

**“We Are the Church Together”:  
A Case Study of Community, Family, and Religion at  
Richmond Hill Methodist Church, 1875-1899**

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The church does not exist in a vacuum: it co-exists with the society in which it is situated, interacting and developing in concert with the people who comprise it.<sup>1</sup> The Methodist church in the latter half of the nineteenth century, for example, shifted the rhetoric of its discourse from that of patriarchy to that of family in order to fit with Victorian ideals of domestic piety.<sup>2</sup> And yet religious history as written from the perspective of a male-dominated institution is a story of declension rather than evolution and progressive development. If the wider family and community implications of the church are made the focus of study, its status shifts from one of a male-based hierarchical institution to one of a place for communal interaction mirroring the increasing influence of family and domesticity on Victorian culture. This inclusiveness created a more active religious community that welcomed the talents brought by all members of the family, not simply those of the patriarch. Previous studies of Protestantism and domesticity in the nineteenth century have begun to address the role of women in the church, but they have done so without reference to their position as members of a household, an attribute central to their own definition of self.<sup>3</sup> And while male roles have been central to discussions of church organization, they have most often been without reference to the position of these roles as part of a larger male community in business, civic leadership, and leisure pursuits.<sup>4</sup> Children were an integral part of the Victorian church, and their upbringing was central to the cult of domesticity and family, yet they are seldom mentioned in religious studies.<sup>5</sup> Through church involvement we can

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examine their response to the precepts of their parents and attempt to re-evaluate the traditional story of religious declension.

I propose to examine the relationship of these three components of the traditional nuclear family – husband, wife, and children – to Methodism in late nineteenth-century Ontario through a case study of the leadership of Richmond Hill Methodist Church from 1875 to 1899. Richmond Hill was located approximately twenty miles north of Toronto on Yonge Street and primarily served the surrounding farm areas. The first Methodist services were held in a log schoolhouse as early as 1810, and a wood frame church was begun in 1847. On 21 December 1879 this church was destroyed by fire and only a month later new property was deeded for the construction of a much grander stone edifice. The cornerstone of the new church was laid 24 May 1880 and the church was dedicated 20 March 1881. The congregation raised \$17,000, over twenty-five times its annual giving, to finance this project.<sup>6</sup>

A dozen families dominated the leadership of Richmond Hill Methodist Church over the course of this quarter century, encompassing three generations. William Harrison (born 1834) was the most prominent lay leader – the patriarch – at the church, acting as a secretary of the Board of Trustees from 1868 to 1915 and superintendent of the Sunday school from 1849 to 1889, while also serving as a class leader, member of the circuit quarterly board, representative to conference, and church steward at various other times.<sup>7</sup> Seven other family names dominate the list of trustees and other lay positions in the church. However, it was not just the men in these families who were active, but also their wives and often their children. This can be illustrated with William Atkinson, who was a church trustee and active in the construction of the new building. His daughter, who was choir leader and a key member of the Women's Missionary Society, married J.A.E. Switzer, who was also a church trustee, class leader, Sunday school superintendent and recording secretary for the Methodist circuit.<sup>8</sup>

Being a prominent family in church leadership did not automatically mean a higher social or economic class in the greater community. There were a few doctors, but the majority of the men were self-employed businessmen.<sup>9</sup> They included a harness maker, a tailor, two shopkeepers, a blacksmith, a carriage maker, a machinist, an undertaker, and later two school principals.<sup>10</sup> Several of the business partnerships in town were comprised of trustees who were associates outside the confines of the church, indicative of its larger community orientation. The majority of the

businesses lined Yonge Street, all within walking distance of each other. The church was not the only foundation for the association of this group of men.

While these men were not necessarily the wealthiest in the community, their religious leadership was matched by their civic roles. With the exception of two men, all of the prominent trustees were actively involved in community leadership. William Harrison, the aforementioned outstanding trustee, was also the most active church member in the community. He was responsible for forming the first fire brigade, founding the Richmond Hill Mechanics Institute, and founding the Richmond Hill Library Society. He was also instrumental in Richmond Hill's incorporation as a town, was its second reeve, and served as a high school trustee.<sup>11</sup> Five of Richmond Hill's early Reeves were also trustees at Richmond Hill Methodist Church, including the first. Various trustees served as librarians, led the town band, sat on the board of education and the library board, served on municipal councils, and one served as the Justice of the Peace.<sup>12</sup> Thomas McMahon, who became a trustee later in the century, was the proprietor of the town newspaper, *The Liberal*.<sup>13</sup>

It has been suggested that positions of leadership within the church "could also contribute to secular success," and that "the public profile and respectable image of church leader would be sought by those with political ambitions."<sup>14</sup> A close correlation between religious and secular leadership at Richmond Hill Methodist Church shows that this is possible; however, none of these men ever went on to grandiose political careers or amassed fortunes. Leadership is an attribute of a specific personality, making it more likely that these men were simply active in all aspects of their lives. This provides a more satisfactory reason for their tireless involvement in a multitude of activities than do self-interested motives.

The men of Richmond Hill Methodist Church may have done business on weekdays, led committees in the evening, and joined together in spiritual brotherhood on Sundays, but they also had another form of community socialization: the fraternal lodges. Over half of the prominent trustees of the church belonged to one or more of the fraternal orders existing in Richmond Hill at that time.<sup>15</sup> These included the Independent Order of Foresters (IOF), the Ancient Order of United Workmen (AOUW), the Masons, and the Royal Templars.<sup>16</sup> Many of these men were actively involved in these groups, as is evidenced by the remarks in obituaries of funerals that combined elements of both fraternal and Christian ceremonies.<sup>17</sup>

While it has been asserted that "ministers clearly feared losing both members and financial contributors to the lodges,"<sup>18</sup> in Richmond Hill the

connections appear to have been very beneficial to the church. After the fire of 1879, which levelled the church building, the congregation was in need of a place to hold services. On 23 January 1880 the trustees' minutes state that "the following members of the Trustee Board met on the above date in the Masonic Hall."<sup>19</sup> Not coincidentally, a number of the trustees belonged to that lodge.<sup>20</sup> And the trustees made use of their connection not only for their benefit, but also for the benefit of the entire congregation. On 23 February 1880 the trustees' minutes suggest they "arrange with the trustees of the Masonic Hall for the use of their building for six months worship."<sup>21</sup> After the land had been purchased for the new building, it was brought to the trustees' attention that "a gore of land with a ten feet frontage on Yonge Street could be purchased off the Trustees of the Masonic Lodge for the sum of \$100."<sup>22</sup> The church then made arrangements to acquire it. While it is possible that the Masonic Lodge would have allowed the use of its building for services even had the church been without connections, it is very likely that the trustees' membership in the lodge allowed them the opportunity to purchase land.

The fear that men would leave the church family in favour of fraternal brotherhood was clearly unfounded in Richmond Hill. These men were all able to maintain prominent lay leadership roles within the church concurrent with their lodge membership. It could also be debated how "clearly" the ministers of Richmond Hill were worried about losing men. Among those initiated into the Richmond Lodge (Masons) from 1880 to 1894 were the Reverends J.T. Morris, J. Oliver, and J.C. Speer.<sup>23</sup> All three were Methodist ministers serving at Richmond Hill Methodist Church at the time. It would seem apparent that they did not see any conflict of interest between membership in a fraternal order and leadership at the church.

The lives of the men of Richmond Hill Methodist Church were evidently diverse, and by no means dominated by their church activities. Even these, the most prominent lay leaders, were active in other community endeavors. In a small community, there can be little question they socialized outside of church, but their career affiliations, lodge memberships, and civic duties reinforce this sense of religion as an activity that extends into the entire community. However, religion in late Victorian Ontario was also a family activity: how did their wives play a role?

The women of Richmond Hill Methodist Church were active in many facets of church life. They were class leaders, members of the Ladies' Aid, organized teas and bazaars, and provided significant financial support for church activities.<sup>24</sup> They existed both as independent contributors and

members of a marital team, with female leadership often corresponding to the level of the husband's participation. Without the numerical presence or financial assistance of the women of the congregation, Richmond Hill Methodist Church would have been a much smaller and less well endowed religious community. From this perspective the church does not tell a story of declension, but rather of increasing vitality through the activities of women who were central to the building of a new church and corresponding faith community.<sup>25</sup>

Because the construction of the new church building acts as a turning point in the history of the congregation – its arrival as a large and relatively wealthy center of Methodism in the region – it is here that we can begin to examine the contributions of female members. The land for the new building was purchased from Mr. Abraham Law, a member of the Board of Trustees for the church. However, without his wife relinquishing her dower claim the church could not have held clear title to the land. The trustees' minutes state, "that they had secured the old deed and paid the sum of eleven hundred for the same as follows – nine hundred and fifty dollars (\$950) to Mr. Law for the lot and the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars (\$150) to Mrs. Law for signing off her Dower."<sup>26</sup> Mrs. Law was given her own receipt of payment and required to sign off on the deed in order for the land to be sold. It is interesting, however, that her husband is the only one acknowledged for the donation of the land in official histories, although she herself played a crucial role.<sup>27</sup>

Not only was a woman instrumental in establishing the site of the new church building, but the women of the congregation were also active in its financing. Twice in 1880 the Board of Trustees requested money from the Ladies' Aid, first stating that "this board borrow of the Ladies' Aid, the sum of \$200 at five percent,"<sup>28</sup> and later that "the secretary be instructed to borrow of the Ladies' Aid another \$100."<sup>29</sup> And although these women were members of the congregation, it is important to note that they did not donate the money: the church borrowed it at a significant interest rate. In financial matters the Ladies' Aid was independent of the larger church and its male leadership.

In the trustees' discussion of the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone, it was "moved by Mr. Crosby, seconded by Mr. Duncan that the Ladies' Aid be requested to arrange for a dinner and tea for the 24<sup>th</sup> of May."<sup>30</sup> These festivities were advertised in the *Christian Guardian* of 19 May 1880:

After this [the dedication] a dinner in the Masonic Hall, prepared by the Ladies' Aid; also a grand bazaar, to be opened by Mrs. Dr. Reed, Thornhill. At 5 p.m. a tea will be provided, to be followed by a public meeting at 7 p.m. . . . The musical part of the programme by Miss McCallum, Professor Wilson, and others. Dinner, 25cts; tea, 25cts; entertainment, 25cts.<sup>31</sup>

Once again the male leadership's connection to the fraternal order was of benefit to the entire congregation. The ladies provided not only the dinner and tea, but also initiated a bazaar and entertainment to facilitate fundraising. This new church was a reflection of their work as well as male efforts.

The women of the Ladies' Aid continued to be very active in fundraising for various projects even after the building was completed. At the opening of the church, the ladies gave a tea, which was recorded by the minister in the *Christian Guardian* as follows: "We then retired to the school room to enjoy a good dinner such as the ladies of Richmond Hill know how to provide: cleared between \$200 and \$300, which, by the way, belongs to the ladies, and with which they intend to upholster the pews."<sup>32</sup> The Ladies' Aid was also often cited for their contribution to the church in the annual report. The amounts of money raised were often quite high, including a tea at the anniversary service in 1885, which raised \$101.<sup>33</sup> The yearly donations of the Ladies' Aid to the running of the church amounted to, on average, \$70,<sup>34</sup> the remainder of the money being used to initiate their own projects, such as the aforementioned upholstering of the pews.

A close examination of the class lists from the years 1894 and 1899 shows the overwhelming predominance of female members.<sup>35</sup> In all classes except the young men's, women outnumber men. Membership in the church for men rested heavily on the presence of a wife, for in most classes the number of men is very close to the number of couples listed. This implies that the men came with their wives and not vice versa, as there were always numerous single women in attendance. As the annual financial statement for 1881 demonstrates, this numerical dominance was also reflected in individual givings. Women gave forty percent of the money while men gave thirty-five and couples (obviously including one woman) gave twenty-five.<sup>36</sup> The percentage of giving by women did not correspond directly to their numbers (while they dominated some classes, overall they comprised fifty percent of the total number of class members) but their financial support was evidently important to the running of the church.

In addition to their financial contributions, the women of Richmond Hill Methodist Church gave of their time. Two of the six classes were led by

women, including the young ladies' class. There was also an active Sunday school, which had on average fifteen teachers each year, and a choir that was for some time led by Mrs. J.A.E. Switzer.<sup>37</sup> The Ladies' Aid had been prominent in church life since before construction began on the new building, and in May 1893 the first Women's Missionary Society (WMS) was established to help support the wider dissemination of religion.<sup>38</sup> The WMS quickly grew in popularity, from twenty-one members in 1894-95 to thirty-four in 1895-96.<sup>39</sup> As members of a religion based on experience, these women clearly saw the importance of teaching religion to the greater community.

Just as a dozen men dominated male lay leadership over the period in question, so too were the same women present in all of the women's activities. The executive for the WMS changed by one or two members each year, the other two positions filled by a shifting mixture of the same women. The women in these positions also tended to share the same name as a trustee or minister, an observation that suggests a familial linkage in leadership.<sup>40</sup> While husbands were attending meetings, their wives were equally active in their own pursuits. A comment in the *Christian Guardian* suggests these women most likely interacted outside of the church as well, for "The garden party held by the ladies of the Methodist church, on the grounds of Mrs. Amos Wright, on Wednesday evening, August 9<sup>th</sup>, was very successful. The grounds were beautifully illuminated with Chinese lanterns, and presented a very attractive appearance."<sup>41</sup> This seems to have been less a fundraiser, as the amount of money raised was not explicitly mentioned, and more a social gathering. Given the close community associations of the men, it would be surprising if their wives were not also familiar with each other outside the church circle.

It was not only adults who were actively involved in events at Richmond Hill Methodist Church, but the importance of including children is also clearly evident.<sup>42</sup> These second-generation residents of Richmond Hill followed closely in their parents' footsteps, often assuming prominent leadership roles if their parents had also been active in the church. Young women contributed at a much younger age than their male siblings, taking on many of the same responsibilities as their mothers, while it was much less common for young men to take any prominent role.<sup>43</sup>

Richmond Hill Methodist Church began publishing annual reports in 1892, and here we are given our first numbers for Sunday school attendance. However, William Harrison had been Sunday school superintendent from 1849, which suggests the early establishment of this program. In 1892 there

were 137 scholars in the Sunday school, with an average weekly attendance of 120, or eighty-eight percent of students.<sup>44</sup> Given the rural nature of the community, this attendance rate appears impressive. By 1897 there were 160 scholars enrolled, with an average attendance of 135, which at eighty-four percent is a slight decline.<sup>45</sup> Records suggest that the increase was most likely a result of individual family growth rather than new members arising from revivals or in-migration.<sup>46</sup>

When children were past the age for Sunday school, they were transferred into a class. Given the prominence of family names in some classes it would appear that some young people immediately joined their parents. However, there were also classes established specifically for the young men and young women of the congregation. The young ladies' class was run by the minister or his wife, while the leadership of the young men's class shifted from Mr. Hume (a long-time trustee) to a Mr. Michael and his wife in 1894. The number of youth in the young men's class remained consistent at eight between 1894 and 1899, and they were the same eight young men. In 1894 they had lost one member to death, two brothers had moved, and one member had transferred to an adult class.<sup>47</sup> The number of young women also remained consistent from 1894 to 1899, with most losses coming in 1894 when three young ladies died and one was married.<sup>48</sup> The family names of the young women are consistent with prominent male leaders' names, while the young men seem to be sons of less actively involved members.<sup>49</sup>

The young women of the church appeared to follow their mothers in their fundraising efforts. For one tea, prepared by the Ladies' Aid, the entertainment was provided by Miss McCallum (the minister's daughter) and others. To stay for the entertainment was an additional twenty-five cents to the twenty-five cent cost of the tea,<sup>50</sup> and as such the young ladies contributed significantly to the amount of money raised. The young women also hosted their own entertainments, such as this one, mentioned in the *Christian Guardian*: "The young ladies in connection with the Richmond Hill Methodist Church gave a social and concert on Tuesday-evening, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, in aid of the Trust Fund. Proceeds, one hundred and five dollars."<sup>51</sup> The proceeds from this event indicate that they were experienced in their activities and adept at supporting their congregation. When called upon, they would be competent to assume the role as the next generation of leaders from their mothers.

The other major outlet for youth at Richmond Hill Methodist Church was the Epworth League. This group is first mentioned in the 1892 annual



report, and met Friday evenings at eight o'clock. The Epworth League "attempted to develop a commitment among the young to spiritual growth, education, and mission work and provided a variety of moral and social activities."<sup>52</sup> As a continuation of Sunday school, the group promoted Bible study and self-improvement through religion. However, it also broadened the focus of the youth by introducing them to mission work (similar to the WMS) and to social issues. Members were required to take the temperance pledge, expanding their understanding of religion and their responsibilities to the larger community.<sup>53</sup> The League at Richmond Hill Methodist Church was first led by A.J. Hume, also leader of the young men's class, but later E.A. Coombs became president. He was particularly well suited to this endeavour as he had a BA and MA from the University of Toronto and served as the principal of Richmond Hill High School.<sup>54</sup> Methodism had roots as a religion of experience, and placed specific emphasis on living a Christian life throughout the week, not just on Sunday. As such, this blending of religious and secular spheres with the overlap of a prominent authority figure would only serve to highlight the importance of religion in everyday life in the greater community.

The men, women, and children of Richmond Hill Methodist Church were active on many different levels within the church and within the wider community. Although this paper deals primarily with the more prominent lay leaders of the church, there are also many other names that recur faithfully in class lists, demonstrating their contribution to the congregation. That the church was able to raise \$17,000 in 1880 for a new building strongly demonstrates the greater community involvement in religion at this period: the leaders and members alone could not have raised that amount of money. Funds for churches were not solicited only from members of the congregation, but the larger community also extended a helping hand. All of the teas and socials that raised over \$100 could not have done so without the patronage of non-Methodists who attended it as a social rather than religious event.

Because this investigation spans twenty-five years, one is able to glimpse three generations of church membership. The majority of the men who were serving as trustees in 1880 were over fifty years old. By the turn of the century, their children had often come to play a role in the church, and their grandchildren after them. William Atkinson, born in 1830, had a daughter, who married J.A.E. Switzer, born in 1839. All three of them were active as executive members on the Board of Trustees or, in Mrs. Switzer's case, the Ladies' Aid. The Switzer daughters also appear in the young ladies'

class, indicating that they followed in their parents' and grandparents' footsteps.<sup>55</sup> This same pattern of marriage within the faith community can also be seen in the Trench family: Mr. Trench, a prominent trustee, had several daughters, all of whom married men from the Methodist church.<sup>56</sup> These genealogies serve to emphasize the family connections of the church. Mr. Atkinson and his son-in-law were also business partners, making this relationship part of the larger community.

The Methodist church provided opportunities for all members to become involved in some way. Young and old, male and female, all were encouraged to become actively involved in their faith, and to make that faith known to others and encourage others in their quest for spiritual fulfillment. The grand edifice that was the new Richmond Hill Methodist Church building in 1881 proclaimed the arrival of the Methodists as an established church, and invited others to join in their worship.<sup>57</sup> Located at the top of the hill, with the tallest steeple in the town, and perhaps the largest capacity, these men and women were proud of their church and the congregation it housed. Revival and conversion played a dominant role at least into the mid-1880s, as the *Christian Guardian* attested in 1884:

For the last four weeks a very gracious work has been going on at Richmond Hill, from five to seven hundred attending every evening. The presence of the Lord has been felt in awakening power, numbers coming forward every evening. Many conversions have taken place. Last week one was one of especial power, young men rushing forward to the communion rail as anxious enquirers.<sup>58</sup>

These new members helped to maintain an active and vibrant religious community into the 1890s, which continued to interact with the larger civic community.

The shift in Richmond Hill from the establishment of Methodist services in 1810 to the turn of the twentieth century, as seen in the window from 1875 to 1899, is the social, economic, and religious evolution of a community. The lay leadership of Richmond Hill Methodist Church, while not wealthy, were certainly middle-class: the women had sufficient spare time to become deeply involved in the congregation, while the men were able to balance their businesses with civic and religious duties. This middle-class Victorian mindset was highly conscious of both religion and family as central to its being, and this is clearly demonstrated at Richmond Hill Methodist Church. If historically religion is seen as slowly shifting from a male to a female sphere,<sup>59</sup> this last quarter of the nineteenth century is the

moment of overlap, when women and men both contribute to the religious congregation. The women were not passive in their domestic roles as pie-bakers and entertainers, they sought to assert control and influence over their own money and the financial, as well as spiritual well-being of the church: the men were not alone in their decision making. The church became a team effort, often between husband and wife. And while children are often neglected in a discussion of religion, it is clear that their decision to continue the family commitment was of significant importance to the older generation. By examining Richmond Hill Methodist Church from 1875 to 1899, one can see a picture of religion as a community activity that involved all members of the family.

### **Endnotes**

1. Many recent studies examine the fluidity of religion and its interaction with culture. Some examples include, Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); and Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
2. A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), xxi. This is also discussed in Marguerite Van Die, "Revisiting 'Separate Spheres': Women, Religion and the Family in Mid-Victorian Brantford, Ontario" (unpublished manuscript).
3. The connection between the role of women and the activities of their husbands' is further developed in Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, 169-195.
4. For an introduction to male activities outside the church, see Lynn Marks, "Mostly Male Worlds: Leisure and Associational Life," Chapter Five in *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
5. For a discussion of the importance of youth in maintaining religious tradition, see Marguerite Van Die, "The Marks of A Genuine Revival: Religion, Social Changes, Gender, and Community in Mid-Victorian Brantford, Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review* 79, No. 3 (September 1998): 524-563.
6. A pamphlet on the history of the church, "Our Heritage on the Hill: Richmond Hill United Church 1880-1980," was prepared by the congregation in honour of their centennial anniversary.

7. Richmond Hill Public Archives [hereafter RHPA], *Family History Binders*, "Harrison."
8. RHPA, *Family History Binders*, "Atkinson" and "Switzer."
9. This pattern was common to Methodist churches. Neil Semple states that "nearly every community across the country had lay leaders, usually merchants or substantial farmers and their wives, who provided much of the impetus for building and administering churches and therefore for establishing the moral and social norms for the community" (Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* [Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996]).
10. This data is derived from the Richmond Hill Methodist Church Board of Trustee minutes, United Church/Victoria University Archives [hereafter UCA] and the RHPA *Family History Binders*. See Appendix #1 for further information.
11. RHPA, *Family History Binders*, "Harrison."
12. According to Neil Semple, no element in Methodism's transformation from a pioneer church to a social institution "was more important than education" *The Lord's Dominion*, 4. This focus was clearly developed at Richmond Hill Methodist Church and is highlighted by the trustees' activities in community education.
13. This list of community involvement comes from RHPA, *Family History Binders*. See Appendix #1 for more a more detailed breakdown of community involvement.
14. Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 54.
15. RPHA, *Family History Binders*.
16. The nature of fraternal orders, their membership demographics, and the motivations for joining orders are all addressed in the prologue of Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-14. The Canadian context is more specifically dealt with in Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*.
17. One such funeral is that of Isaac Crosby, who was a past master workman in the Ivy Lodge (AOUW) and active in the Masons. He was also a church trustee and a member of the circuit quarterly board. The entire Masonic ceremony was read at the graveside following the Methodist one.
18. Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 113.
19. UCA, Board of Trustees' Minutes, 23 January 1880.

20. See Appendix #1 for lodge memberships.
21. UCA, Board of Trustees Minutes, 23 February 1880.
22. UCA, Board of Trustees Minutes, 17 April 1880.
23. List from *A History of Richmond Lodge 1824-1974*, a commemorative book published by the Lodge on 23 October 1974.
24. These traditional contributions are recognized in several studies of female roles in Victorian Protestant Ontario. These include Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*; Marilyn Fardig Whiteley, "'Doing Just About What They Please': Ladies' Aid in Ontario Methodism," *Ontario History* (December 1990): 289-304; and Marguerite Van Die, "Marks of a Genuine Revival."
25. This shift in perspective to examining religious history from a female viewpoint is used extensively in Anne Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History," in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
26. UCA, Board of Trustees Minutes, 15 March 1880.
27. Such histories include the congregational booklet *Our Heritage on the Hill*, and the programmes from the 1907 and 1930 Jubilee Services at the church (UCA). It is also evident in *A History of Vaughan Township Churches*, eds. Patricia Somerville and Catherine Macfarlane (Maple: Vaughan Township Historical Society, 1984), 207.
28. UCA, Board of Trustees Minutes, 31 May 1880.
29. UCA, Board of Trustees Minutes, 12 July 1880.
30. UCA, Board of Trustees Minutes, 8 April 1880.
31. *The Christian Guardian*, 19 May 1880, 160.
32. *The Christian Guardian*, 13 April 1881, 119.
33. *The Christian Guardian*, 22 October 1884, 351.
34. This number is determined by looking at the Annual Reports from 1892, 1893, 1894 (UCA)
35. UCA has the class lists for these two years, which allowed for a close analysis of names and gender distribution. See Appendix #2 for exact details.
36. These numbers were determined through an analysis of the "The Recording Steward's Annual Financial Statement: 1881" (UCA), which gave monetary contributions according to class and individual.

37. This information comes from the Annual Reports, 1892-94, UCA.
38. Neil Semple addresses the missionary nature of Methodism, saying “the role of the church was not merely to expand its own horizons, but more importantly, to create a moral social order and to promote God’s kingdom on earth” (*Lord’s Dominion*, 4).
39. This information comes from the recollections of Dorothy J. Rumble, written in 1961 and kept in the archive room at Richmond Hill United (Methodist) Church.
40. This pattern can be observed in other communities in the same period. For example, see Marguerite Van Die’s discussions of Brantford.
41. *The Christian Guardian*, 16 August 1882, 261.
42. While Methodists were particularly concerned with religious education, the desire to pass religion to younger generations can be seen in the actions of David Wilson in Albert Schrauwers, *Awaiting the Millennium: Children of Peace and the Village of Hope* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). In the Methodist tradition it is also evident in Donald Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
43. For a discussion on the roles for young men in the Victorian church, see Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 54.
44. UCA, Richmond Hill Methodist Church, 1892 Annual Report.
45. UCA, Richmond Hill Methodist Church, 1897 Annual Report.
46. Revivals in Richmond Hill are recorded in the *Christian Guardian* in the mid-1880s, but the class lists for 1894 and 1899 do not show an increase in the number of members to correspond to the increase in the number of children enrolled in Sunday school.
47. UCA, 1894 Register for Recording the List of Members of Richmond Hill Methodist Church.
48. UCA, 1894 Register for Recording the List of Members of Richmond Hill Methodist Church.
49. Given the trend towards familial involvement, I would suggest that the lay leadership had more female children than male. In the course of research no specific breakdown of offspring was undertaken, but the class lists from 1894 and 1899 show that there were no sons with trustee surnames in the young men’s class. It is possible they simply were not active church members, or that they immediately joined their parents. Further research is needed to address this

issue.

50. *The Christian Guardian*, 19 May 1880, 160.
51. *The Christian Guardian*, 11 March 1885, 149.
52. Semple, *Lord's Dominion*, 385.
53. For a broader discussion of the temperance movement in Ontario, see Jan Noel's *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). While the RHPA suggest that some adult members of the Richmond Hill Methodist Church were active in the temperance movement, the recorded numbers are very limited.
54. RHPA, *Family History Binders*, "Coombs."
55. This can be traced through the class lists of 1894 and 1899, in conjunction with the RHPA *Family History Binders* and the UCA trustee list.
56. RHPA, *Family History Binders*, "Trench."
57. William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989) examines the Protestant culture of the mid-Victorian period in Southern Ontario. Chapter Five, "Epics in Stone: Placing the Sacred in a Secular World," addresses specifically the physical attributes of churches built in this period, and their meaning in the context of their environment.
58. *The Christian Guardian*, 5 March 1884.
59. Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) addresses the increasing role given to women in an earlier period. Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion: 1800-1860," in *Religion in American History: A Reader*, ed. Jon Butler and Harry Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) underlines the development of women's roles in the American church in the nineteenth-century, and the corresponding evolution of theology to accommodate this new audience.

**Appendix #1*****Richmond Hill Methodist Church Leaders***

Total Number in Sample: 12

Number of Trustees: 9

Number of Class Leaders: 3

Number of Sunday school Superintendents: 2

Number of Epworth League Leaders: 2

Number of Representatives to Circuit Quarterly Board: 3

Number of businessmen: 4

Number of tradesmen: 5

Number of Principals: 2

Number of reeves: 5

Number of school trustees: 5

Number involved with Public Library: 3

Number of Richmond Hill Council members: 3

Number of Justices of the Peace: 1

Number born in Canada: 4

Number born in England: 3

Number born in Scotland: 3

Number of Liberals: 3

Number of Conservatives: 2

Number of members of AOUW: 4

Number of Masons: 5

This data is derived from the Richmond Hill Methodist Church Board of Trustee minutes, UCA, and the RHPA *Family History Binders*. It is not a complete list of all trustees over the period 1875-1899, but rather a sample comprised of those trustees whose families also appear in the RHPA, thus providing data on their community involvement and personal lives.



*Appendix #2*

*Demographics of Class Lists, 1894 and 1899  
Richmond Hill Methodist Church*

*Numerical Break-down, 1894 Class List*

|                                | Class #1 | Class #2 | Class #3 | Class #4 | Class #5 | Class #6 |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b># Males</b>                 | 27       | 6        | 9        | 11       | 10       | 0        |
| <b># Females</b>               | 34       | 25       | 1        | 16       | 26       | 23       |
| <b># Family Names</b>          | 31       | 23       | 9        | 15       | 21       | 18       |
| <b># Trustee Family Names</b>  | 7        | 4        | 0        | 4        | 9        | 5        |
| <b># Couples</b>               | 12       | 6        | 1        | 5        | 6        | 0        |
| <b>Total Number of Members</b> | 61       | 31       | 10       | 27       | 36       | 23       |

*Numerical Break-down, 1899 Class List*

|                                | Class #1 | Class #2 | Class #3 | Class #4 | Class #5 | Class #6 |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b># Males</b>                 | 31       | 6        | 9        | 12       | 9        | 0        |
| <b># Females</b>               | 36       | 26       | 1        | 15       | 27       | 23       |
| <b># Family Names</b>          | 33       | 23       | 8        | 15       | 21       | 17       |
| <b># Trustee Family Names</b>  | 8        | 5        | 1        | 4        | 8        | 5        |
| <b># Couples</b>               | 15       | 4        | 1        | 5        | 6        | 0        |
| <b>Total Number of Members</b> | 67       | 32       | 10       | 27       | 36       | 23       |

This data is derived from the only two class lists available for this period, located in the UCA.

