

Souvenir

Richmond Hill  
Presbyterian Church

1817



1917

Centennial Celebration

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Celebration

of the

Centennial

of

Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church

Richmond Hill, Ontario

September, 1917

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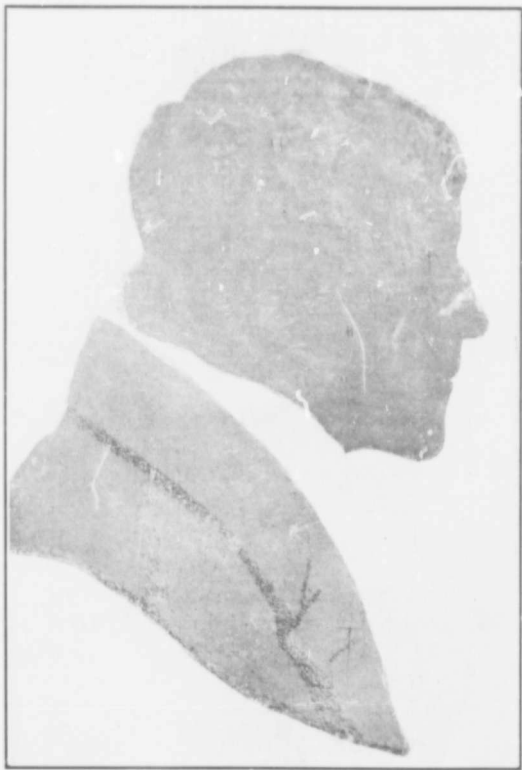
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REV. WM. JENKINS.  
Minister 1817-1843.

## Historical Sketch

1817 - 1917

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THE Centenary of Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church has more significance attached to it than the mere celebration of a hundredth birthday. In celebrating the centenary of this church, we are celebrating the centenary of the mother church of a very large district, and the centenary also of the establishment of Presbyterianism in Western Ontario.

Richmond Hill has the honour of being the centre from which pioneer missionary effort was directed for many years. This formed the hub of the wheel, the outer circle of which reached Lake Simcoe, Halton Co., Whitby and other points equally distant. In that large area, Rev. Wm. Jenkins, her first minister, laboured, preaching the gospel to little groups of pioneers, organizing congregations, administering the sacrament, baptizing, marrying, burying, without rivalry and without assistance, in a parish of several counties. He came to Canada in 1817, crossing from New York State to Kingston, and travelling westward by pony-back to Little York, then a half dozen houses and a windmill. Mr. Jenkins was a graduate of Edinburgh University, and came to America as a missionary to the Oneida Indians, in which work he spent twelve years.

Learning of the benighted condition of the pioneers of Upper Canada, he came with a definite missionary motive, and with the missionary enterprise filling his heart. No hope of a munificent income or comfortable living lured this hero of the faith. His call, which still exists in good condition, was from the two districts about what are now St. Andrew's, Scarboro, and Richmond Hill.



REV. JAS. DICK.  
Minister 1847-1885.

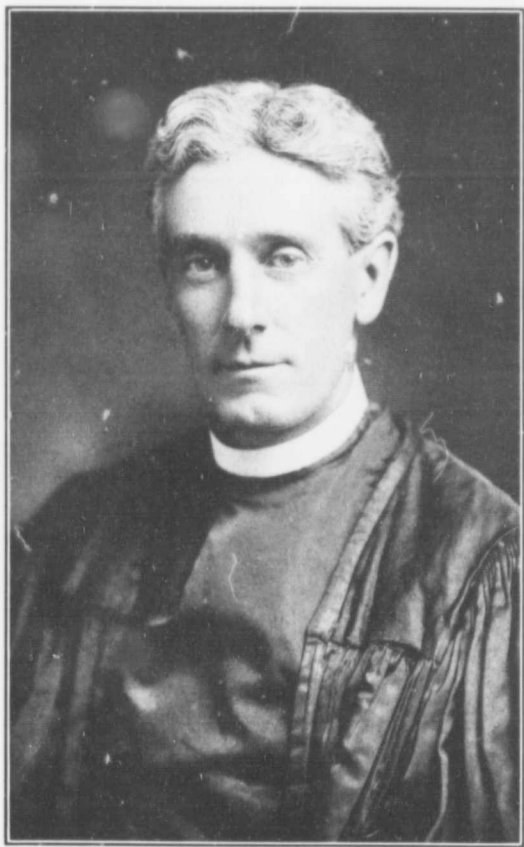
The stipend does not seem to have been munificent, and Mr. Jenkins, probably of necessity, took up his home on two hundred acres of land near what is now Cashel, felled the timber and made the ground yield him and his large family no small part of their living. In the early days he carried his bag of wheat pony-back to the Little York windmill to be ground. His pastoral work had all to be carried on by saddle-back, often following beaten trails rather than regular roads.



FIRST CHURCH.  
Erected 1821.

All this required grace and fortitude. Many traditions survive in the minds of the older people, as recollections of what their fathers told them about services held in the open forest with a fresh cut stump to serve as a pulpit. The first sermon at Richmond Hill is said to have been preached in the pine grove that once stood on the ground now occupied by the cemetery.

Mr. Jenkins was a man of profound learning. This is evinced by the fact that he was offered a professorship in an American



REV. ROBERT HERBISON,  
The Present Minister.

University before coming to Canada. His knowledge of the Hebrew Bible is reputed to have been equal to the ordinary reader's knowledge of the English. In family worship, and with smaller groups, he is said to have read regularly from the Hebrew Bible, translating as he went.

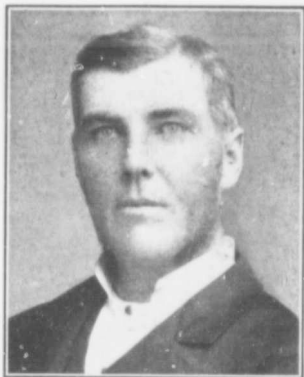
His wife, also, must have been a woman of fine spirit and courage, to face cheerfully such hardships as she did. She was



PRESENT CHURCH.  
Erected 1880.

an American, daughter of Dr. Stockton, of New Jersey. She survived her husband quite a few years, and is remembered well by many of the older people about Richmond Hill, where she spent her closing years. There was a family of eleven, nine of whom survived. There are to-day about twenty-five grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the county.





REV. ISAAC CAMPBELL.  
1877-1884.

Richmond Hill Church, as the records show, was organized regularly in 1817. St. Andrew's, Scarborough, according to the records, was regularly organized in 1818, the first sacrament being dispensed in 1818 in Mr. D. Thomson's house. The church at St. Andrew's was built in 1819, that at Richmond Hill in 1821. Richmond Hill seems to have been the central point of Mr. Jenkins' labours, Scarborough after twelve years passing into the hands of another minister.

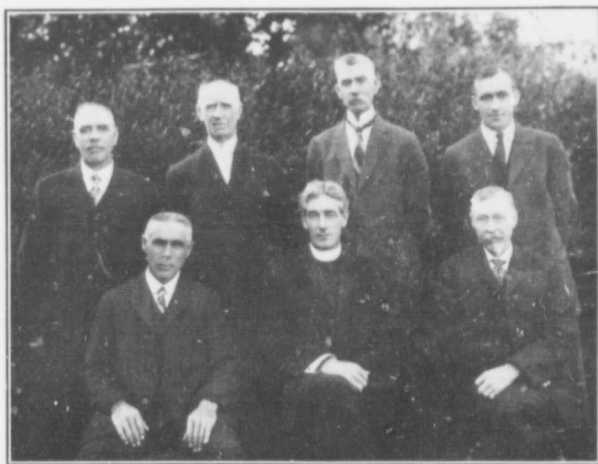
The work carried on by this church and her minister for the first quarter of a century, must have been of incalculable and permanent benefit to the moral and spiritual life of the whole county. The property on which the church stands, was, according to tradition, a gift to the church, although the deed states it was paid for in good coin of the realm in 1844, £300 being the price received by John and Elizabeth Arnold—five acres at about \$300 per acre.

As to connection with any larger body of the church, it will be plain that for the first few years little connection could be maintained. Rev. Mr. Jenkins was a member of Saratoga Presbytery of New York State, and would probably remain on their roll, so that the church was, for the time being, standing alone.

In 1832, a mission of three ministers was sent to Canada by the Secession Church of Scotland, and in 1834 these, along with others following them, formed themselves into a Presbytery called "The Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas in connection with the United Associate Synod of Scotland." At the meeting of organization, Rev. Mr. Jenkins, who was present, expressed the wish of the congregations under his care to be received into this Presbytery, stating as his reason, "that having been educated in

the Secession he was glad to have an opportunity of connecting himself with the church which maintained the doctrine and discipline which he had ever been accustomed to believe most agreeable to the Word of God." This request was granted, and the history of the outward connections of the congregation from that on is the history of the several unions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

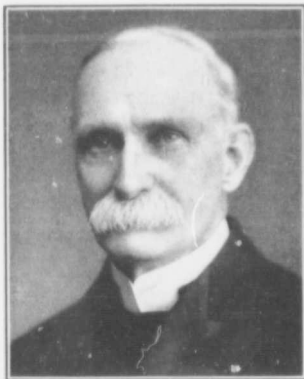
Of this Presbytery we find Rev. Mr. Jenkins Moderator in



SESSION, 1917.

Geo. Cowie, Dr. W. R. Pentland, J. S. McNair, J. F. Atkinson,  
Geo. Sims, Rev. R. Herbison, Wm. Innes.

1842, and at one meeting manifesting signs of serious illness. He continued in harness, however, to the very end, preaching on the last Sunday, and after the sermon pointing out to the elders the spot in the cemetery he wished for himself. During that same week he was called to rest from those arduous labours that, by their nature, rank him alongside the Livingstones, Moffats, and MacKays.



REV. J. W. CAMERON.  
1884-1887.

Mr. Jenkins' death occurred in 1843, so that to-day there are few who remember very vividly his preaching or his personality. One woman remembers distinctly the great solemnity of the worship and the reverence, akin to awe, with which Mr. Jenkins inspired not only herself as a child, but the whole congregation.

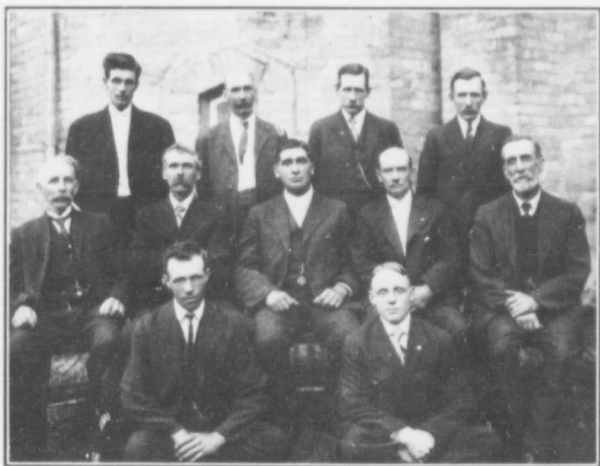
In that ministry of twenty-six years, Mr. Jenkins is said to have married two thousand couples. If this be an index to his other labours, they must surely have been abundant.

In Upper Canada only a few other congregations hold precedence to Richmond Hill. Williamstown, organized about 1794; Bath, organized by Rev. Mr. McDowall, about 1797; Brockville, organized by Rev. Mr. Smart in 1811, and some work carried on in the Niagara district; these and apparently these alone precede Richmond Hill. In Central Ontario, from Kingston district, west to Niagara, the name and ministry of Rev. Wm. Jenkins ranks foremost.

The next great period in the history of the church is that occupied by the ministry of Rev. Jas. Dick. After the death of Mr. Jenkins, a period of two years elapsed before Rev. Walter Scott was called. Little is recorded or remembered of his ministry, which was of only about three years' duration. On March 14th, 1849, Rev. Jas. Dick was called, from the parish of Emily, and from that to 1877 gave good proof of his ministry. This was the golden age of the church's history. There was no break in her prosperity, and the records give abundant evidence of the happy relations existing between minister and congregation. There are many references to the "indefatigable labours" of the beloved pastor, and many proofs of the affection of his people, in the steps they took to care for his comfort. Mr. Dick, as many yet living

testify, was an untiring worker, a tender and devoted pastor and an intensely earnest and sympathetic preacher. From those beyond his own church there are still many to bear testimony to the noble Christian life and character of Mr. Dick.

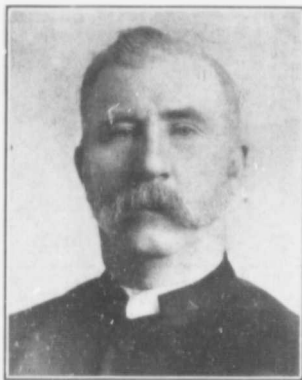
Early in his ministry Thornhill was organized as a congregation, and a church secured. About 1850, Laskay also and East King, or Temperanceville, were organized and added to the congregations already under his care. Mr. Dick's charge at this time was very large, and his pastoral work must have been most exacting.



BOARD OF MANAGERS, 1917.

Wm. Graham, Chas. Cooper, Fred Clark, Jos. A. Monkman,  
Robt. McLean, Jos. E. Atkinson, Jas. McLean (Chairman), John Dunlop, Wm. Pratt,  
Milton Savage, R. S. Cooper.

The average attendance in 1850 is reported as four hundred. Richmond Hill at that time, according to the statistical report, stood both in numbers and finances, well in the lead of the United Presbyterian congregations of Upper Canada, and for ten or twelve years maintained this position. In 1861, Laskey and King were separated from Richmond Hill, and erected into an inde-



REV. W. W. PERCIVAL.  
1887-1894.

pendent charge, with a membership at that time of about one hundred.

The records of this period are interesting in the moral and social progress they exhibit. Up to 1850 the cases dealt with by the Session are almost entirely those of immorality. Case after case is dealt with in a kind, but firm, manner, the parties rebuked, admonished and often suspended from the privilege of the ordinances of the church. The Session exercised in those days a very real authority.

Its pronouncements were often made public in the church. Their judgments were not without effect, and, in more cases than those of the legal courts, resulted in the reform of the offenders. Members quarrelling were cited, counselled and enjoined to refrain from going to the Lord's table until a reconciliation had been effected. Cases of sharp dealing were also cited and, at the least, severely censured. For irregularity or non-attendance at church, members were sharply rebuked. The general moral tone, however, seems to improve very much. Immorality seems to decrease, and after 1850 intemperance is the prevailing charge. The very fact that this begins to be considered is something, and when as the years pass, the censure of intemperance becomes more severe, it indicates a decided progress in public, or at least in religious public, opinion. Eg., "A. B., having under influence of drink, attacked with abusive language X. Y., to the scandal of the church and the cause of religion, was cited to appear before the Session. The court decided that A. B. be for the present suspended from his privileges as member of this church, until he gives evidence of repentance and reformation. The Session also agreed that this should be announced to the congregation as a warning to those who hereafter live wickedly." The effectiveness of this

rebuke is to be found in the fact that the said "A. B." appears later as a good member and a faithful office bearer of the church.

We are reminded of old days by a resolution, in 1858, that the new roof of the church be made of "machine" shingles; also by the appointment of a committee, in 1860, "to inquire as to how cheap coil-oil lamps may be furnished for the lighting of the church."

In 1862, Alex. Moodie was engaged as precentor. In 1864



LADIES' AID, 1917.

Miss H. Burnett, Miss Anna Boyle,  
Mrs. J. Boyle, Mrs. J. Inne (Pres.), Miss E. McLean.

the trustees were authorized to get a platform and seats for the choir around the precentor's desk. In 1868, the Session took up the question of instrumental music, without reaching a decision. In 1869, the Session discussed the revival of the Psalmody and the introduction of hymns. They approved the hymn book sanctioned by the English Presbyterian Church, and requested the Synod to adopt the same and sanction its use. In 1872, the Session unani-



REV. JAS. GRANT.  
1894-1909.

mously declared that "instrumental music in the worship of God is not in itself sinful, yet they think that in almost all churches where it has been, and is still, used, it tends to hinder and ultimately to silence the singing of the praise of God by the congregation, and on this account, if for no other reason, should not be sanctioned." In 1877, the point of view had so changed that, by a vote of the congregation, it was resolved that the organ be used in the church. In 1881, the Session, considering the desire of many

to change from sitting to standing at the service of praise, and vice versa at prayer, resolved to ask the congregation to stand during singing and to sit during prayer. In 1884, the Session agreed to intimate to the congregation that, in their opinion, it would be for the spiritual benefit of the members of the church to use the hymns adopted by the General Assembly in their service of praise. This short story of the evolution of the service of praise would not be complete without adding that in 1915 a fine new pipe organ was installed and the choir capped and gowned.

One item in 1867 is a resolution agreeing that Mr. Dick should receive discount on all silver paid to him on his salary, and for the present year to give him firewood in lieu of such discount.

Toward the close of Mr. Dick's ministry an incident occurred which seems pathetic. The goods and chattels of this good man were seized and sold by public auction in Toronto. This came about as the result of a suit in the Court of Chancery, Lawson vs. Cruikshank. Mr. Dick had apparently been co-executor with Mr. Cruikshank of some estate, and thus the decision in the case affected him equally. The congregation very promptly, through its repre-

sentative, bought in the goods and held them in charge for Mr. Dick.

None of Mr. Dick's family remain in the neighborhood, the two living being Mr. John Dick, near Listowel, and Mrs. Robert McKie, of Saltcoats, Scotland. His health failing in 1877, Mr. Dick offered to resign. The Presbytery and the congregation agreed, rather, to make him pastor-emeritus, with an allowance of \$200 per annum and the use of the old manse. In this relationship Mr.



WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

Mrs. G. F. Allan, Mrs. D. Watson, Miss I. Gibson, Mrs. J. MacKenzie,  
Mrs. R. Vanderburg, Mrs. R. Herbison (Pres.), Mrs. J. F. Atkinson.

Dick lived out peacefully the remaining years of his life, passing on to his rest in 1885.

In 1877, Rev. Isaac Campbell was called. The congregation had taken steps in 1876 toward building a new manse, and this was apparently completed for Mr. Campbell's occupation. The period of his ministry is notable for the building of the new church. Mr. Campbell was a man of profound scholarship, and one of the strong preachers of his day. His able leadership proved quite sufficient for his difficult task.





REV. E. C. CURRIE.  
1909-1913.

The first steps were taken Jan. 15th, 1880, when a resolution was passed to build a new church. Subscriptions were taken amounting to \$4,800. So rapid was the progress of events, that the corner stone was laid July 1st of the same year. The total cost of the church building, including furnaces, according to the report of the building committee, was \$6,366, an amazingly low figure for the building we see to-day. These were trying times in the financial history of the congregation and the liberality of the people was put

to a severe test. When Mr. Campbell was called to Listowel in 1884, a debt of \$3,250 still remained.

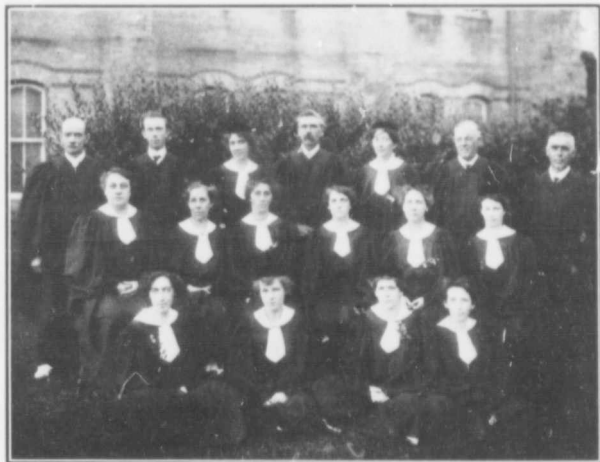
The Rev. J. W. Cameron, previously in Laskey and King, was called on Nov. 5th of the same year. Mr. Cameron's ministry was devout, earnest and whole-hearted. The period, however, was one of great strain and difficulty in the history of the congregation. The ordinary revenue suffered because of the heavy debt the church still carried, and gave both minister and Board no little concern. Mr. Cameron's pastorate was comparatively short, as he was called to Mornington in 1887, where he remained for twenty-two years.

In October of the same year Rev. W. W. Percival was called. Mr. Percival is reported to have been an effective preacher and a good administrator. The seven years of his ministry were quiet and uneventful, and in them the congregation paid off old scores and reached fairly normal conditions again.

After Mr. Percival's resignation in 1894, Rev. James A. Grant, of Toronto Junction, was called. Mr. Grant's ministry and also his winsome personality, are still fresh in the minds of his people. A man of kindly, genial temper, he greatly endeared himself during the fifteen years of his pastorate to every member of his congrega-

tion. Under his ministry the church prospered greatly in things moral and spiritual. When the heavy hand of illness was upon him, he was surrounded by a people who loved him and were deeply moved with sympathy, and when at last death called him, a great sorrow was felt by all.

In 1909, Rev. E. C. Currie was called. Mr. Currie, while giving careful thought to his sermons, and making himself most accept-



CHOIR, 1917.

Back row—J. Dunlop, L. McNair, Mrs. Stirling, J. E. Atkinson, Mrs. J. E. Atkinson, A. L. Phipps, G. Sims. Centre row—Mrs. Watson, Mrs. G. F. Allan, Mrs. R. S. Cooper, Miss Ethel Dever (Organist and Leader), Mrs. Phipps, Miss E. McNair. Front row—Miss H. Pentland, Miss M. Vanderburg, Miss Carol Innes, Miss H. Innes.

able in the pulpit, excelled in his pastoral work. By his energy and activity in this direction he gave new stimulus to the congregation, and during his short pastorate greatly increased the membership. In 1913, Mr. Currie received a call to St. John's Church, Belleville, which he accepted, much to the regret of Richmond Hill.

In 1910 there occurred the death of Alexander Marsh, who had held the honourable office of elder for nearly half a century.

Early in 1914, the Rev. Robert Herbison, formerly of St. Giles, Toronto, the present minister, was called. During the last three and a half years the congregation has introduced a water-works system, and made other repairs to the manse, installed a pipe organ at a cost of about \$3,500, enlarged and altered the choir loft, and provided caps and gowns for the choir. The most notable feature in the life of the congregation, during that time, other than this, is a decided increase in missionary interest and missionary contributions, the Sunday School giving now as much as was given a very few years ago by the whole church.

Of the families who formed the nucleus of the congregation in 1817 not many now remain in the immediate locality, one reason being that the congregation then drew members from King, Markham and Thornhill, a very large territory. Up to the middle of the century, when separate congregations were formed, these worthy folk travelled distances of one to ten miles to worship and, if tradition be true, were constant and regular in attendance to a degree unknown to-day. Of those who remain to-day the Marshs, Vanderburgs and Hislops seem to have been on the spot when the congregation was organized. The Marsh family can boast of the sixth generation linked up with the church; this family has also lateral branches nearly as ancient in the McNairs and Boyles. Robert Marsh was one of the first elders, forming along with James Miles the first session. The Hislop family also were among the earliest, being present still to the fifth or sixth generation. James Hislop was a member of Session in 1840. This family also has a lateral branch in the Moodies.

Peter Vanderburg also appears as one of the original members, his family being well represented still in several branches.

The Munchaw family, while one of the first, was not identified with the church at the outset.

James Miles, one of the elders of the first session, leaves no one of his name to-day in connection with the church. Other names are found of families from King, such as Henry Stewart, who was an elder in '40, the Camerons, Jaffrays, Fergusons and others.

Others, too, such as David Smellie, have still descendants in the Thornhill section.

In 1834 the roll has, among others, the following names:— Peter Vanderburg, Thomas Wilkie, Janet Jaffrey, Benjamin Davidson, Archibald Wright, James Hislop, John and Gideon Hislop, Thomas Ferguson, William Dickson, Ann Dickson, Mrs. Lucy Langstaff, James Gilmour, Nancy Cameron, Agnes Jaffrey, Henry Stewart, James Bowman, David Smellie, Elizabeth Arnold, Mrs. Henry Miles. It will be seen by this that the Langstaff and Dixon



SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND OFFICERS, 1917.

Miss H. Pentland, Dr. W. E. Pentland, H. B. Stirling, Miss I. Vanderburg, Mrs. Stirling Geo. Sims (Superintendent), G. F. Allan, Mrs. Geo. Sims, Miss Mary Vanderburg, Miss Edna McNair.

families are also among the earliest. The Session in 1834 consisted of James Gilmour, William Dickson and Benjamin Bowman.

In 1840 we find the Session consisting of Robert Marsh, Henry Stewart, Robert Trench, James Hislop and Archibald McDonald. The roll in 1840 bears, among others, the names of Henry and Mercy Miles, James Ledgerwood, Jude Hislop, Moses Gamble, John Stafford, John Coulter, Mrs. Langstaff, John Dickson, John Folliot, William O'Brien, Thomas Morgan, Robert, William and George Trench, William Dalziel, Jean Craig, Robert McNair.

Thus at this early date one sees appearing the Morgans of Thornhill, also the Dalziels, once of that vicinity, the McNairs, the Gambles and the Trenches, all of whom still remain in the neighborhood.

In 1849 the list shows, among others, the names of James Jenkins, Elder, Thomas Lawson, Thomas McBeth, Charles Pollock, James Newton, James Gamble, John McKie, Cameron Gillis; and in 1850 William Cruikshank, Dr. James Langstaff, William Marsh, Alexander Marsh, indicating the presence of the Newtons at this period. At the same time, 1850, the Dalziels, Smellies, Millers and others appear in a separate Thornhill list, indicating that an independent congregation had been organized there on Mr. Dick's arrival. The Hamiltons must also have come about this time, for the Session of 1852 has the names of John Hamilton and C. Pollock.

In 1854 Thomas Woods and Thomas Folliot are elders from the King district, and Samuel Muir at Thornhill; and in 1855 Walter Dalziel, also of Thornhill.

In 1858 the roll contains the names of Ann Playter, William Pogue, William Innes, George P. Dickson, John Hamilton, elder, James McNair, George Sylvester Savage; at Thornhill, Leslie Innes, Mrs. Cox, Mrs. Morgan; and in King, James Ness. In 1860 the names of William Russell, John Waterhouse, John Story, Matthew McNair, Alexander Moodie are found, the elders then being Benjamin Jenkins and James Mitchell. In '63 Alex. Marsh is a member of Session, and the names of John Savage, Charles Kirkland and Robert Cox are recorded, the last at Thornhill.

In 1865 the Session consists of John Hamilton, Benjamin Jenkins, James Ralston, Alexander Marsh at Richmond Hill, and Samuel Moore, Walter Dalziel, James Jenkins, W. O. Stark at Thornhill. Incidentally, the Thornhill Church was acquired by purchase, in 1852, for the sum of £152.

Those elected to the Session from that time on were James Ness, 1869; David Gray, George Trench, James Webster, 1881; Alexander Innes, Alexander Linkletter, 1889; William Innes, Thomas Thompson, 1894; George Sims, 1908; J. S. McNair and George Cowie, 1909; Dr. W. R. Pentland, 1913; J. Frank Atkinson and William George Scott, 1916.

