



Rawlinsville Camp Meeting Making Disciples Since 1885

Text and photos provided by Bishop Mike Sigman, President of Evangelical Theological Seminary, and Spiritual Director of Rawlinsville Camp. The images are from old post cards, part of Bishop Sigman's collection.

With the tolling of the tabernacle bell on July 26, 2010, the 125th session of the Rawlinsville Camp Meeting will begin. Established in 1885 by the Methodist Episcopal Churches of southern Lancaster County, Rawlinsville continues to grow and expand as a ministry dedicated to making disciples of Jesus Christ through Spirit-filled preaching and teaching and the cultivation of strong bonds of Christian fellowship and unity. The camp meeting's 150 cottages are filled with families and the waiting period for a cottage is estimated to be 10+ years.

The 14 United Methodist congregations of the "southern end" continue to own and manage the camp meeting. These churches include: Bethesda, Boehm's, Clearfield, Colemanville, Conestoga, Marticville, Mt. Hope, Mt. Nebo, Mt. Zion, Pleasant Grove, Quarryville Memorial, Quarryville Wesley, Rawlinsville and Safe Harbor.

By the opening day of the 1900 session, the Boarding House (facing page, c. 1906) was providing overnight accommodations and three meals a day to camp meeting visitors. The building was enlarged in 1904 and again in 1956, allowing for the establishment of the “restaurant” (the camp meeting’s version of a snack bar) and the dining room where family style meals continue to be served daily at noon and 5:00 PM. The second floor guest rooms have been transformed into a pre-school ministry center for more than fifty 3, 4 and 5 year olds.

The Main Tabernacle (below, c. 1950) was built in stages. The front section, or preaching stand, was erected in 1901-02. Congregants were protected by a large tent attached to the front of the preaching stand. The preaching stand was enlarged in 1905 and 1925 and the tent over the seating area was replaced with the addition seen in the foreground. The Tabernacle seats 500 with additional outside seating for 180. While a worship band has replaced the choir, and a concrete floor has replaced straw and sawdust, the Tabernacle’s central pulpit and altar/prayer rails remain unchanged. God’s Word is preached in the power of God’s Spirit and young and old alike use the altar rail as a place for prayer and godly counsel.

Generations have decided to follow Jesus through the faithful ministry of Rawlinsville Camp Meeting. Thanks be to God!

