

## **The Codrington Orange Hall** by Dan Buchanan

In Upper Canada of the 1830's and 1840's many small buildings sprang up at the corners of concession roads or at handy central locations in many rural communities. They were Orange Halls, the home of the Loyal Orange Lodge. In many rural Ontario communities the Orange Hall was the first community structure to be built and often served as school, church and political meeting place until proper buildings could be built for those purposes.

The Loyal Orange Lodge was established in Upper Canada around 1830 and in its early decades was focused on helping Irish immigrants make a good start in the new land. It was an important social support in rural communities until other institutions grew and took responsibility for helping people in need. The political and religious side of the organization caused lots of trouble, particularly around the July 12 marches that still make the news in Ireland. As decades passed in Ontario, cooler and more moderate heads prevailed.

The politics of the Orange Order gradually evolved into a social service role and the Orange Hall was used for many decades for what ever community meeting or event needed a space. The brick school house was built beside the Orange Hall in 1885 which may have transferred some activities from the old building and then, when the Codrington United Church was built in 1929



just to the north of the school, even fewer events would have needed the smaller, darker space of the Orange Hall. Over the next few decades it was used occasionally but eventually fell into disuse.

Most Orange Halls do not survive today but one of them does – in Codrington. Have we forgotten about that old ugly red building that now huddles in between the revitalized Codrington School and the modern Codrington Community Centre? It is there still, the old Orange Hall. For many years it was used to store machinery and now it belongs to the school property and is used for storage. A large door was opened up in the rear wall to allow easy access into the main open area inside the hall and even today it is used for storing household and garden items.

A closer look inside the hall will reveal that the ceiling of the hall still is covered by tin sheets which sport imprinted designs and a good deal of rust from years of weather. A balcony extends the width of the building at about head height at the east end and it's not hard to imagine sitting up in the balcony to watch a dance or meeting in the main area below.

The only land records that directly refer to the Orange Lodge are:

On January 5, 1907, Alicberis Van Blaricom sold 1/8 acre of land in the North ½ of Lot 3, Concession 8 to The Loyal Orange Lodge No. 1363 for \$100.

On February 10, 1967, The Loyal Orange Lodge No. 1363 sold a small sliver of land at the road to the Department of Highways.

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