

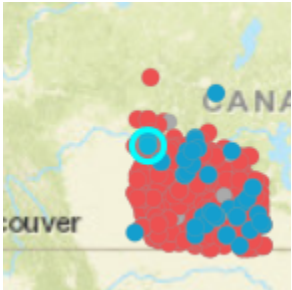




Heritage Property - Charlow (Shiloh) Baptist Church and Cemetery

Street Address	Municipality	Designation Type	Designation Date
	Eldon RM 471	Municipal Heritage Property	December 4, 1991
			
			

Statement of Significance

Charlow (Shiloh) Baptist Church and Cemetery is a Municipal Heritage Property occupying approximately one hectare of land in the Rural Municipality of Eldon No. 471, about 30 kilometres north of the Town of Maidstone. Nestled in a small grove of trees and shrubs, the property features a one-room log building, constructed in 1912, and an adjoining cemetery.

The heritage value of Charlow (Shiloh) Baptist Church and Cemetery resides in its association with the first Black community in Saskatchewan, which arrived from Oklahoma in 1910. Following the American Civil War, tens of thousands of former slaves began migrating to Oklahoma Territory, where they could vote, study, and live in relative freedom. The political situation changed in 1907 when Oklahoma achieved statehood and elected a segregationist state government. As a result, a small Black Baptist congregation from Oklahoma was drawn to Saskatchewan in search of a free life from segregation and racism. In 1910, with the promise of free land in Canada's west, about 12 Black families, many of whom were former slaves or descendants of former slaves, arrived in Saskatchewan and settled in the Eldon district. These original 12 founding families were the seeds around which a community of over fifty families would grow. In 1912, they constructed their one-room log church, which they named Shiloh Baptist Church. Constructed of dovetailed, hand-hewn square poplar logs hauled many miles by cart and furnished with hand-made benches and a pulpit, the church was the focal point of community life and a vital social and religious centre for the close-knit Shiloh community. The only log church built by Black pioneers in Saskatchewan, it remained in active use until the mid-1940s, by which time the community had largely moved away.

Heritage value also lies in the property's status as the only African American cemetery in Saskatchewan. Used from 1913 to 1945, the cemetery holds what is believed to be 37 graves from the Shiloh community, which, according to custom, were originally marked by large stones at the head and foot of each grave. Today, marked by white wooden crosses, the cemetery remains an important bond between the original Shiloh community and its descendants.

Nestled in a grove of trees and shrubs, Charlow (Shiloh) Baptist Church and Cemetery stands as a symbol of the Black pioneers' faith, and desire to build a better life.

The heritage value of Charlow (Shiloh) Church and Cemetery resides in the following character-defining elements:

- those elements that speak to the building's simple vernacular construction, including its one-room layout constructed of square logs, dove-tailed corner joints, fieldstone foundation, hip roof, and original hand-hewn benches;
- the cemetery, with its arrangement of graves and grave markers, including any remaining original stone markers;
- its original location in a small grove of trees and shrubs on a pastoral tract of land.

Source:

Rural Municipality of Eldon No. 471 Bylaw No. 114.

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