

Graham Methodist Church

A Monument on Elm Tree Road

Buildings that have been taken down for one reason or another often hold significant meaning to those that remember them. Their walls have witnessed the birth of generations, while their staircases have served as stages for brides leaving their family homes. These structures have provided hiding spots for siblings engaged in games of hide and seek, shared in the joy of first kisses, and offered solace during difficult farewells. They may have even resonated with the hymns of worship, joining in the heartfelt expressions of faith and community. In 2018, a monument was erected in remembrance of one such building.

The earliest recorded reference of the Graham Methodist Church dates back to January 1859, when land was donated for the construction of a new church in Ops Township.

Among the early settlers of this area was the Graham family. After immigrating to Canada from Northern Ireland in the 1830s, William and Jane (nee Wilson) Graham, along with their two sons, John (born 1804) and James (born 1807), established their home on a 100-acre parcel acquired from the Crown, located on Lot 21, Concession 1, now known as Elm Tree Road.



Graham Methodist Church Memorial, c. 2024



James A. Patterson, County of Victoria Map, 1877

Following the death of his parents in 1841, John inherited the family farm. According to the book 'Ancestors and Descendants of James Graham c.1658 to 1958,' "In religious life, [John] was very active in promoting the cause of the Methodist Church to which he belonged." Consequently, in January 1859, John donated land at the northeast corner of his property for the construction of the church.

The construction of the new Wesleyan Church took nearly a decade to complete. The October 4, 1865, issue of the Christian Guardian, a Methodist publication active from 1829 to 1925, states:

"The new Wesleyan Church on the farm of John Graham Esq. of Ops will be dedicated to the service of Almighty God (D.V.) on Sabbath, October 8, 1865. The sermon will be delivered by the Rev. James Brock, chairman, at 10:30 AM and 2:30 PM. A collection will be taken in support of the Building Fund."

By 1875, the original wood-frame church had become insufficient to accommodate the growing congregation. As a result, a new church, constructed of red and yellow brick, was built at the northeast corner of Lot 24, Concession 1, in Ops Township. This new church was situated on land owned by John Graham's nephew, William Graham, and was also known as "Graham's Church."



Brick from the Graham Methodist Church
CKL Artifact Collection, 2024.008.001, Gift of the Reed Family and in memory of Reverend Frederick Reed.

The second church was dedicated on September 23, 1877, by Reverend William Jeffers of Lindsay.

Excerpts from the Christian Guardian, November 7, 1877:

“On Sabbath, the 23rd, ult. the opening services of the new brick church on this circuit commenced. Dr. Jeffers, the ex- President of Toronto Conference conducted the morning service.

In the afternoon Rev. Thos. Dunlop of Woodville preached. In the evening Rev. W.R. Barker gave us a faithful and suitable address.

On Monday evening, after a hearty turkey dinner, or supper, such as our friends can provide in that neighbourhood, Dr. Jeffers gave us some portion of his very popular lecture.”



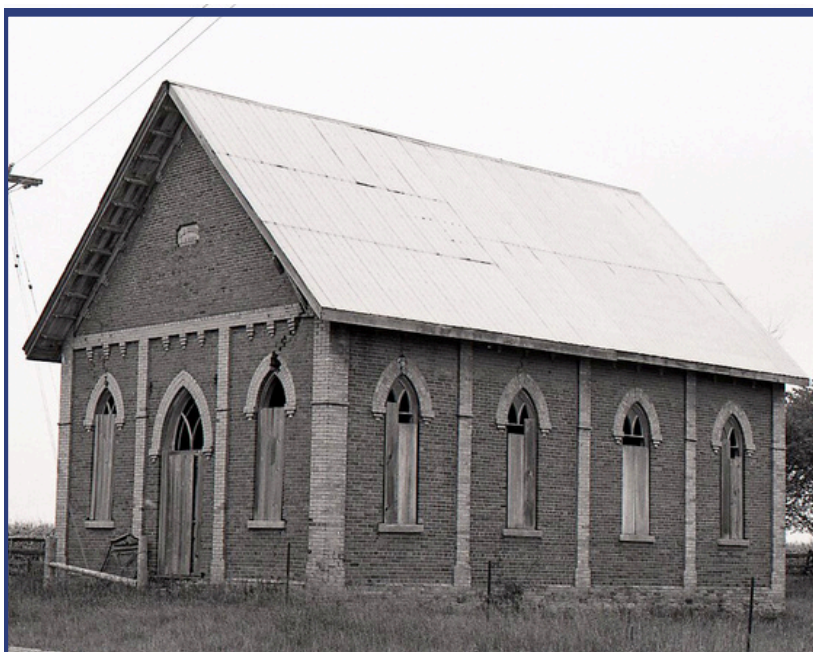
Graham's Church Choir, 1892

Back Row: Robert Braden, Samuel Wright, Newton Smale, Herbert Graham, Wm. Smale, Wm. M. Graham;
Second Row: Ella Graham, Annie Graham, Alicia Braden, Bertie Smale, Mae Braden
Third Row: Emma Graham, Rebecca Wright.

Courtesy of the Reed Family

The original frame church was sold in 1890, and today, a small cemetery commemorates the location of the first church and the burial of approximately 25 individuals.

In contrast, to the first church, the second church faced significant challenges due to declining attendance, ultimately leading to its closure and sale back to the Graham family in around 1926. The church was turned into family storage until the difficult decision was made, due to its unsafe condition, to demolish the structure in 2013.



Graham Methodist Church, c. 1970
Lindsay Architectural Conservation Advisory
Committee (LACAC) collection.)



Graham Methodist Church, c. 2011
Google Maps

Shortly after demolition, the Graham family, that are still residents on Elm Tree Road, erected a monument using bricks from the church, featuring the date plate at its center. This monument honors the early settling families who considered Graham Methodist Church an integral part of their lives and a way to remember the building.

It is very fitting
that the motto on
the Graham
family crest is “Ne
Oublie,” meaning,
“Do Not Forget.”

~Ancestors and
Descendants of James
Graham c.1658 to 1958 by
Harvey L. Graham, 1985

Resources

Graham, Harvey L.,
Ancestors and Descendants
of James Graham c.1658 to
1958, 1985

Thank You

The Graham Family