

Jessie Hill (2009)



Jessie Hill, the daughter of Alexander and Margaret Hill and grand-daughter of Robert Stewart, was one of Guelph's first piano teachers. She taught children when she herself was only 18 years of age. She was a graduate of the Toronto Conservatory of Music where she later taught as well as giving instruction at Branksome Hall, a school that drew students from many countries around the globe. She had studied piano in Paris in 1906, and in 1929 attended the Anglo-American Music Convention in Lausanne as the only delegate representing Canada. Nine of her pupils graduated from the Toronto Conservatory.

At one time, she was organist and choir leader at Chalmers Church and sometimes she also played at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. She had strong connections to her community, encouraging a series of children's concerts held in the Children's Library. They could attend 3 concerts yearly for the price of one dollar.

She also helped start the Presto Club in Guelph which requires members to play or give an essay on music at the monthly meetings held at members' homes. Later the Presto Club welcomed non-playing members and opened the club to the public to hear professional artists. A Steinway grand piano costing \$1,600 was given to the Presto Club by Edward Johnson and was placed in GCVI Auditorium.

Jessie Hill was known as a capable pianist, organist and accompanist, and in her later years enjoyed playing duets or 2-piano scores with Col. Charles Crowe who was a graduate of the University of Leipzig. In the 1950's with the encouragement of Edward Johnson, she began a program of offering group instruction after classes in the schools. The price was 25 cents per student.

She wrote many articles on music that appeared in the Saturday issues of the Guelph Mercury. For almost six decades she taught piano and opened the door to the world of music and its joys to countless children.