

The Oren House on Union Road

Excerpts taken from "Oren Family Stories" by Rev. Ira A. Oren, Ruth E. Oren and Virginia E. (Oren) Groves

Who has not stopped at the intersection of Old Salem Rd. and Union Rd. and enjoyed looking at the old white frame Happy Corner Church of the Brethren (originally the Lower Stillwater Church) on the southwest corner of the modern church complex built in 1979 on the northwest corner? Our eyes also would stray off the road to a brick house on the opposite side of the road which for many years had a sign hanging from the porch saying "Happy Corner – Oren House." Did you ever wonder about the story behind the sign?

A recent family history donated by James and Betty Oren provides the Oren family tree and, through personal recollections of relatives and friends, helps clarify the impact the Oren Family had on the development of Happy Corner Church. Only the highlights of some of the stories will be given here. Much more information along with photos can be studied in the society's genealogy archives.

The Oren family can trace their ancestors to England, Ireland and even Russia. Later generations settled in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Indiana and Clinton and Highland Counties in Ohio. Our interest will focus on Alva Warren Oren born to Quaker parents Ira and Mary Ann Oren in Indiana. After attending the public schools and completing 3 years of Normal School, Alva and the rest of his family moved to Carroll Co., Tennessee where he taught school and engaged in the sawmill and shingle business. Alva united with the Church of the Brethren in the New Hope Church in Carroll Co. and was called to the ministry. In 1899 he married Alma May Mummert, whose parents were Aaron and Minnie Mummert of Phillipsburg, Ohio. After spending some years in Tennessee, Alva and Alma moved to Trotwood about 1904. By 1906, they owned a small house just east of Happy Corner School. Alva and Alma had five boys John David, Ira Aaron, Samuel Byron, Jesse Myron and Harold Alva. The older boys went to Happy Corner School, the younger ones to Clayton and all but Harold graduated from Randolph. From 1906 to 1941, Alva took an active part in the free ministry program of Happy Corner Church.

When the sub district schools were consolidated in 1921, Alva bought the old Happy Corner School building and remodeled it into a "big brick house." John David Oren, described by Rev. Ivan Gascho of Happy Corner Church as a pillar of the community, came into possession of the house in 1937. He and his first wife Naomi cared for 33 local "foster" children until she passed away. Later, after the children were grown, he married Kathryn Conklin and they lived in the house until John's death. Oren family members had lived in this house for all but 4 years between 1923 and 1987. In September 1987, Kathryn Oren donated the Oren House at 7038 Union Road to Happy Corner Church according to the wishes of her late husband. In later years, the house was used as a church parsonage.