

Rev. James Evans

REV. JAMES EVANS, who was the pastor of Norfolk Street Church in 1839, was one of the most famous and heroic figures of Canadian North-west missionary enterprise. First as a school teacher among the Indians at Rice Lake, then in the regular ministry as a great flaming evangel among the tribes in Upper Canada; and then, as the Apostle of the North, in the far-away and uninhabited regions from Lake

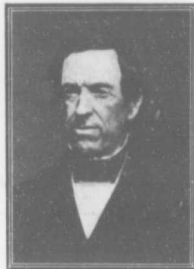


*Rev. James Evans

Superior on to Norway House and the great Saskatchewan country, he has left a record of missionary devotion, heroism and success which is one of the most cherished possessions of the Methodist Church. After ten years among the Indians in Upper Canada, he went, in 1838, to the great North-west and gave eight hard years to preaching among the Cree Indians. Mr. Evans' invention of the Cree syllabic characters, by which the Crees first learnt to read, and which are to-day in use among the North-west Indian tribes, has given him enduring fame, and the story of his too brief life, as given in the fascinating pages of Rev. Egerton R. Young's "Apostle of the North, Rev. James Evans," reveals a brave, self-sacrificing, gifted, godly man. He died suddenly in November, 1846, at Keilby, Lincolnshire, England, after delivering a missionary address, at the age of 45. Mr. Young (page 83) writes: "In 1839 he (Mr. Evans) was, owing to the disturbed

state of the country, brought back to civilization. For a time he preached in the town of Guelph with great power and acceptance. He showed, by his powerful sermons, that his talents and gifts were many, and that, if he had devoted himself to the regular work of the ministry, he would have taken rank as one of the greatest preachers of the age. These few months in Guelph were his last ministerial labors in Upper Canada."

After her husband's death Mrs. Evans came back to Guelph and lived for some years here with her daughter, Mrs. John McLean, taking an active part in the work of Norfolk Street Church. Mr. McLean, who laid the corner-stone of this church in 1855, was a notable character. For twenty-five years he had served the Hudson Bay Company in the North-west Territories, had visited the great Peace River valley, and in 1839 was the first white man to discover the Grand Falls on the Hamilton River in Labrador. These falls, 302 feet high, on a river the size of the Ottawa, are one of the scenic wonders of the world. While in Guelph Mr. McLean had correspondence with Lady Franklin regarding the possibility of finding traces of her lost husband, Sir John Franklin, who sailed from England to discover a North-west passage, and was never afterwards heard of. Mr. McLean suggested some explorations from Hudson Bay. He moved to Elora about 1860, and after twenty years' residence there as Division Court Clerk, went to Victoria, B.C., where he died at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. (Dr.) O'Brien, now of Nanaimo, B.C.



* John McLean