

# Saskatchewan African Canadian Heritage Museum

## Fact Sheet No. 3 - Oklahoma Pioneers & the Shiloh Baptist Church



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**1907 -** In the United States, the Oklahoma and Indian Territories merge to become the state of Oklahoma. The segregationist controlled state legislature's first order of business is to pass a bill requiring separate railway coaches and "Waiting rooms", for African Americans. Escalating violence, and laws taking away their right to vote, encourages thousands of Oklahoma Blacks to take serious note of advertisements for free homesteads in Western Canada.

**1909-10** *Julius Caesar Lane* and Baptist minister *Joseph Mayes (wife, Mattie)* both residents of Creek County, Oklahoma, lead a group of African American families to Saskatchewan. Canadian border entry records show that at least seventy-five individuals representing 12 different families arrived at Emerson Manitoba in the spring of 1910. They all stated their destination as Maidstone.

**1911 -** Residents of this new Black community come together to build Shiloh Baptist Church located in the Rural Municipality of Eldon about 27 KM North of Maidstone.

In Saskatchewan and Alberta, White opposition to the African American immigration becomes so strident it fosters a Government of Canada Order in Council which bars Black immigration. The order states that "...any immigrants belonging to the Negro race... is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada." This "Order in Council" never becomes law.

**1913 -** Joseph Mayes conducts Shiloh Church's first funeral for colony co-founder Julius Caesar Lane who is also the first person buried in Shiloh Cemetery.

**1916 -** The congregation of Shiloh Baptist Church and Cemetery register the property at land titles in Battleford. A misunderstanding or clerical error erroneously records the property as Charlow Baptist Church.

**1930-45** The Shiloh colony prospered and as many as 75 different families populated the area by the early 1930's. But the depression sapped the strength of the community and it began a slow decline; by the early 1950's only a hand full of Black families were left in the area.

**1991 -** In 1991 Shiloh Church and Cemetery is designated "A Site of Historical Value," under Rural Municipality of Eldon bylaw 114.

**2010 -** Today Shiloh Baptist Church and Cemetery is all that remains of the African American pioneer community that once thrived in the R.M. of Eldon.