

History Of Utopia Community Centre

After many expressing the need of a hall in Utopia, a community meeting was called for March 23, 1955. This meeting was held in the school and was well attended. The late Harold Bell was appointed as chairman and Mrs. Vivian McCann as secretary.

First, a vote was taken as to the advisability of building a hall in our community and the outcome was unanimously in favour.

Much discussion followed on the location. Many sites were suggested. Finally Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Dobson made the generous donation of land north of the Anglican Church and this was accepted with thanks. The roadway to the park at the back of the church was donated by the late W. J. Miller.

A building committee of Willard Dobson, Russel Coulson, Gilbert McMaster, Tom Exell and Louis Traux was named. The wheels were now set in motion with approximately \$2,200.00 on hand, which had been raised from euchres held in the school and ball tournaments in the park, among many other activities.

The building committee held their first meeting on March 30, 1955, at which time Louis Traux was appointed chairman, Gilbert McMaster, treasurer and Mrs. Vivian McCann secretary.

The late Charles Griffen of Allandale Lumber and Fuel, a former resident, was contacted and given the contract to build the hall using all the voluntary labour we could possibly get. Wonderful co-operation was received so the building proceeded. We were also guaranteed 25% of all costs as a government grant.

Generous donations were received from former residents, as well as installing hydro and the painting, while our local people donated many of the furnishings, etc.

The opening night was February 24, 1956, with a good attendance despite the very icy conditions. There was a banquet served followed by a programme. Mr. Norman Moore, Cockshutt Plow Ltd., Brantford, was the special speaker. Mr. F.A. Lashley, former Agriculture Representative for South Simcoe, then working for the government department responsible for grants, officially opened our hall. Roxy Smith cut the ribbon.

The approximate cost of the building was \$20,000.00. A debenture of \$6,000.00 was taken by the Township of Essa with 25% of all costs by Government of Ontario. The balance was raised locally and from donations.



We had many inconveniences without water supply, but by serving banquets, euchres, etc., a well was drilled and water supplied in the hall in 1958. After more struggling the washrooms were installed in 1961 and in 1963 the basement ceiling was closed in. Later, cupboards were put in the kitchen.

In July, 1965, we began to plan for the Centennial year 1967. Again money was the prime factor. A finance committee was formed. Euchres were held after our regular season, pot luck suppers and home talent concerts, but the biggest boost was from an autographed quilt. Donations were received from past and present residents and in turn their names were embroidered in the quilt, which was beautifully designed by Mrs. Louis Traux.

A cairn in memory of our forefathers was built in front of the hall on which the bell from the old SS# 9 school was mounted. A cement sidewalk was laid around the south and east of the hall and shrubs were planted.

Due to the full co-operation of our community, our school board and our township council, it was possible to raise the money to pay for a \$1,300.00 project, which added much to the beauty of our hall.

May this spirit of good will always remain in Utopia.

Mary McMaster