

Richmond Church Prepares to Mark 90th Anniversary

On Sunday, Nov. 3, the village of Richmond celebrates the 90th anniversary of the building of its church in 1850, though the church's congregation dates from 1840. Earlier still, an Anglican mission was running in 1836.

Richmond being an early settlement on Talbot road, one of the earliest highways, it is not improbable that Bishop Stewart of Quebec (a son of the Earl of Galloway), who toured the Canadas exhaustively before and around 1820, probably preached in its inn at a very early date. His graphic appeal resulted in the founding of the Stewart Traveling Mission, whose representative, Rev. Thomas Green, by 1836 was covering appointments ranging through Elgin, Oxford and Norfolk, including one at Richmond where the records are said to mention a Hatch as church warden.

It was for the building of an Anglican church that the pioneer Caleb Cook donated the lot many remember as lying fenced in opposite the West Richmond cemetery for years (now incorporated into the Haines' farm). The cemetery lot itself was given by Jeremiah Moore, the Quaker, at least as early as 1825, he having buried in it on Christmas Day of that year his brother, who died while on a visit from Welland. There is a Moore family tradition also that the same ancestor left provision in his will not only for the lot for an Anglican church but a bell that might be heard twenty miles.

Brought Own Fuel

The late Mrs. John Veitch told of attending an Anglican Sunday School in a schoolhouse about where is now the Dr. Riddell plot in the West cemetery. Mr. Springalt, the postmaster, was wont to bring up a kneeling cushion from the village to accommodate the minister, who arrived on horseback from Aylmer; and in cold weather to go across Talbot road to Grandma Story's for coals to build a fire.

Other sects coming in discouraged Anglican church building. But Caleb Cook was determined to have a church. Still extant is the chapel deed, dated March 21, 1850, by which "Caleb Cook of the township of Bayham and Melinda, his wife, of the one part" (for the nominal sum of 5 shillings, presents a lot to) "Thomas Godwin Senior, Thomas Godwin Junior, William Medcalf, William Bowes, David W. Hatch, William Hatch and George Proconier, all of the said township of Bayham, in the county of Middlesex, in the London district of the province of Canada West, trustees" (of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada) "of the other part," etc., signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of Nicholas Spore and George Laing. Mr. Cook made provision for other Protestant churches of character to have free use of the building. And Anglicans, Baptists and Methodists are said to have held in it separate services on the same Sabbaths.

The white cottage chapel amid its green trees on Richmond Hill still forms a mental picture in the minds of many living people. But two aged residents, Mrs. Annie Pettman and Hiram Morse (87), remember it in its days of pioneer services, for which the latter's boyhood duty was to ring the schoolhouse bell.

"In the early days," says Mr. Morse, "the women sat on the south side of the church; the men on the north. The seats were set in squares in the corners, the pallbearers for the church funerals occupying the north corner by the pulpit. The entry projecting inward formed the 'rear' squares naturally. In each stood a box stove for burning wood. For years the choir sang from the back of the church. Richmond's good singers formed a choir long before the church possessed an instrument. I mind for great occasions they used to unscrew the legs off Mrs. Laing's melodeon, carry it over and set it up.

Scripture Tickets

"When I started to Sunday School, George Proconier (grandfather of the present Sunday School superintendent of that name) was the superintendent. I can still see my teacher, Adam Pauling, the tailor, in his swallow tail coat and high silk hat. Church officials dressed for their office those days. Mr. Pauling taught from the Testament, of the catechism, which we gradually memorized. We were given small ornamental tickets with

scripture on them, of which when we attained a certain number a larger size was presented."

Quaint, though modern in comparison with Mr. Morse's memories, is the minute-book of Richmond's first Ladies' Aid, organized March, 1899, with Mrs. George Mitchell, president; Mrs. R. Knott, vice-president; Mrs. Henry Godwin, treasurer; Mrs. William Andrews, chaplain, and about an equal number of gentlemen and ladies on the roll. The canny ladies had no mind to embark in financial ventures without their menfolk entrenched behind. Theirs to cook for harvest homes, the part of the husbands was to eat and pay. The unique tactics were successful. Starting with seven cents the women were soon recording totals of \$83.15, etc., no mean sum for the day.

Blithely naive are some of the secretary's entries: "Moved, we buy coal oil for next Sunday" "that the young folks take over the church in warm weather" . . . Dec. 3 (1812) Kate's wedding day! (Kate Heather's).

"Imported" Speakers

An Epworth League topic calendar of around the same date reveals a plan of inter-community collaboration—a local member with an "imported" speaker being responsible for each evening's program in turn. The names of John McDowell, Delme; and Herbert Hatch, Straffordville, appear among the outside help.

There is a curious story in connection with the burning of the first Richmond church in the autumn of 1904. The bench seats ranged round the warm stoves formed ideal nooks for church confab, the space beneath being devoted to fuel storage. The story goes that on the Sunday night of the fire, a volunteer stoker replenishing the stove during service, finding a stick too long, removed it, and replaced it under the bench.



CALEB AND MELINDA COOK, a devout church couple of early days in Richmond. Mr. Cook donated the lot for the church in 1850.

After service a layman and the minister held a pleasant and animated visit around the mellow, dying fire, during which the latter recalled, late in the evening, that his "subconscious" had all the while been striving to register in his mind the odor of smouldering wood. But that was after the church had gone up in flames! From which the strong gale prevailing bore charred shingles far across the Otter into Maple Grove.

The present up-to-date church was built and dedicated by the Rev. William Godwin the following year, 1905, William Andrews, a local artisan, having charge of the brickwork. The pioneer pulpit was

the cottage now occupied by Leonard Morse. The pioneer pulpit, lost with the old church, was the gift of George Neal Proconier.

In Many Circuits

A church is an entity and during a century lives history. The Richmond church has witnessed two eras of church union, the rise and progress of three generations of the same families, and, sometimes as the head of a circuit, as often not, according to the ebb and flow of fortune, has been connected down through the years with every Methodist church in a wide district — of the Bayham, Malahide, Brownsville, Springfield, Tillsonburg circuits.

Mrs. McKenzie (nee a Miss McKenay) remembers when Cornith had no church except one a mile west, and the Rev. Mr. Crews came over from Richmond of a Sunday to minister to them. Soon after, she recollects driving with her father to Tillsonburg, bearing a salary subsidy of flour and meat to the Rev. Mr. Morrison, the circuit headquarters having moved to that town.

The first organist at Richmond church was Mrs. Robert Proconier. Mrs. Bert Green next officiated over a term of 20 years; then Mrs. James Crossett, Lorne Laing and Miss Erie Haines in succession. The present organist is Mrs. Percy Green.

A century long list of ministers have preached on Richmond Hill, of whom, except for a doubtful period between 1876-92—a fairly complete list is extant:

Richmond in connection with Malahide Circuit: 1840, Thomas Fawcett; 1841, Luther O. Rice; 1842-3, John K. Williston; 1844, Bewley Heyland; 1845-6, Thomas Jeffers; 1847-8, Joseph Shepley; 1849-50, S. C. Philp and John English; 1851-2, George Kennedy and Thomas Peacock and in '52 John Shaw.

With Aylmer-West Circuit: 1853, George Kennedy; 1854-5, Francis Berry; 1856, Ozias Barber.

With Bayham Circuit: 1857-8-9, Brinton P. Brown; 1860, Philip Rose 1861-2, Henry Reid; 1863-4-5, Thomas Crews; 1866, W. F. Morrison.

With Tillsonburg Circuit: 1867, W. F. Morrison, James Moss; 1868-9-70, Jonathan Betts, Richard James Walter Rigsby, E. A. Chown.

With Vienna Circuit: 1871-2, W. C. Watson, M.A.; W. H. Cairnduff; 1873-4, George Ferguson.

With Straffordville Circuit: 1875, John Elliott; 1876, W. T. Turner.

With Springfield Circuit: 1881-4, R. D. Hamilton; 1885-6, W. G. Brown, M.A.; T. R. McNair.

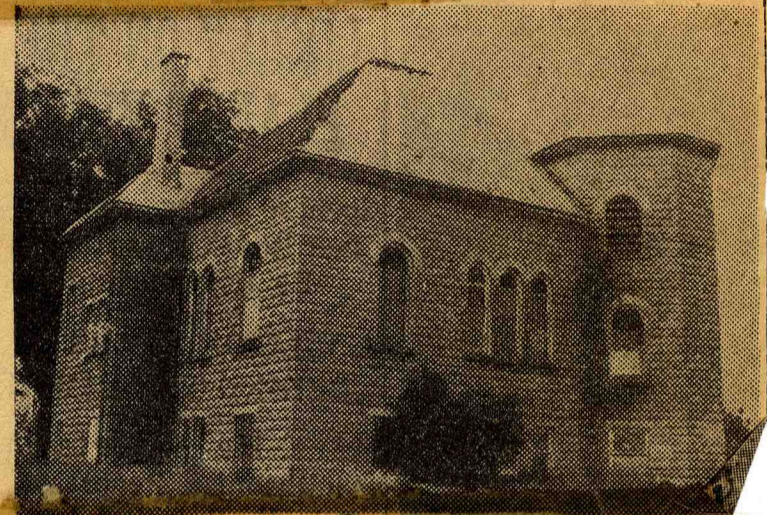
With Brownsville Circuit: 1892-3, John Veale, G. N. Hazen, A. H. Brown, Ph.D.; 1894-6, G. H. McAllister, Orville Alexander, James Snell.

With Corinth Circuit: 1897-1902, L. W. Reid, Mr. Madden; 1903-6, A. E. Lloyd; 1907-9, R. A. Miller; 1910, J. Hart; 1911-14, James Elford.

With Richmond Circuit (student ministers): 1915-16, M. C. Parr; 1917, C. R. Gower; 1918, T. C. Wilkinson; 1919, J. P. Cooke; 1920, L. C. Harvey; 1921, C. H. Dickinson; 1922-3, H. C. Wilson; 1924, Clayton Searle; 1925, Frank Gilbert (with ordained ministers), 1926-28, A. D. Boa; 1929-30, M. P. Smith; 1931-33, R. E. Southcott; 1934-35, C. W. Leslie; 1936-39, C. C. Strachan; 1940, J. L. Foster, Aubrey Edworthy.

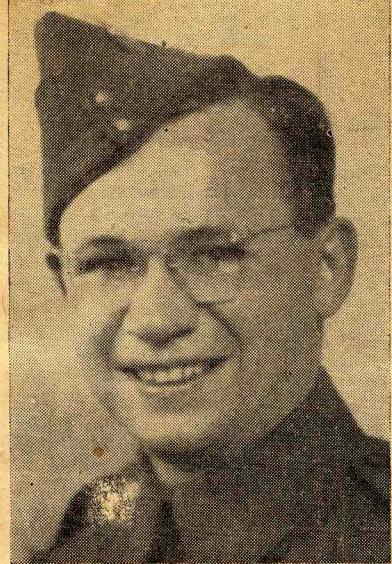
At the 90th anniversary services to be held on Sunday, Nov. 3, the morning service will be in charge of the Rev. Dr. Knowles, Aylmer; Rev. G. S. Hammond, Port Stanley will speak in the evening. The anniversary supper will be given on the evening of Nov. 7, the Thursday following.

History Century Old Reports on Earliest Doings in Little Community; First Ladies' Aid Included Gentlemen



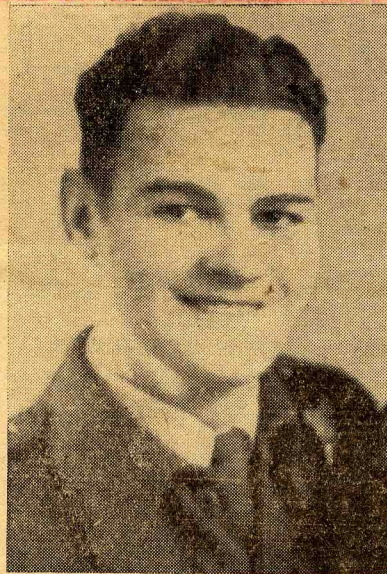
THOMAS GODWIN AND WILLIAM HATCH, pioneer residents of Richmond district, who were members of the board of trustees of Richmond Church, which received the original deed for the property from Caleb Cook.

Richmond and District Service Men and Women World War II - 1939-1945.



L/CPL. GEORGE E. ANGER

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Austin Anger, received his early education in Richmond Public School. He enlisted in October 1940, with the Oxford Rifles, and received his military training in Woodstock and London. He went overseas in December 1942, and was transferred to the 1st Base Workshop where he was trained in the Mechanized Division of the R.C.E.M.E. His wife, the former Ruby Burwell, and son, reside at Tillsonburg.



PTE. ROBERT H. JOHNSTON

No. 1 C.R.D., son of Mrs. Ripley, of St. Thomas. He attended the Richmond Public School and made his home with Mr. L. Sparkman, and the late Mrs. Sparkman. He enlisted in 1940 and after receiving military training in Canada, went overseas in 1941. He has seen service in Africa, Italy and Sicily. At present he is in England.



CPL. FRANK WRATHMALL

A native of England, came to Canada in his early teens, and assisted on farms in this community. He enlisted at Kingston in Feb. 1940, and went overseas in June 1940. He served in England, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Germany. He received injuries in Italy and Holland. He returned to Canada on the "Lady Nelson," in August 1945.



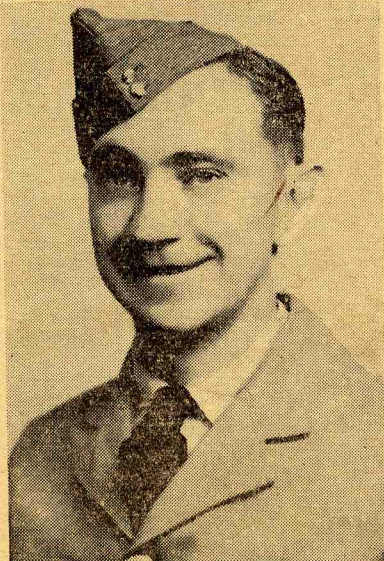
A/SGT. HUGH WOODWARD

Son of Mr. and Mrs. M. H. Woodward, of St. Thomas. He was a former successful teacher of the Richmond School for four years. He enlisted in September 1939, and received his military training at London and Valcartier. He went overseas in the second contingent of the 1st Division, arriving in England in December 1939. He went to France in May 1940 (Dunkirk), but returned to England without being in action. Later he went to Italy, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. Sgt. Woodward and his wife are at present in England.



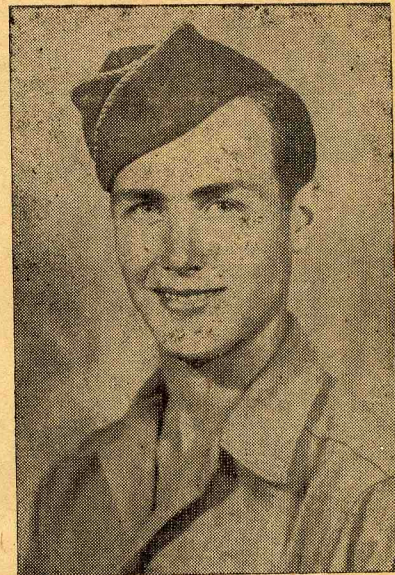
CPL. W. ALEX. MORSE

Son of Mr. and Mrs. John Morse, received his early education in the Richmond Public School and Aylmer High School. He enlisted from Stevensville, in August 1942. He received his military training at Barriefield, Debert, N.S., in R.C.C.S. In 1944, he was transferred to the Atlantic Command of the Signal Corps where he is now serving. His wife, the former Mary Green, of Aylmer, resides at Debert, N.S.



SGT. E. BRUCE MORSE

Son of Mr. L. Morse and the late Mrs. Morse. He received his early education in the Richmond Public School. He enlisted at Niagara Falls. He received his military training at Camp Borden in the Dental Corps. At present he is in Kentucky. His wife, the former Audrey Russell, of Wales, and daughter, reside in Niagara Falls.



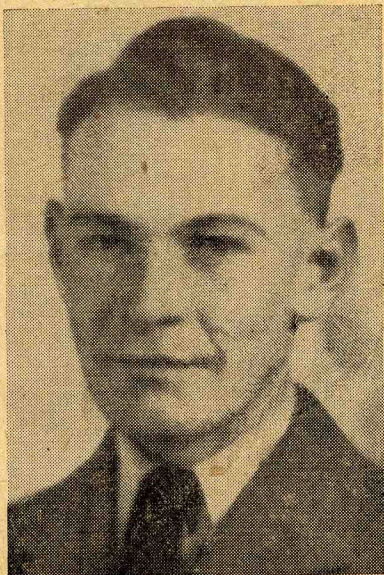
SGT. ROBERT J. WHETSTONE

Son of Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Whetstone. He enlisted in 1942 and received his training at Camp Borden and London. Later he trained for the Special Service Force at Vermont, New York. He went overseas in 1943 and saw service in Africa, Italy, France, and is now present in England.



CPL. MARY C. PROCUNIER

Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Procunier. She attended the Richmond Public School and is a graduate of Aylmer High School and the Toronto Normal. She enlisted in September 1943, and received her military training at Kitchener and Toronto. She is stationed in London.



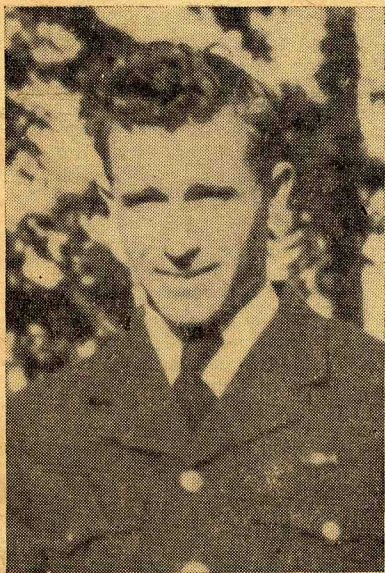
SGT. WALLACE E. BERDAN

Son of Mr. and Mrs. William Berdan. He attended the Kinglake Public School and Vienna High School. He enlisted in January, 1942, and received his basic training at Chatham. He was transferred to Queen's Park Mechanized Training School at London, Ontario. In Feb. 1943, he was stationed at Barriefield and then at No. 3 Company R.C.O.C. Depot, Kingston. In August 1944, he was transferred to No. 3 Company R.C.E.M.E., Barriefield, and was promoted to the rank of Corporal, and in August 1945, he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant.



FLIGHT SERGEANT HARRY TRIBE

Son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose Tribe. He received his early education in the Richmond Public School. He enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in May, 1940. He was stationed at Manning Pool, Toronto, T. T. S., St. Thomas, Fingal, Trenton and Aylmer. He has just completed his Master Mechanics' Course, and has returned to Trenton. His wife and family reside in Aylmer.



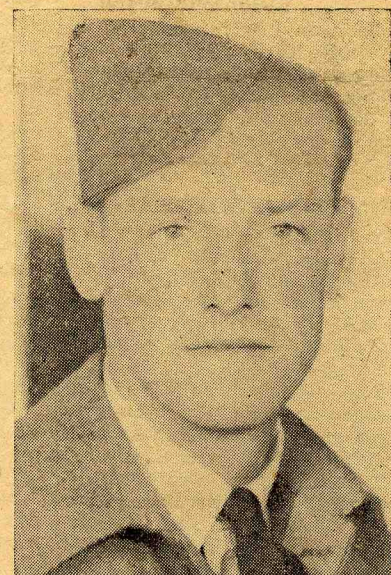
L.A.C. RALPH W. HONSINGER

Second son of Mrs. Honsinger, and the late June Honsinger, received his early education in Richmond Public School. He enlisted in 1941. He received his training at Manning Pool, Toronto, Swift Current, Sask., and Rivers, Manitoba. He went overseas in March 1944. At present he is in England.



PTE. WILLIAM H. JOHNSTON

1st Perth Regiment, son of Mrs. Ripley, of St. Thomas. He attended the Richmond Public School and made his home with Mr. L. Sparkman and the late Mrs. Sparkman. He enlisted in 1944, and received his military training in London, Camp Ipperwash, Chatham and Debert, N.S. He went overseas in March 1945. At present he is in Holland.



PTE. W. EARL BOYD

Son of Mr. and Mrs. William Boyd. He enlisted in October 1944, and received his training at London, Chatham, Ipperwash, Camp Borden, New Westminster, B.C., and Halifax. He is now stationed at Goose Bay, Labrador. His wife, the former Wanda Shipp and son, reside in Port Burwell