

## FIRST WESTMINSTER UNITED CHURCH

First Westminster United Church is located on Wilton Grove Road in the City of London, Ontario. Before annexation the location was described as, part of Lot 18, in Concession 2, Westminster Township.

In 1854, John Elliot, Sr., and Arthur Baty each gave a half-acre of land for the use of the congregation.

This property was deeded and registered in 1857 and a board of trustees appointed. Francis Nichol, James Rae and Thomas Fleming

In a review of the early history of Westminster Township, it was learned that several years before 1832 there was a Presbyterian Congregation in Westminster Township. The earliest records show that in 1825 William Dounan, a licentiate of Scotland, who was teaching in a school in London Township conducted services in a log school house that stood where Pond Mills Cemetery is now located. As has been the case in many townships the school preceded the church. This section in Westminster was known as the Scottish Settlement, and several descendants of these early pioneers still reside in the township. In 1826 Rev. James Ferguson who claimed to be a minister of Scotland took charge of the congregation remaining for over a year. Owing to information received that Mr. Ferguson was a suspended minister he was forced to leave the settlement. For a time it was found difficult to secure anyone to take charge.

In 1830 the settlers met and decided to hold regular weekly services in the school house. A plan was adopted whereby some member would read a printed sermon if it were found impossible to secure a clergyman. These were known as fellowship meetings and were well attended by the residents of the district. In 1832 these Scottish pioneers called a special meeting to consider the matter of organizing themselves into a regular congregation. A trustee board was elected and money subscribed to provide for the payment of any supply that could be secured. This little mission carried on successfully without any assistance from the Presbytery or any mission board. It was composed of sincere and devout men and women who felt the need of a church and desired to assemble for worship regularly as had been their custom in their native land. As the clothing was made in the home the inhabitants came to church in homespun materials. The women were attired in flannel gowns and wore sunbonnets or large handkerchiefs