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The history of the Millville Quaker meeting house

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The only congregation of Quakers of Society Friends to ever be established in Orleans County was at Millville as early as 1818.

They first met in the homes of members, but in 1841 they erected a meeting house in Millville made of field cobblestones.

The Friends did not discriminate against women holding positions of leadership in their church. Mary Thislethwait served the congregation as a preacher in the mid-19th century. She was most likely the first woman in Orleans County to hold such a position.

By 1870, the Quakers disbanded and sold their meeting house to Presbyterians, who used it as a church for over a decade. However, in 1884, when the Presbyterians no longer wanted

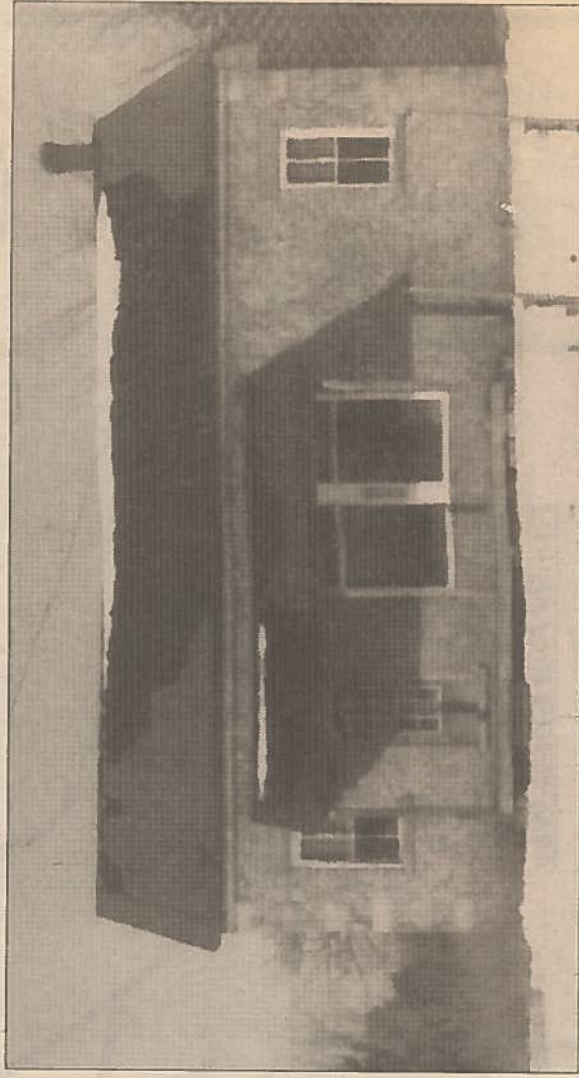
the building, the Quakers bought it back. With rejuvenated interest, under the leadership of Mrs. E.G. Underhill, they again held services there until 1893.

Around 1900, the meeting house was sold and turned into a grocery store. It then remained a grocery store until 1972. It ended up serving longer as a grocery store than it did a church.

Presently, this fine example of cobblestone masonry construction is owned by Arthur Barnes.

My grandfather, Ross Wilson, who grew up around Millville, was told that the pews in the old meeting house were built with adjustable backs. These could be changed depending upon which way people were to face when seated. In other words, they could have half the congregation facing the other half or all facing the same direction. How

the pews were adjusted would have been determined by the format of worship on a given Sunday.



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