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A Sketch of the History of the
BAPTIST CHURCH
— AT —
LOWER AYLESFORD,

Also
Of other Churches formerly
connected with it,

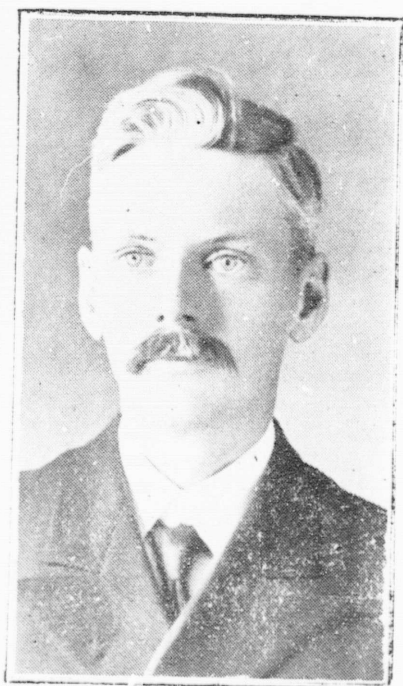
Written for the Central Association of 1904

Edward Manning BY
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REV. N. A. WHITMAN, B. A.
Pastor Lower Aylesford Baptist Church.

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A Sketch of the History of the Baptist Churches of Aylesford and Upper Wilmot.

THE section of the county between Berwick and Nictaux was the last part of the Annapolis and Cornwallis Valleys to be settled. In the latter part of the eighteenth and the first of the nineteenth centuries, this wilderness welcomed a number of sturdy, courageous immigrants mostly from the revolted New England colonies. In the log houses that went up in the woods, there lived, on the north side of the Annapolis River, the VanBuskirks, Gouchers, Reaghs, Randalls, Gateses, Faleses, Stronaches, Parkers, Bakers, and others. On the south side of the river, among others, were the Weltons, Munroes, Spinneys, Bankses, Wards, McKenneys, McGregors, Saunderses, Wilsons, and others.

Before 1829, among all these settlers, there were about eight or ten who had professed religion. They were members of the Nictaux Church. But their influence was not sufficient to arrest the prevailing worldliness and careless living of the people who, although not christians, were not infidels. They believed, so far as that class of people are able to do, the verities of revelation. The men were hard working and honest, but they made free use of the Jamaica rum with which the country was well supplied. The sentiment then reigning on both sides of the Atlantic was dominant in all parts of Nova Scotia. In the higher classes, an insult was followed by a duel;

in the lower classes it was followed by a test of heavy fists which dealt blows like the kick of a horse. The women however, were pure, sweet and industrious. They left the use of Jamaica rum and profanity to the men.

In September 1828, the yearly meeting—a meeting for the whole province—was held at Upper Aylesford. There the Lord appeared. Rev. Thomas Ainsley, caught the inspiration of the coming reformation. Among those present was a son of the Rev. Joseph Dimock of Chester, Anthony Vaughn Dimock who afterwards became a minister of the gospel. Mr. Ainsley went across the room, dropped on his knees, put his hands on young Dimock's head and thanked God that he had raised up another preacher of the gospel. This was before the young man had made it known that he regarded himself called of God to preach the gospel. That burst of preaching was the trumpet call to the heralds of the cross.

Coincident with this event, the first Cornwallis Church sent out three young preachers of the gospel, I. E. Bill, Ezekiel Marsters and William Chipman. After the close of the yearly meeting, Mr. Ainsley came from his home near Bridgetown, and preached in different sections of this part of the country. A few were converted and baptised. The spirit of enquiry was abroad from the shores of the Bay of Fundy to the borders of the wilderness on the top of the South Mountain. Young Marsters and Bill were sent to this place by an impelling power within them. There were no calls in those days, except the Macedonian call and the divine impulse in the soul. With I. E. Bill it was in this wise, great was his travel of soul; but he had his wife and little children to support. In his distress he went to his brother, Caleb R. Bill, the late Senator, and told him his troubles. "Go preach

the gospel," said Caleb, "and I will take care of your wife and children." That was to him the voice of God, and he went west. Ezekiel Masters joined him. They rode on horse back over this country from mountain top to mountain top, from the Carriboo bog to the western limits of the Nictaux church. Never in the history of these provinces was there a more remarkable work of grace than that which followed the coming of these two young exempliers.

Those who were first baptized were added to the Nictaux church. Father Ainsley did the baptizing. Rev. Thomas Handly Chipman who had been the companion of Henry Alline in evangelizing the country, was then pastor of the Nictaux church. He was old and feeble.

On the 5th of March, 1829, a church was constituted in Aylesford consisting of thirty three members. Thomas Handly Chipman, Edward Manning, William Elder and I. E. Bill who had been ordained over the Nictaux church a few days before, were the ministers present. There were no church buildings at the time. It is not known where the meetings were held. The Condon school house at Melvern Square, and the Bethel at Tremont, both of which served the double purpose for schools and public worship, were the most important places of meeting at the time. Most of the services were held in private houses. On the same day the church was formed, Ezekiel Masters was examined as a candidate for the ministry. On the following day he was ordained. Rev. Mr. Elder preached the ordination sermon. T. H. Chipman asked the questions. The Rev. Edward Manning offered the ordaining prayer. The Rev. I. E. Bill gave the candidate the right hand of fellowship, and the prayer to conclude the service was offered by Mr. Marsters.

The church clerk says:—"The Lord was a wall of fire about us and a glory in our midst. We also embraced the articles and covenant of the Baptist Association, and gave up ourselves to one another as brethren in Christ to walk together in love."

That, for this part of the country, was no ordinary event. It filled the minds and thrilled the hearts of the people along the mountain tops and throughout the length and breadth of the valley. Fancy the state of the country at that time, the dwellings of the people and their religious condition of that day, and the entering into this field of those two zealous, eloquent young men. The desert soon began to blossom as the rose.

On the 26th of March, fourteen candidates were baptized, on April 23rd eleven more, on the 27th seven others put on Christ in the same way.

On the 29th of April at the house of Abraham Spinney; Ebenezer Stronach, Sydney Welton, Henry Saunders, and Obed Parker, were chosen deacons and Thomas Tupper, Clerk. Three of these afterwards became ministers of the gospel in the higher meaning of the service—Ebenezer Stronach, Henry Saunders and Obed Parker. On the third of May these deacons were ordained by the pastor, assisted by the venerable Thomas Handly Chipman, and sixteen candidates were baptized.

On the 24th of the same month, fifteen more followed their Lord in Baptism, among them David and Elizabeth Saunders the father and mother of the Rev. E. M. Saunders, D. D., and Isabella Welton the mother of the late Rev. D. M. Welton, D. D., Ph. D. On the seventh of June seven others were baptized, and on the fifteenth four more. On the 22nd of the same month four others put on Christ in baptism. One of them was Willard

Graves Parker who afterward entered the ministry and wrought a great work for the Lord. W. G. Parker the father of the Rev. J. M. Parker and of Mrs. E. O. Read, was a lovely minister and beloved by a host of friends. On the 12th of July eight others were baptized, among them Robert Walker, who subsequently entered the ministry and did evangelistic work. Three more followed Christ in this ordinance on the 9th of August. On the 20th of September Mr. Marsters baptized six others, among them, Mary Miller who became the second wife of the Rev. Charles Tupper, D. D. On November 15th two more came into the church by baptism, and on the 25th of the same month three others. On the 20th of December four more received baptism. On this day E. M. Saunders, now Rev. E. M. Saunders, D. D. was born. On the 5th of January 1830, four others were added to the church by baptism. There were 113 baptized in the first year of the existence of the church.

This revival was not confined to this section of the country. I. E. Bill was equally active on his field which extended from the shore of the bay to the South Mountain. His gathering was much larger. In five years two hundred and forty two were added to the church by baptism. This work of grace extended East and West. It was known to the old people as "the great reformation," and indeed it was a reformation. A notable era it was for the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces. During that time Horton Academy was founded and the great temperance campaign was undertaken. Among those who entered into that great work none were more enthusiastic and successful than I. E. Bill and Ezekiel Marsters. This whole section of the country was regenerated. It was a religious-temperance reformation.

But trouble in the midst of all this prosperity made its

appearance. Toward the close of the first year of the existence of the church, meetings for discipline and a council of ministers were held. William Tupper was called upon to confess to the church and ask its pardon and that of the pastor and recant his errors in sentiment. His reply was, "I will not." Exclusion followed. Other trouble appeared. Some of the members became careless in their habits—fornication and drunkenness were their sins. Exclusions followed.

On the 19th of February, 1831 Ebenezer Stronach received a license to preach. July 30th, 1831 Charles Randall was dismissed to unite with the Nictaux church. May 5th, 1831, delegates were appointed to meet on the 9th day of May at Upper Granville to ordain Nathaniel Vidito. Henry Saunders was ordained July 3rd, 1832, as an evangelist. Edward Manning, Wm. Chipman, I. E. Bill and Ezekiel Marsters took part in the ordination.

May 22nd, 1833, Ebenezer Stronach was ordained at the Methodist chapel. Edward Manning, Wm. Chipman, among other ministers took part in the service. The scene was solemn, interesting and glorious. A brother was excluded and "delivered over to the buffetings of Satan. Oh, may God have mercy upon him." March 13th, 1834 Robert Walker was appointed deacon.

In June 1834, the church was convulsed with evil reports about the pastor, Ezekiel Marsters. A council was called which came to the conclusion that he had been imprudent; and that he should make a public acknowledgement to the church, which he did. He having done this, it was the advice of the Council that he should be retained as pastor. Mr. Marsters complied with Council's advice, and was supported by the church; but a minority refused to abide by this decision. Sus-



Baptist Church at Tremont, Nova Scotia.



Baptist Church at Greenwood, Nova Scotia.

pensions, exclusions and restorations and general confusion followed. It would take a volume to write the full account of that sad chapter in the history of the Aylesford church. Here is the record of a special conference which gives an intimation of the character of some of their meetings: And through this conference it may be inferred what the state of things in the community was at a time when there were neither railroads nor newspapers, thus giving ample time to thoroughly discuss any subject of an exciting character.

At this special conference it is said that "brother James Gates and others attended: but they were full of malignity and raised a tumult, so that we had to shut down the windows." Whether this device was to keep the noise out or in does not appear.

The confusion continued. In the spring of 1835 Mr. Marsters accepted a call from the church in Pleasant River, Queens County. In connection with his withdrawal, the clerk writes, "May God bless him forever." On the 27th of March, 1835, eighteen members were restored. Shortly after this a Council was called to ordain Obediah Saunders. The church, however, accepted the advice of the Council not to proceed with the ordination; and Obediah Saunders was never ordained.

In January, 1836, the church met for the purpose of engaging a pastor. They considered the names Obediah Saunders, Abraham Stronach and Charles Tupper, but could not agree upon either of them. Then the name of Ezekiel Marsters was taken up. He received an urgent call to return to the church which was accepted. This naturally kindled anew the smouldering fires and the old trouble broke out anew. On the 14th of May, 1836, Aaron Cogswell was ordained. He became one of

the many ministers of the gospel raised up in this section of the country.

In 1838 a society was formed to aid in establishing a mission in Burmah, and \$800 were contributed for the mission. Led chiefly by Dr. Crawley, the denomination had resolved to begin work in Burmah. Richard E. Burpee, a young pastor in New Brunswick, had been engaged to take a course of study at Acadia College, which had just been established, and each province had engaged to bear half of his expense, while preparing for work in the foreign field. The two pounds raised were devoted to this purpose. Mr. and Mrs. Burpee did not leave for Burmah until four years after this. In the meantime the Associations of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia bore the expense of his education.

In 1838 the pastor's salary was \$370. It was resolved by the church that at the end of the year any subscribers who had not paid up their subscription should give notes of hand for the several unpaid amounts.

In January, 1839, a revival commenced at Upper Aylesford. On the 3rd of that month Edward Harris and John Chipman Morse were baptised—two young men who became useful ministers of the gospel, the latter of whom continues in his work until this day. He has told again and again how he first saw the light in James Morton's bar-room in Upper Aylesford. This James Morton kept the inn at that place. All ministers enjoyed his hospitality; and when any of them wanted to preach, he kindly put his bar-room at their disposal. It was in this room, consecrated to rum and religion, that the agony of the carpenter, John Chipman Morse, gave place to the joys of the wonderful salvation. As he graphically described the occasion of his passing

from darkness into light, sins rose all around him, east, west, north and south. On the occasion of the baptism of these two young men, the clerk says "Elder Manning preached to a host of people. A deep solemnity pervade the minds of the people. The day was cold; icy fetters lined the banks of our Jordan; the earth was clothed with its wintry fleece; and flakes of snow quietly descended to beautify the scene. The administrator and the congregation moved quietly down to the banks of the river without confusion or timidity. In the living stream thirty were buried and raised up without a sigh or a grasp for breath, and went on their way rejoicing."

In 1839, \$21.50 was raised for the Burman Mission. On the 4th of April, 1841, Edward Harris was licensed to preach the gospel.

About the year 1841, Mr. Marsters accepted a call from the church at Quaco, now St. Martins, New Brunswick. In the spring of 1842 W. C. Rideout, from St. Andrews, N. B., and a licentiate of the Tuskent church, came to Annapolis County. Then followed a great revival at Handley Mountain and Nictaux. Reports of this awakening came to Aylesford. People from this district attended the services at Nictaux, and brought the flame to their homes and the church. The old people now living can remember the state of excited expectancy with which the church members looked forward to the coming of the zealous young evangelist; also the meetings and the revival which followed his coming. The writer, E. M. Saunders, sees him now as he appeared in the pulpit of the old Bethel. A young man, slight and straight as an arrow, long neck, drooping shoulders and a loud solemn voice. He read the hymn :—

“ I send the joy of earth away,
 Among the tempters of the kind,
 False as the smooth deceitful sea
 And empty as the whistling wind.”

I can see even now his adam's apple running up and down from his shirt collar to his chin as in awfully solemn tones he read and prayed standing in that rude pulpit.

During that spring and the following summer a large number was added to the church. The converts were baptized by the Rev. Ebenezer Stronach.

On the 14th of September Mr. Rideout was ordained. The sermon was by Edward Manning. A. Vidito asked the questions. I. E. Bill gave the charge and Wm. Chipman gave the right hand of fellowship.

On the 2nd of October Mr. Rideout baptized his first convert—a boy ten years old—Daniel Morse Welton, who lately, after a long and useful life, beloved and honored by all who knew him, entered into his eternal rest.

The members on the north side of the river who opposed the church in retaining and justifying the Rev. Ezekiel Marsters were, after wading through many difficulties, formed into a separate church, which in 1842 was received into the Association. It reported one hundred and eleven members, 47 of whom had been baptized. Rev. James Parker became their pastor. This church maintained a separate existence until 1847, and in that time reported 66 baptisms. For two years James Parker was its pastor and for the other four years his brother, the Rev. Obed. Parker, had the oversight of this flock. At the time that it united with the mother church, its membership was one hundred and five. As

early as Nov. 8th, 1843, this church which had been called the second Aylesford church, sent a letter to the first church, asking for a committee to confer with a committee appointed by it to devise a plan of reunion. This was the outcome of the revival following the labors of W. C. Rideout.

In 1842-43-44, under Mr. Rideout's ministry, 115 were added to the church by baptism. Four years after the reception of this letter from the second church which met a hearty response from the first church, the two churches were dissolved, and one church formed, consisting of 111 members. At the time of the union the total membership of the two churches was 400. The union left 289 in both churches without membership. In subsequent revivals the larger part of them were induced to connect themselves with the church, but some of them never united with the new church. They lived and died outside of the church.

In March 1846, all the members living east of the Episcopal church in Upper Aylesford were permitted to take their dismission to form a church in that place. Seventeen were dismissed for that purpose.

The union of the two churches took place October 14th, 1847. After a long experience of discord it is written in the church book, that the first and second churches finding all the difficulties removed, and remembering how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, resolved to unite together in one church. This was done at a meeting held in the central meeting house. The Rev. I E. Bill was present and assisted. The conditions of union were that the two pastors, Rev. Obed Parker and the Rev. W. C. Rideout should resign, and both should be regarded as

ineligible for the pastorate of the new church. The clerks and deacons also resigned. All members of the two churches in good and regular standing were regarded as qualified to become members of the new church. Those not prepared to become members were to be considered eligible for membership whenever they should desire it. All members not in regular standing were to be considered "self excluded," and were exhorted to immediate repentance and reformation of life. Any members having difficulties with each other were required to settle such troubles before becoming members. The united church was pledged not to make any effort to secure the services of either of the two pastors who had resigned. The rules of the Temperance Society were to be conscientiously observed by every member of the new church. Sydney Welton was chosen deacon, and Thomas Tupper, clerk. Rev. Ebenezer Stronach was engaged to supply the pulpit for three months.

On the 15th of January, 1848, Calvin Baker, Joseph Goucher, Abraham Reagh and Zebina Roach were appointed deacons. It was also agreed that Robert Walker, Obed Parker and Samuel Spinney be permitted with the consent of the pastor for the time being to exercise their gifts in any sections of the church. Rev. Ebenezer Stronach was engaged as pastor for one year, his pastorate to commence on the 15th of January, 1848. The church agreed to give him at the rate of \$200 a year.

May 7th, 1849, Edward Manning Saunders, Edgar Wheelock and Mary Eliza Welton were baptized by the Rev. James Park, who was preaching for the church at the time. He was invited to the pastorate, but declined the invitation.

In 1849 and 1850, 67 were added to the church by baptism.

On the 12th of March, 1850, the church extended a call to Rev. W. C. Rideout to become its pastor for one year. He accepted the invitation and being on the ground continued his labors until the 8th of June, 1850. Then at his own request he was released from his engagement as pastor of the church.

On April 9th, 1851, the church gave a unanimous call to the Rev. Charles Tupper to become its pastor. This call was accepted, and Mr. Tupper entered upon a long and successful pastorate of the church. His salary was to be \$400; one-quarter of which was contributed by the Upper Aylesford church to which he gave one-fourth of his time.

On the 24th of September, 1853, Daniel Morse Welton was licensed to preach the gospel.

In 1854 there was an extensive revival. Rev. W. G. Parker assisted Dr. Tupper. Eighty-five were baptized. Dr. Tupper commenced his labors with the church as pastor July 1st, 1851. The membership was then 214. At the close of 1854 it was 335.

At the Bethel on the 3rd of June, 1856, Robert Walker was ordained as an evangelist.

In February, 1857, John E. Goucher was licensed to preach the gospel.

In 1859 there was an extensive revival of religion in every section of the church. Dr. Tupper acknowledges with gratitude assistance received from Robert Morton, Abraham Stronach, Henry Saunders and Obed Parker. One hundred and eight were added to the church by baptism, making the membership 536.

From 1851 to 1861, 274 were added by baptism; and 151 by letter.

On the 30th of January, 1872, at a meeting held at Melvern Square it was resolved to divide the church into two churches. The Annapolis river was made the dividing line. The church on the north side of the river to be called the Upper Wilmot church. Dr. Tupper resigned the pastorate in 1872, having been pastor for 21 years. In November a call was extended to the Rev. Henry Bool, at a salary of \$500 a year. He accepted the invitation and began his labors on the 13th of December, 1872. He labored as pastor for one year only.

By invitation Rev. A. Vidito visited the church in March 1874. "The faithful were made to rejoice; backsliders returned to God; sinners became awakened and from the child of nine years of age to the aged of eighty years began to ask what they must do to be saved. Mr. Vidito baptized 138."

On the 13th of June, 1874, the church invited the Rev. J. C. Morse to visit them with a view to a permanent settlement as pastor. The following is Dr. Morse's reply:—"I laid the matter before the people of my charge. They would not agree for me to leave them; and it seems the will of God for me to stay with them for the present. I hope God will direct a minister to you after his own heart."

The Rev. E. O. Read accepted an invitation to the pastorate and began his work on the first of January, 1876, at a salary of \$600 a year.

In 1878 the name of the church was changed. It has since been known as the Lower Aylesford church. Its



Baptist Church at Meadow Vale, Nova Scotia.



Baptist Church at Harmony, Nova Scotia.

connection with the Western Association for greater convenience was transferred to the Central Association.

On the 16th of March, 1880, Rev. E. O. Read on account of ill health resigned his charge of the church.

On the 27th of February, 1881, Rev. F. Beattie began his labors as the successor of the Rev. E. O. Read. Rev. F. Beattie resigned in December, 1884.

Rev. E. H. Howe became pastor in June, 1886 and resigned in 1893. Rev. R. E. Gullison began his labors as pastor in 1894, and resigned in 1896. Rev. H. H. Saunders was pastor in 1897 and 1898, and Rev. Joseph Webb from 1898 to 1900. Rev. J. A. Huntley commenced his pastorate in 1902. He resigned in the summer of 1904.

From 1829 to 1904 there were added by baptism 1420. To the Upper Wilmot church there were additions by baptism from 1872 to 1903, 627. The Upper Aylesford church had additions by baptism from its organization in 1848 to 1903 amounting to 670. The second Aylesford church constituted in 1841 and dissolved in 1847, received by baptism 66. The total baptisms of the Aylesford group of churches from their organization until 1903 is 2,783.

From 1848 until 1853 the Upper Aylesford church received pastoral supply from the Rev. Wm. Chipman; from 1853 to 1857 from the Rev. Dr. Tupper; the Rev. J. L. Read was pastor from 1858 to 1888; the Rev. H. N. Parry for 1889 and 1890; J. B. Ganong supplied in 1891 and 1892; Rev. J. W. Bancroft was pastor from 1892 to 1895; the Rev. J. B. Morgan from 1897 to 1899; and Rev. A. S. Lewis from 1901 to 1904.

Rev. W. G. Hall was pastor of the Upper Wilmot church from 1877 to 1881; Rev. John Rowe from 1884; to 1888; the Rev. L. J. Tingley from 1889 to 1896; Rev. H. N. Parry from 1897 to 1903.

During the seven years of the existence of the second Aylesford church from 1841 to 1848 Rev. James Parker was pastor for the first two years and the Rev. Obed. Parker for the remainder of the time.

In the first church 29 were baptized in 1829. During Dr. Tupper's pastorate 78 were baptized in 1854; 143 in 1859; 77 in 1866. In Rev. F. Beattie's pastorate 45 were baptized in 1883. In the pastorate of the Rev. E. H. Howe 107 were baptized in 1886; 22 in 1887; 24 in 1888; and 39 in 1889; and 22 in 1892. Mr. Gullison baptized 47 in 1895 and 37 in 1896. In 1903, 33 were added to the church by baptism by Rev. J. A. Huntley. In 1859, 60 were baptized in the Upper Aylesford church by the Rev. J. L. Read; 35 in 1860; 44 in 1863; 29 in 1866; 25 in 1867; 68 in 1874; 27 in 1878; 89 in 1883; 31 in 1889 by the Rev. H. N. Parry; 47 in 1895 by the Rev. J. W. Bancroft; in 1897 22 by Rev. J. B. Morgan; 1902, 33 by Rev. A. S. Lewis. In 1877, 98 were added by baptism to the Upper Wilmot church under the ministry of the Rev. W. E. Hall; in 1878, 51. In 1885, 88 were added by baptism under the ministry of the Rev. John Rowe; and 96 in 1892 under the ministry of the Rev. L. J. Tingley.

These large numbers of baptisms indicate extensive and powerful revivals of religion—times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

The history of these churches is distinguished for remarkable revivals of religion. A large number of ministers, too, have gone out from these churches to

preach the gospel. Among them Revds. Obed. Parker, James Parker, W. L. Parker, Abraham Stronach, Ebenezer Stronach, John Chipman Morse, Edward Harris, Henry Saunders, Aaron and Joshua Cogswell, D. M. Welton, D. D., E. M. Saunders, D. D., L. B. Gates, C. B. Welton, Sydney Welton, J. C. Goucher, — Goucher, Jonathan Neily and others.

The Great Head of the Church above can measure the work and influence of these churches during their history. They have fostered religious education and missions at home and in foreign lands. Behind them is a notable history in which there have been remarkable displays of God's grace, notwithstanding the shortcomings and conflicts through which the churches have passed. There has always been a seed. The faithful have called on God in the day of darkness. He has answered their prayers and given success to their labors. A bright future is before them. May they fulfill their great mission.

