed however with the Russian Mennonites, who settled in Manitoba more than a half century ago."

This log church was situated on the River Road north of Black Creek, on the north east corner of the Gonder farm — Lot 6 — Township of Willoughby. Of the 28 pound sterling collected one quarter of the amount was needed for the purchase of a wood stove.

A Sunday School was organized here in 1826, only forty years after the founding of Sunday Schools in England by Robert Raikes.

Mr. J. C. Fretz states in his records of the Mennonites, that Jacob Miller, a Mennonite preacher and pioneer on the River Road, was said to be the first preacher of the Mennonites, and Michael Gonder Sherk states that his grandmother Gonder was one of his followers. John Zavitz, a Quaker, Jacob Krebiel from Clarence, N.Y., and Abe. Johnston are a few, who preached here, and even Rev. James McKay of Chippawa Presbyterian held service here one summer on Sunday afternoons.

This Willoughby church served as a church and school for many years, but as the Mennonites were in the majority they used it more regularly.

The first public school teacher, Rob Grierson, on December 4th, 1826, agreed to teach a well conducted school until April 30th, 1827, at the rate of 12 shillings New York currency per quarter for each and every individual scholar. Pounds and shillings were used here in Upper Canada as it was then called.

This church was built for the use of all Protestant denominations. The frame church, which had been built later was moved to the south east corner of lot 7, the Elias Sherk farm. It was moved about 1858, when the side road was opened, the Gonders giving the land for this road. Then when the boulevard was put through the Niagara Falls Queen Victoria Park Commission moved the church farther back on the side road, but left it standing without a foundation. It was never used again, and was finally dismantled about 1914.