

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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A LANDMARK DESTROYED



Early on Monday morning, October 11, the Faith Bible Baptist Church on North Gravel Road at Ridgeway was totally destroyed by fire. This was indeed, one of the oldest church edifices in Orleans County still being used for religious services. Faith Bible Baptist Church was organized in the early 1970's and has owned the church building since the mid-1970's. It is indeed, a tragic loss for this congregation as the church building not only served as space for religious services, but also as a Christian School for fifteen students through grade 12.

The church building was built in 1835 by Universalists. The two accompanying older photos show the church the way it appeared around 1907. We notice in the exterior view, a horse hitched to a surrey with the old church sheds in the background. The interior photo shows the auditorium decorated for a funeral. The pulpit which appears here was also unfortunately destroyed by the fire as were all the original pews.

The Universalist Church at Ridgeway was organized on November 14, 1833 out of a somewhat unusual background. It seems the first settler in Ridgeway was Seymour Murdock who built a cabin in 1810 on the south side of the Ridge Road. By 1816 the Methodist Church was beginning to send circuit riding preachers to Ridgeway where the first religious services were held in the Murdock log cabin once a month. Soon afterward a Methodist class was organized there with a local leader taking charge of the meeting between monthly visits of the preacher. However, when this group meeting at Ridgeway decided to form a church, they chose the Universalist denomination. Once organized, they voted to raise one thousand dollars for building a church to be completed by January 1, 1835. They also soon decided that the rise of ground just south of Ridgeway Corners



would be the best location for their church. This land was owned by Mrs. Joseph Perry who sold the half-acre site to the trustees for thirty dollars. Mrs. Perry then donated \$30.00 to the Universalist Society so she actually gave the site for the church. The frame church was dedicated in June 1835 and rededicated in 1855 after being remodeled. In 1871 it was again repaired and remodeled and rededicated in March 1872. I believe the double windows in the Italianate Style with inside shutters dated from this period. In 1961 the Universalists discontinued their religious services there. Prior to Faith Bible Baptist Church acquiring this church building, a group was incorporated as the Ridgeway Community Church which used the edifice for a short time.

Update: In Vol. XV NO. 36 of this column on Aster Day there appeared a photo with an auto decorated with asters. Art Wood of Arthur A. Wood & Associates in the Town of Carlton has identified this early car as one which belonged to his great-grandparents, Albert and Lucia Wood.