

Golden Jubilee Historical Sketch

The Ontario Sunday School Association

Outlining its Origin and the Principal Events of its Growth

BY E. W. HALPENNY

On the 14th of July, 1836, the Rev. T. Osgood, Captain Maitland, Mr. Jas. Court, Mr. Alexander Leslie, Mr. A. Howson and Mr. Henry Lyman, met in the office of Mr. Jas. Court, Montreal, "To take into consideration the necessity of forming a Union for the purpose of promoting Sabbath Schools throughout the Provinces." A Committee was appointed and a larger meeting called at which, on the 21st of July, 1836, a Union was formally organized, as its constitution declared, "To promote the establishment of Sunday Schools wherever it is deemed practicable, and to encourage and strengthen those already in existence." The name chosen was CANADA SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION. It was similar in plan and purpose to the American Sunday School Union, with which, in its early days, it was clearly associated. This is the first co-operative Sunday School effort in British America.

Its constituency included all the British Provinces then recognized, and its agents and missionaries travelled from Sarnia in Western Ontario to Gaspé and the Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. There seems to be no break in the records of this Union, showing a January Annual and a regular monthly meeting. The names of its workers were the foremost in Canadian civil and religious life. They apparently were diligent and faithful in the creation and development of schools, also in supplying them with helpful tracts, periodicals and books, the Union carrying on an extensive depository.

First Employed Officers

On the 15th of February, 1853, Mr. J. McNally was engaged as the first agent of the Union. His duties were not only to encourage and organize schools but to collect funds for the promotion of the work. His salary was "one dollar per day while he worked." He was succeeded by Rev. Mr. Elliott, who labored from September 1, 1856, to December, 1860. In March, 1860, Rev. John McKillican, a Congregational Minister, became agent, and continued for over thirty years. Some conception of the work accomplished may be gathered from the