

First Lobo Baptist Church – A Brief History

Our story cannot start without a brief period in the history of Canada. The American Revolutionary War, or the War of Independence, started between the Kingdom of Great Britain and 13 British colonies in North America in 1775. This resulted in the declaration of independence of a new sovereign nation external to the British Empire, the United States of America, in 1776. However, those who remained loyal to the British Empire, known as United Empire Loyalists, had their land and all their belongings confiscated by the new nation, were persecuted, and sometimes jailed for treason. Eventually they moved north from 7 of the Eastern Seaboard States, and settled in Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Some who were in N.S. and N.B. heard of warmer winters and better growing seasons in Upper Canada, and headed to the Long Point region of Lake Erie, a distance well over 800 miles. Some arrived on foot to scout the area, then returned to retrieve their families, taking months and months to achieve their goal. From there, eventually, families trekked to Lobo Township on the news of getting 200 acres of land from the Crown.

It was three of these families who were involved in the start of our church, the primary family being the Edwards.

Henry, Richard, and John Edwards, whose ancestors were from Wales by way of England, and then Boston, moved to Lobo Township with some of their siblings.

Titus Finch, an itinerant preacher in the Long Point area and beyond, was one of the first pastors at First Lobo Baptist. Two of his daughters married into the Edwards family.

John and Abigail Gustin fled the States and moved to New Brunswick, and then Long Point. Two of their sons and one daughter married into the Edwards family and moved to Lobo Township in the early 1820s, and it was at the home of their son Isaiah Gustin that the first meeting of the church was held on February 11, 1827.

Their daughter Abigail Gustin married Simon Mabee, one of the people at the very first meeting of the church, and a preacher at the church soon after.

So how did religion enter into the picture, and how did our church ancestors become Baptist? Well, there was a revival in Great Britain starting in 1725 called the Great Awakening. George Whitefield, a Church of England preacher and evangelist, and later a founder of Methodism, started this Awakening throughout Britain. He also travelled to the British North American colonies to preach the gospel. Meanwhile, Jonathan Edwards, (no relation to the other Edwards mentioned), was preaching to the lost in Connecticut and New Jersey. There is no doubt the fruit of the labours of these two preachers passed down through the next 100 years to those who settled in the Long Point Region. Many in this area were Methodists and other denominations. However, Baptists from the Shaftsbury Baptist Association from Vermont, Massachusetts, and New York State were sent to Long Point to

preach the Gospel. Many were convinced by the power of the Word relating to baptism and several churches were started in the Long Point area during the early 1800s. The Edwards, Finchs, and Gustins all came from Vittoria Baptist Church in Charlotteville in Long Point. Sadly, Vittoria Baptist closed in 2009.

When I tell people I attend First Lobo Baptist Church, I am sometimes asked if there is a Second Lobo Baptist. Well, there was! It is now known as Poplar Hill Baptist Church, which was our second daughter church. Our first daughter church was formed by Welsh Baptists who were sent to start First London Welsh Baptist Church, later known as Denfield Baptist Church, which is now closed. Denfield daughtered East Williams Baptist church, which is also closed. We also daughtered a church in Komoka, which became a seminary shortly after, and then it became a school but is now closed.

Our first building was built in 1840 on land next to the cemetery which is around the corner on Oxbow Road from our present location. A yellow brick building was built in 1872 on our current location. By the way, the land for the first church and cemetery, and the initial land for the yellow-brick building was donated by John Edwards. The yellow brick building was removed January 2015 to make way for the North addition which was officially opened on Anniversary Sunday in May 2015.

From the family line of John Edwards and Prudence Finch we are grateful to have direct descendants as members of our church: Mary Sells, through her deceased husband Syd, and their daughter Sarah. (See accompanying document: FLBC Founding Families Family Tree.)

Prepared by: Dorian Morton
Original for 185th anniversary in 2012
Revised in 2016 for first anniversary in newly finished building