

Over there. D'you see her coming from Hartney-way in her buggy – snow flying from hooves and wheels? She's why I'm here. I'm a modest, white building we call *the meeting house* – along the highway between Deloraine and Hartney. And her? She's Mrs. Alma Dale – the first minister of Chain Lakes Friends.

It's 1903. Early winter. My favourite time. Our people need this break. After a new snowfall, the animals, machines, the traffic – all go still.

Many folks around here tend cattle, horses, chickens and pigs. It's not the best farmland. Putting up food and hay for the winter is a large, necessary job.

The folks who gather, are called Quakers, by others. They call themselves '*Friends*'. You see, even though Mrs. Alma gives fiery sermons that move the most calcified hearts, Friends actually prefer quiet. When they meet, they sit in quiet prayer - to give the spirit a chance to speak – to move them. Friends got the name "Quakers" because of the way folks shake when profoundly moved by the Spirit.



A Cairn and a small Cemetery mark the location of the "Meeting House" on the east side of Highway #21 about 11 km south of Hartney.

House' These Friends came from Ontario a decade ago. Before that from Pennsylvania and before that from Britain. Mrs. Alma - is a wonder. Her family in Ontario is into horses. So, she has two long-maned palominos doing exactly as they're trained. Such a sight to see

them prancing from visitation to meeting, meeting to celebration. Always on the move. In perfect harmony. And fast!

When my people decided they needed a meeting house, they got it done in record time. Who was shingling at the peak? Yep. Mrs. Alma. She's a decent finishing carpenter as well!

You might think Quakers – or Friends – are a tad odd. Not to me they aren't. They're farmers and business folk. Determined to work hard and to be thoughtful and respectful, because, as they say, God lives equally in each person.

Women in Canada can't even vote, but Friends are okay with women being called to ministry, or to any position. They're fond of saying that if God wouldn't call women to minister, there'd only be half the ministering going on. Gotta' love the logic.

Mrs. Alma was called to the ministry in her thirties. She couldn't have babies, so dedicated herself to joyful service to her community. She puts on mini dramas – to add emphasis and vigor to her teachings. Wherever she lives and travels, people are drawn to her, to her messages about living clean, spirit-full, justice-loving lives. She's in high demand across the prairies, Ontario, USA and even England! We're fortunate to have her while we do.

And me? I've had to move twice. But the cemetery's still where we started. You're welcome to visit!

Chain Lakes Friends was inspired by a story in Vantage Points 2. David Neufeld