

ORO AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH



When the Oro African Church was built in the 1840s, the logs were visible on the exterior and interior. About a decade later, the exterior was covered with clapboard to protect the logs and block the wind and cold. By the end of the 19th century, two west windows and the wainscot were added, and the pulpit was likely reconstructed. The founding congregation ended their active use of the church in the 1920s.

By the 1940s, the church had decayed to such an extent that local residents and some descendants were concerned that this important landmark would be lost. What followed was continuing decades of stabilization and revitalization. The deteriorating log foundation was reinforced with stone and concrete, the original floors, ceiling, window sashes, and exterior clapboards were replaced several times, and the center chimney was moved to the east wall. Serious damage was done in 1981 when trucks hit the west and north walls.

Today's initiative continues that process of stabilization and revitalization. This is not an attempt to make the church new again, as when built in the 1840s. The conservation approach respects the evolution of the church from the 1840s to the 1920s, when all work was "touched by the Black hands" of the congregation. What you see today is based on a 1941 photograph, the only known depiction of the church taken before the start of the first stabilization work that decade, and on evidence revealed by extensive examination. All new work is labelled to distinguish it from the original artifact.

Some may be critical of the sagging roof, less than straight walls, windows, and wainscot, and the creaking floor. This is not how the church was built, but it is how it aged. After 170 years, the church can settle into its old age, and its future, with a solid foundation, waterproof roof, warm walls, and a fresh coat of whitewash. Its significant story in Canadian history can continue to be told for generations to come.