

**Title:** Rich Hill: The Church and Cemetery. Page 1/3

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**Description:** A detailed two page history of the Rich Hill United Church. Article contains information on the Sunday School, Cemetery, and notable church events. Please note that the original artifact is also nearly illegible. Please click on 'enlarged version' for a more readable version.

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From P.O. Office - Tecumseh Township

## Rich Hill

**THE CHURCH AND CEMETERY** The first Rich Hill Church was built on the cemetery property. This plot of land was obtained from Mr. Richard Allen, who owned the north half of Lot 11, Concession 1, Tecumseh Township, at that time. It was registered July 1850 in a bond consisting of Samuel Hastings, Richard Palmer, James Pinkerton and Robert Thompson.

A plank church was erected on the property and sheds were built to shelter the horses. Plots were taken up around the church for a burial

ground for members of the congregation, but no plan made of them. This church served until December 1, 1853, when the present brick building was opened. The lot on which it stands was given by Mr. Robert Fleming and his mother who owned the east half of Lot 10, Concession 2, Tecumseh, at that time.

All gathering of the material for the new church was done by the men of the congregation with horses and wagons, and when the opening services were over, enough money was either on hand or promised to clear off all debt.

Rich Hill was a Methodist church - a strong congregation in those times. Every family had its own pew and they were nearly always there on Sunday to occupy it.

The Beeton-Tottenham circuit was formed by the Toronto conference in 1837 (we have no records prior to 1837) and consisted of the following appointments: Beeton, Tottenham, Rich Hill, Rainey's and Tecumseh. We think the Tecumseh Church must have been near Beeton as a Mr. Baycott was a member of the board. Rev. A. Rodwell was the minister at this time (1837) at a salary of \$700. He had an assistant, Rev. M. Lavers, who received a salary of \$400. The Tecumseh church seemed to have a difficult time to keep going and closed permanently in 1890.

A Sunday School had been in existence from the beginning in Rich Hill and it was used for five or six classes to be held in the basement for one hour before church services. Mr. William Porter was Superintendent of the Sunday School for a great number of years and Mr. Hastings was another who held that position for quite a number of years. Clarence Rogers was secretary for some time and in later years Sam Hastings took over that job.

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- ... A Sunday School Christmas concert was a main event at Rich Hill and provided good entertainment. A church picnic, garden party and bowl supper were other highlights of the year and of course, choir practice and prayer meeting through the week brought the people to the church where it was the social centre of the community.

In the Methodist Church, a minister stayed for a four year term, if everyone was agreeable. So this accounts for the number of ministers on the charge. Also, some being assistants, might have accounted for the number of changes as they might have only been here for a year or two at a time. Rev S. Dunlop (1889-91), later Rev R. Richards, Rev H. Moore, Rev T. Keam, Rev Richard Lunge (1896-1901). Tottenham and Rich Hill became a two-point charge in August 1900, with Tottenham paying \$410. for the minister's salary and Rich Hill paying \$245. The United Church House on Queen Street North, in Tottenham, was purchased about 1902 by the two congregations (of course, the name for it at that time was the *Parsonage*).

Following are the names of ministers on the charge from 1901. Rev J. Gough, Rev J. Talbot, Rev F. Brown, Rev Horton, Rev M. Kenzie, Rev J. Ferguson, Rev Belfry, Rev Dodgson, Rev Stanley, Rev Fox, Rev Beveridge, Rev Levi Hallyard, Rev S. B. Butt, Rev George Purchase, Rev James Dorian, Rev Gardner, Rev Burton, Rev Fred Lund, Rev O. H. Holmes, Rev Geo. Saunders, Rev Paul Lee, Rev Alfred Dumont, Rev Fred Jewell, Rev Mrs J. Mills at the present time.

Rev Mr Beveridge arrived just after church union (1925) and he, having been a Presbyterian and full of enthusiasm, really brought things to life, especially at Rich Hill. He organized a women's group known as the Ladies' Aid (later W. A. and now United Church Women). The silver

anniversary of the group was held in 1951 and Mr Beveridge was able to be there and preach the sermons.

The young people, with the leadership of Mr Beveridge and the direction of Mrs Russell Williamson, provided entertainment in their own and many other communities by putting on plays. They had a good time, and as an added bonus, even made a little money at 25c admission. (The church could use it, too, as a high wind had toppled the steeple about this time and the front steps had also been demolished, so repairs had to be made and new steps built.)

(Most of the following information on the Rich Hill Church and school can be attributed to Isabel Hastings.)

In 1859, a Methodist Church was built of planks, on the south half of Lot 10, Concession 1, in Tecumseh Township. Plots were taken around the church for a burial ground and this became known as the Rich Hill Church. This too was a very active church, and it wasn't long before the congregation became too large for the church. A new brick church was built in 1883 on the east half of Lot 10, Concession 2, and this church is still in operation today.

In 1887 one minister had five charges: Beeton, Tottenham, Rich Hill, Rainey's and Tecumseh, but he did have an assistant, Rich Hill being on the second Concession and Tecumseh on the eighth Concession meant a lot of travelling. The minister's salary was \$750.00 per year, and his assistant's, \$400.00, and were made up as follows: Tottenham \$461.00, Beeton \$275.00, Rich Hill \$225.00, Rainey's \$150.00 and Tecumseh \$100.00. (Rainey's and Tecumseh I believe were houses where services were held.) Tecumseh had trouble making up expenses and closed in 1890. Church union came about in 1925, and in 1926 Tottenham and Rich Hill acquired a former Presbyterian Minister.

In 1928 the spire was blown off the church; the damage was repaired, but the spire was never rebuilt, as in 1929 came the Depression and money was too short for *finis*. This is still a very active church. The Minister of Tottenham United Church also serves Rich Hill Church. A few years ago the Rich Hill Church was asked if they would consider closing and amalgamate with the Tottenham Church, and the answer was a definite No. It is a good building and well maintained by dedicated people. The recently retired Mrs Isabel Hastings was organist for approximately fifty years, this was not done for any financial gain, as when times were bad this was non-existent.