

THE GRASSY LAKE CHURCH, SCHOOL AND MANSE

(from Hilda Cullen) 1975

During World War I, settlers on and near the south side of Grassy Lake became interested in building a church. Rev. A. I. Heinonen, an energetic young Finnish minister from Copper Cliff, had already started to make trips to Louise Township, either by horse and buggy or horse and cutter in winter, to hold services in private homes.

Mr. Kalle Makela donated land for the building of the church, and later also, a six-room manse with a stable and drive shed. The church cemetery on Grassy Lake Road was also located on Makela property. Rev. Heinonen canvassed for building supplies, and the response of business men was very generous.

The building was constructed entirely by volunteer labour, as many were unemployed during the war, and so were willing to work for board and lodging. When complete, the church was a frame building, finished inside and out, with double doors at the front, a single door at the rear, and five or six windows on the side walls. It was dedicated by Rev. Barnes, and the first elders were Kalle Makela, Fred Hill and Frank Lahti.

Rev. Heinonen became the resident Presbyterian minister when the manse was built, and the church was very active for a number of years, with regular services, Sunday school, confirmation classes, English classes, bazaars and social gatherings being held. Sermons sometimes were held in English and Swedish, as well as Finnish. Rev. Heinonen and Mr. Makela attended a conference in Toronto to discuss church union, and soon after, the church became United.

The church served as a school until about 1924, at which time Rev. Heinonen and his family left the community. Services continued to be held intermittently by various Finnish ministers. As it was in a poor location, with no road and no means to reach it by car, activity and interest in the church dwindled down. Finally the building was sold and eventually torn down around 1950.