

Church Women Vow To Save Structure

By BONNIE ATWOOD
JM Staff Writer

WOODBRIDGE — There's not much here that is really old. The hundreds of houses in Dale City and Lake Ridge are new. Most of the people are young marrieds, newly settled, with school-aged children. The shiny shopping centers, the super-schools, even many of the trees are recent acquisitions.

The Bethel United Methodist Church building is an exception. The one-room, white frame structure has been situated at the corner of Davis Ford and Smoketown Roads for 125 years.

The small plot of land the church occupies has been sold to developers, Paul C. Kinchloe Jr. and Herbert Aman. Plans are under way to build a larger church on adjacent land that the church owns.

Until recently, the 200-member congregation had assumed the old building would have to be torn down—another victim of modernization.

But, in the past three months, a group of interested citizens has discovered that the little church can be moved. And they've begun raising the funds to do it.

Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, attended Bethel Church since she was a child, is one of the members of a small committee trying to save the church. She said a house mover, Francis I. Gerrick of Pennsylvania, has looked at the building. According to Mrs. Leepson, Gerrick says he can easily move the church for about \$5,000, which includes excavation.

After the short move, a matter of only 200 yards, some repair work must be done, Mrs. Leepson said. To cover these additional costs, the committee has set a goal of \$15,000.

The fund-raisers have sent letters to historical groups and approached interested persons. As of Tuesday, they

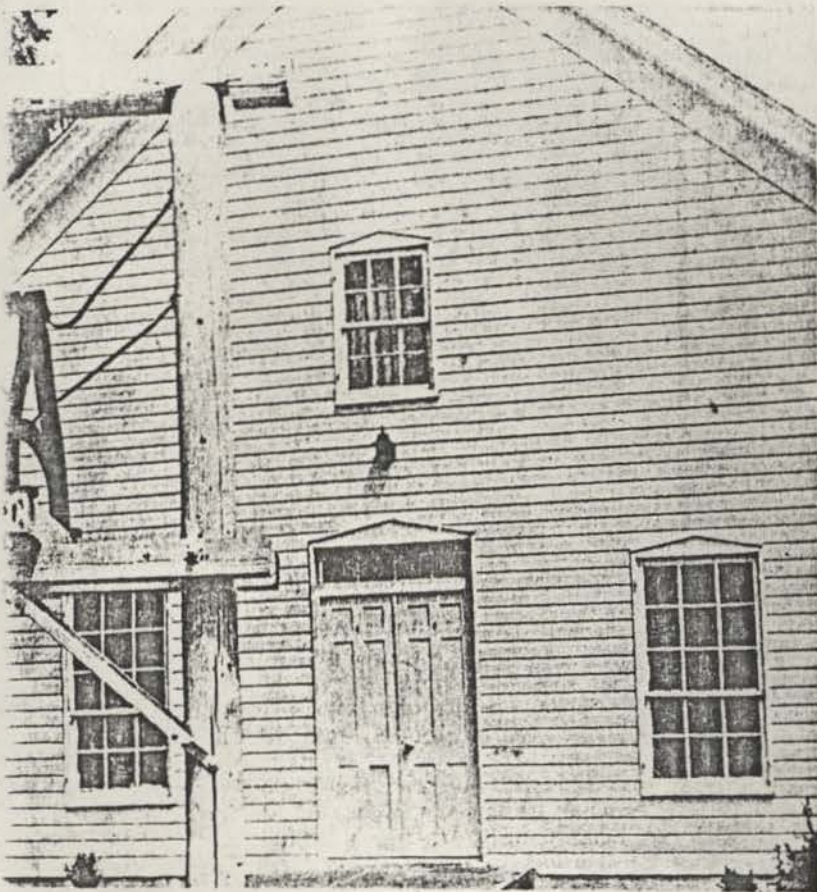
had raised \$4,605.

Anna Lee Dean, the treasurer of Bethel Church, and Mrs. Leepson said they are confident the church can be saved. They stressed that the project has been a harmonious one.

The developers have cooperated with the committee, Mrs. Leepson said. She said their target date for beginning development work on the land is Sept. 1, but the date may be postponed to make sure the church is safely moved.

Calling the building a symbol of our "simple roots," Mrs. Leepson continued, "We are determined to have it moved and find a use for it. It will not stand empty. It's too important a part of our heritage to let go of."

The women said more funds are needed to ensure the survival of the building. Contributions may be mailed to: Anna Lee Dean, treasurer; Route 3; Box 425Z; Stafford, Va. 22554.



Bonnie Atwood—The Journal Messenger

Church on Davis Ford Road

