

# Methodism in Canada a Hundred Years Ago.

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THE story of the pioneer Methodist preachers is one of the most thrilling tales that can be told. As we worship and meet together in our beautiful churches, we seldom think of the self-sacrifice and courage of the early Methodist preachers, who laid the foundation for these things in the midst of the greatest difficulties. But it is to the heroism of the preachers of a hundred years ago that we owe our religious liberty to-day, and that enterprising spirit of Methodism, which is still one of its chief characteristics, and which if once lost, will bode ill for the future.

One hundred years ago this country was a pathless forest, with here and there a break in the woods where a settler, with infinite labor, had felled the trees, and was beginning to eke out from the soil a scanty subsistence. There were no means of communication, except by the trails blazed through the virgin forest; there was no news from the outside world, except such as was received from the travelling traders, who stopped to gossip while they offered their wares; there were none of the conveniences of our twentieth century civilization,

One day in the winter of 1790, a stranger made his appearance among the settlers along the Bay of Quinte. He was a man of very solemn aspect, with straight hair, a long countenance and a grave voice. Although he had only one arm, yet he was a fearless horseman, and could readily mount and dismount his horse and ride him over the roughest roads and most dangerous places. This was Wm. Losee, a probationer from the United States, the first Methodist minister who preached in the Bay of Quinte District, or for that matter, in Canada. He came from the New York Conference, and was welcomed by the settlers (although he was an American) from the fact that he was a loyalist in his sympathies and had relatives in Canada. He came without appointment, but with permission to organize a circuit, if he could do so, in the sparsely settled country to which he went. One of the first places at which he stopped and preached was the tavern of Conrad Vandusen, of Adolphustown. The landlord listened to him with such effect that he became converted, and showed his sincerity by chopping down his tavern-sign with his own hands. In the house of Paul Huff, on the

Hay Bay shore, Losee formed the first regular class-meeting in Canada in 1791. Under his preaching conversions became numerous, and soon they felt that instead of worshipping as formerly in their own log cabins, they should build a chapel for their accommodation. So in the year 1792, the year of the first Parliament of Upper Canada, the Hay Bay chapel was erected, which still stands as a monument to the Methodists of a hundred years ago. During this year also, the second Methodist chapel was built by the efforts of Losee in Earnestown, a little east of the village of Bath.

As a result of the first year of Losee's labors, 165 members were returned from the Cataragui circuit, as it was then called, which extended from Kingston to Belleville. In the next year, a new circuit, Oswegotie was formed, east of Kingston, extending down the St. Lawrence almost to Montreal, over which Losee was placed, while Darius Dunham was appointed to travel the Cataragui circuit. The after history of Losee is sad and romantic. He had formed an attachment for a young lady who lived in one of the homes he used to visit in the vicinity of the Napanee River. But while he was removed to another charge, his successor won the affections of the

young lady. As a result of this, for the ministers of those days were but mortal, the matter so preyed upon his mind that he lost his mental balance, and his name was quietly dropped from the list of ministers. Afterwards, when his mind was restored, he left the province, went to the United States, and engaged in business in the City of New York.

Darius Dunham was appointed to the Cataragui circuit in 1793 by the M.E. Church of the United States, and was the first ordained Methodist minister who travelled in Canada. He had been educated for the practice of medicine, but had changed to enter the itinerant ranks. At this time he was a young man, having entered the ministry three years before, and had been appointed to several fields of labor, which it was his duty to organize into circuits, as no regular circuits had existed in those places before, and he had to depend for his support on whatever the people might give of their own free will. He was a man of strong mind, earnest and firm in his opinions. He cared not for the praise or blame of men, but preached the Gospel fearlessly and with power. In the year 1800, after having travelled eight years in Canada, he ceased from his labors as an itinerant and became a located minister, settling on a farm near Napanee. Because of his faithfulness in reproving, he had become known as scolding Dunham, and several incidents are told of his sarcastic humor, one of which will suffice.



THE OLD HAY BAY CHURCH.

The first Methodist Church built in Upper Canada. Erected in the summer of 1792, under the direction of William Losee, enlarged and rebuilt in 1834, and used until 1904. This view was taken, June 22nd, 1902, at the Centennial gathering.

which have become to us almost necessities; but these men were contented and happy, and lived their uneventful lives in quiet peace. It was to such men as these and in such places that the early Methodist preachers came with the Gospel, enduring hardships, but counting these things as nothing if only they could win some souls to a better life.

In the year 1788, a young man named Lyons, a school teacher in Adolphustown, an exhorter in the Methodist Episcopal Church from the United States, began the first Methodist preaching in the Bay of Quinte District.

In the same year came James McCarty, who was the first to suffer religious persecution in Canada. He was a convert of Whitesfield, when he had preached in America, and now McCarty began to preach to the settlers with great zeal and earnestness. Because he did not belong to the Church of England some said that therefore he was a rebel and a spy, for at this time patriotic feeling ran high, and the settlers were men who had suffered on account of their loyalty to the Motherland. One Sunday, while he was preaching, four men armed with muskets, seized him, and took him to Kingston, where he was tried, but was at first acquitted. He was seized again by his enemies, taken down the St. Lawrence to an island near the rapids, where he was left, and was never heard of again. Undoubtedly McCarty was a martyr for the Gospel, and was so regarded by the early inhabitants.