

MRS. F. W. HALL

- (Richmond Methodist Church)

INTERVIEWED:

January 31, 1975

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Mrs. Hall was born in Scotland in 1880, Isabella Gordon, and later moved to England. She came to Richmond from England with her parents as a child of 8 years, settling in Terra Nova. She met her husband, Frederick William Hall, at a threshing when the girls were serving the meals to the crews. They were to move to land purchased by Mr. Hall at the end of the Lulu Island bridge, but it was destroyed by fire so the wedding planned for October was postponed until the following January 1908. Mr. Hall was helping build Mr. Thompson's house in Richmond. A neighbouring sawmill's sparks destroyed the house and a nearby Anglican Church. The \$300.00 insurance enabled him to buy lumber in New Westminster and rebuild the house. The lumber was loaded on a scow and sent downriver to Marpole. Their livestock was numerous and later they used the lumber from the barn to raise the house. A similar house cost \$500.00 at the time, but was made more finished than their house.

The original house was moved 4 months later further over to the Bridgeport area, Beckwith Road, to avoid the sawmill, and Mrs. Hall remained there until 1974. Her parents have passed

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away, her father in 1928 and her mother in 1940. Her mother was very active in the Richmond Methodist Church at its first location. The ladies were always doing fund-raising and good works, Mrs. Hall's mother made quilts and supplied some to the missionary boat running between Nanaimo and the Upper Coast. One was made for the Ladies Aid when she was 90 years old.

Some of the Ministers Mrs. Hall remembers are Mr. Ridlands in 1916; before the Union of the churches, Mr. Finnemore who was Minister for 14 years; Mr. Carr who is now at Chown Memorial, Mr. Nixon who was there 1919-24, the year before Union; Mr. Evans; Mr. Carmichael.

The interior of the first Richmond Methodist Church, now Minoru Chapel, is being retained by the Municipality in almost exact condition to what it was. The lighting is just the same, the heating was supplied by a huge wood or coal stove.

Volunteer caretakers came to clean the church. The Stables at the side of the church were for horses used in driving buggies and "Democrats". A democrat was an over-sized buggy for larger families with more rows of seats. The advent of automobiles rendered the stables impractical.

The shorter catechism was presented for use by Reverend A.A. Jaffrey and Mrs. Hall used it when she was attending Presbyterian Church. She then attended the Methodist Church after her marriage when her two sons were persuaded to attend the Sunday School by Mrs. Esterbrook. The boys walked down the river bank, half a mile. Access to the Presbyterian Church would have meant crossing the bridges, about 2 miles.

During the First World War all the groups worked hard for the Red Cross, making over 200 quilts, knitted socks, and sewed. The group received a medal from the Red Cross for the work they did. They sent boxes of food and fruit all over.

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Many boys served in the Forces during the war and there is an Honour Roll in the church. There were strawberry teas, potato dinners and turkey dinners to raise money. There was no gambling and plenty of fun. Mrs. Hall feels there was more fun at that time than at present. The ladies went down to the church to clean as there was not a caretaker then.

The original floor was wood, but some rugs were later brought in and this was a special event. The ladies cleaned them. The Parsonage, next door to the church, was supplied with curtains by the Supply Committee. Mrs. Hall's father built the parsonage right next door to church which is now used as a Rod & Gun Club.

Mrs. Hall often wondered why one larger church was not built rather than splitting congregation between Brighthouse and Richmond United.

The depression years were hard work for the church. The ladies worked at many fund-raising events because of the shortage of money. Though many Ministers took a cut in salaries, they visited the congregation more than they do now. They would drop in for a chat and a cup of tea.

Home life was closer before television and shows. There were hay rides, sleigh rides, picnics and glee clubs. The boys would bring orange juice and they would have "taffy-pulls". There were parties and "dialogues" (short plays ED.NOTE) for amusements and the magic lanterns. The church groups put on these "dialogues".

The Richmond Methodist Church had a tower but no bell but the Town Hall had a bell. The church congregation met there for services before the building of the structure, and a few years beforehand. The roads were not paved, but only mud tracks. A visiting Minister came to certain houses where neighbours met, for

services and prayer meetings in the early 1900's. Colonel R.D. Rorison was coming one evening with the hymn books when he walked into the ditch up to his knees and he had to be dried out along with the hymn books. However, many of the congregation argued about interpreting the Bible and finally Mrs. Sexsmith decided all would take the Bible as written.

In the floods of 1898, Mrs. Hall recalled that the wind had changed from blowing from the east to blowing from the west and her father was very unsettled. He made his family pick up things. The dykes were flattened and the waters overran everything. The orchard was washed out - a new cannery had just been built on the river bank and that too was washed out. The water came in through the front door, (in spite of the efforts of Mr. Gordon) rushing through the house putting out the fires. They managed to get the piano up.