

**The
Old
Spring Hill Church**

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by

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Prophetstown Area Historical Society
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Introduction

Since 1964 I have been driving by the old church at Spring Hill, watching it deteriorate. It should not come as a surprise that at one time it was not old. It is much like us old folks. It, too, has seen better days. Here is what we know about it.



The church in the 1970s.

SPRING HILL CHURCH (1912-1979)

In 1912, the Emanuel Church of the Evangelical Association located in Loraine Township, Henry County, was moved to Spring Hill— three and a half miles to the north in Portland Township, Whiteside County. The church had set on the farm now owned by Dale Hofmeister near the Loraine Cemetery.

The building was a simple structure consisting of an entryway and large sanctuary area. It was sold for \$250 and moved by horses and capstans to its present location on the west edge of Spring Hill on land obtained from David Urick. The newly named Union Church of Portland was dedicated on July 20, 1913 by Rev. E.A. Rife and deeded to the people of Portland Township.

From 1912 to 1929, it continued to be known as the Union Church of Portland. The church closed for a time and in 1930 it was reopened and joined the Loraine and Ebenezer Churches on the Loraine circuit. Under the pastorate of H. O. Zimmerman and with help from some citizens of the community, the old church began to thrive again. Services were held in the afternoon for several years and then began to schedule morning services.

In 1946, the three churches united with the Evangelical United Brethren faith, and they continued to serve their respective communities sharing a pastor. In addition to Sunday services, a prayer meeting service was held at the Spring Hill church on Thursday evenings. There was also an active Ladies Aid Society for many years which helped keep the church a vital part of the community.

Spring Hill Church underwent a major renovation in 1954, and a special rededication service was held on November 3, 1955. Over 100 people attended the service under the leadership of Rev. C. Wolfly. A new furnace was put in and many cosmetic changes were made. No plumbing, however, was added. The old outhouse, which sat on the west side of the church, continued to serve its purpose.

In 1959, the “Loraine Larger Parrish” was formed and included Joslin and Rose Hill and the original three churches under the pastorate of Rev. E. Lieske. The Augustana Seminary helped to fill some of the pulpits with student pastors on Sundays.

In 1965, the church was painted by members of the congregation under the supervision of John R. Shoemaker. The ladies, men and young people all chipped in and got the job done. Paint was paid for by an anonymous donor who passed the church frequently and wanted to see it kept up.

In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist denominations merged and Loraine circuit became a United Methodist Parrish. The Parrish, at that time, went back to the original three churches. Once again a single pastor, Rev. Albert Atteberry at the time, served all three.

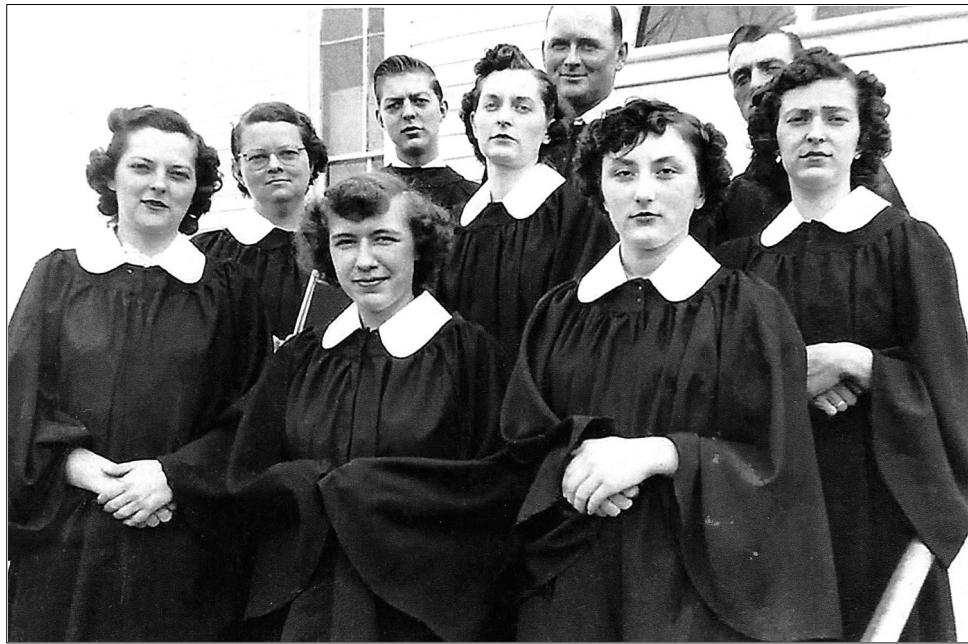
Around 1970, another renovation at Spring Hill Church took place with two classrooms being added into the existing structure. A new furnace was also installed. Blair Redell (carpenter), Albert Luchman (plumber), and John Shoemaker (painter) did much of the work.

By 1979, the membership of the Spring Hill Church had dwindled to just a few members, and it was decided to close its doors. Some members would transfer to the Loraine Church and others would go elsewhere. Two years earlier, in 1977, Ebenezer left the Loraine circuit and became an interdenominational church. The parish now consisted of just the Loraine Church under the pastorate of Rev. Charles Shriver.

Over the years, many children attended Sunday School and summer Bible School at the old church. Charles Redell started a shuttle service for Sunday School children in the area. Revival meetings were held there, also, and many funerals and weddings would take place there.

Once the Church, Perkins General Store, and the School closed, Spring Hill would never be the same little community it once was. The store building and church still stand but are in disrepair. Just down the road stands the old Sharon Church which also is showing its age from lack of use. When we drive by these places we should think about why others felt a need for them. Only memories remain today (2013) of what once was.

Pastors who served at Spring Hill Church from 1930-1979: Rev. H.O. Zimmerman (1930-34), A.L. Reid (1934-39), Curtis L. Price (1939-43), William LeConte (1943-47), Harold Flessner (1947-52), Leo Buechler (1952-53), Wallace Gable (1953-55), Clyde Wolfly (1955-57), Ewald Lieske (1957-60), Chester Hewitt (1960-61), Raymond Bjork (1961-1966), Albert Atteberry (1966-70), Claire Noblett (1970-72), Charles Shriver (1973-81).



Spring Hill Church Choir 1951: Front Row: Zola Redell, Doris Kissell, Barbara Fuller / Middle Row: June Redell Shoemaker, Loretta Redell Blean, Elaine Redell Duncan / Back Row: Gerald Redell, James Blean, Blair Redell.



The interior in 1954 after the remodel.

The old church in 2026.

Photos by John Janssen

