

Bell Acres History...

Linbrook Woodlands' Historic Burial Site

"Out by the headwaters of the Big Sewickley Creek is a quaint old brick chapel or church known as Hopkins Chapel that is well worth a Sunday afternoon visit, both because it is a beautiful ride with plenty of different routes for the return trip, and because it is a place with a history...where the service is attended by people coming from the farming country for several miles around, where the worship is conducted in the simplest way...there is a great charm about the simplicity and earnestness of this worship in the little brick chapel with its old-fashioned pine pews and the rustling of the forest trees and the freshness of the hill breezes coming through the broad open door..." [Sewickley Herald 5 August 1916]

Perched on a wooded bluff overlooking the Big Sewickley Creek is the long abandoned Hopkins Chapel and Cemetery site. Located on Hopkins Church Road on the Bell Acres/Franklin Park border, the half-acre is now part of the Linbrook Woodland's Conservation Area.

Built in 1846 on a section of farmland donated by the Ingram family, the brick chapel was named in honor of Rev. Robert Hopkins, a popular Sewickley minister of the day.

The congregation of farm families shared itinerant ministers with neighboring Blackburn, Sewickley and Franklin [Ingomar] Methodist churches. Because of its small size, Hopkins often received financial support from the larger Sewickley church until closing circa 1920. Burials, however, continued for a short time longer with a 1935 survey recording 125 known gravesites.

The chapel stood empty for a number of years before being dismantled for the bricks. Grave markers were either removed or vandalized with the remnants eventually moved into a grouping at the edge of the site.

Today, the only visible evidence of the pioneer chapel and cemetery is an earthen outline of the foundation and rows of gentle depressions marking unknown graves belonging to generations of Big Sewickley Creek Valley families.

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Rev. A. B. Leonard was an itinerant minister who served Hopkins Chapel during the Civil War's early years. He would later write in reference to the First Battle of Bull Run (1861), *"At the close of a Sabbath afternoon service at Hopkins Chapel the news was received of the defeat of the Union forces and their retreat toward Washington City."*

This Bell Acres History article also appeared in the **Sewickley Herald**.

