

*Brotherhood,
Aug 5th 1934*

THEY WHO MADE THE WAY

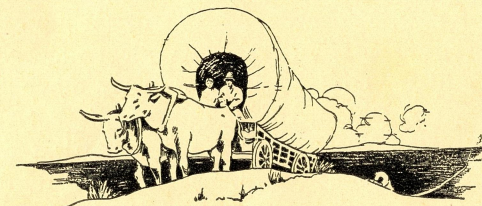
By COE HAYNE

A SOUVENIR

In Honor of the Memory of Baptists
One Hundred Years Ago
In
Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin

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BAPTISTS ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

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Four states in the valley of the Mississippi River this year (1934) are celebrating anniversaries of Baptist beginnings. They are: Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin. The Baptist State Conventions in the two states first named were organized in 1834. One hundred years ago the first Baptist church in Iowa was organized in a log cabin and in the same year an Indian Baptist church migrated from New York to Wisconsin. In centennial programs many eulogies will be voiced concerning the stalwarts of faith who carried the gospel message to the American frontier when to do so meant sure poverty, opposition, and indescribable hardship. The tribute of the anonymous writer of the verses that follow find an echo today in the hearts of Baptist men and women throughout the great mid-section of the United States:

PIONEERS

Forget not yet, forget not yet
That once we were your peers;
Remember, though the world forget,
We were the pioneers.

When in the burning noon of day,
The forest-wind blows sweet,
Forget not us, who made the way
Smooth ground beneath your feet.

We braved the fever-swamps by night
The desert's heat at noon;
We wandered, lost to all men's sight,
Beneath the wan white moon.

We dug the wells we may not drink,
The gold that buys not life;
Spent, in the forest's heart we sink,
Forgotten of the strife.

The Anniversary of an Idea

Greater than the anniversary of an organization is the anniversary of an idea. One hundred years ago the missionary cause on the frontier found itself hedged about by an ignorance and intolerance that sometimes resulted in persecution. Keeping step with the advance of the missionary motive were other ideals closely allied and as strongly contested by the unenlightened. These ideals found expression in the formation of Sunday schools, the distribution of Bibles, the organization of temperance societies and the establishment of colleges to produce an educated ministry.

Churches throughout the entire nation in spirit and sympathy unite with the Baptists of Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin in their celebrations and rejoice with them that the ideals and privileges they memorialize this year are the common heritage of peoples everywhere within our national borders.

First Baptist Minister in Illinois

The first preacher who visited the Illinois country was James Smith, a Baptist from Kentucky. Before his arrival in 1787 the settlers' manner of worship was to assemble to read portions of the Scriptures, or of a sermon, and to sing hymns.

In 1790, Smith again visited Illinois for the purpose of preaching the gospel. But the settlers at this time had fallen upon difficult times. One day Smith was riding horseback in company with another man and a Mrs. Huff and her daughter. On the trail near Bellefontaine, now Waterloo, they were fired upon from ambush by a party of Kickapoo Indians. Mrs. Huff and her daughter were killed. Smith was taken prisoner. The other man, although wounded, escaped on his horse. Several months later news was received that for \$170 ransom Smith would be brought back. Although there was a dearth of currency in the settlement, the ransom was cheerfully raised and was paid through the agency of a French trader. Great rejoicing in the settlement heralded the preacher's return.

After these visits of James Smith there were men in the settlements who were willing to lead in public prayer. When it was considered safe to live outside of forts, the settlers gathered in each other's cabins for worship and had for leaders men like Judge Bond, James Piggott, James Lemen, Sr., and Captain Ogle. James Lemen, Sr., became the pioneer Baptist leader, and Captain Ogle, Lemen's father-in-law, the first Methodist class leader in Illinois.

First Baptisms in Illinois

The first recorded baptisms by immersion in Illinois occurred as far back as February, 1794, when Rev. Josiah Dodge, a Baptist preacher from Kentucky, in Fountain Creek near a settlement called New Design, baptized James and Catherine Lemen, John Gibbons, and Isaac Enochs. James Lemen, and five of his sons, James, Jr., Robert, Moses, Josiah, and Joseph, later became Baptist preachers. James Lemen, Sr., his wife, and their six stalwart sons and two daughters comprised one of the first families to form the settlement of New Design.

James Lemen, Sr., his sons, and a few of their neighbors were among the first to oppose slavery in Illinois that had existed in the territory since the establishment of the earliest French settlements, strengthened by later migrations of slave-holders.

This pioneering body of Christians later took the name "Friends to Humanity," and church minutes recording their radical anti-slavery measures are in existence today—documents of inestimable value. The acts of those early Baptists as they gathered in regular church sessions had a real bearing upon the great contest for the freedom of Negroes in Illinois waged in 1824, in which John Mason Peck was given a leading part by Governor Edward Coles, the central figure in the battle to prevent the pro-slavery forces from changing the constitution of the state to admit slavery.

Oldest Baptist Church in Missouri

The oldest Baptist church in Missouri was formed 127 years ago. A marble shaft near a low brick building in the Fee Fee cemetery six miles west of the city limits of St. Louis bears a brief life-history of Rev. Thomas Musick, said to be the first ordained Protestant minister who preached west of the Mississippi River.¹ The inscription on the marble tombstone follows:

ELDER THOS. R. MUSICK

Born in Virginia, Oct. 17, 1756. Died in St. Louis Co., Nov., 1842. He was converted to Christ and united with the Baptist Church in Virginia. Removed to St. Louis Co. and remained a faithful and devoted servant of God until death, being the first Protestant minister who preached west of the Mississippi River.

¹ Other records inform us that John Clark (his biography was written by John Mason Peck), a Baptist in sentiment though not a member, was the first minister other than Catholic to preach in Missouri. He came in 1798, when under the Spanish régime it was unlawful to hold religious services other than Catholic. Musick came not long after.

In 1807 the Fee Fee Baptist Church was organized by Rev. Thomas Musick and the Martin, Sullens, Williams, Richardson, Sullivan, Link, Howdershell, and Hilderbrand families that came from the Southern and Middle States to help settle the wilderness between St. Louis and St. Charles. There was no Protestant church at the time in St. Louis. The Bethel Church, formed in 1806 near Jackson, Cape Girardeau County, prosperous for a time, died after it became antimitmissionary in spirit.

John Mason Peck, Builder of Christian Commonwealths

"The Bible never has crossed and never shall cross the Mississippi." This boast, in the opinion of John Mason Peck, represented the attitude toward religion of half the population of St. Louis when this pioneer missionary arrived there in December, 1817.

"St. Louis must not be relinquished by the Baptists," wrote John Mason Peck in 1820 in his appeal to the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions to reconsider the resolution concerning his removal to the Indian mission station in the Indian territory. He could not retreat now. His driving passion was to see the banner of the Cross planted firmly in the Mississippi Valley.

Nearly forty years later Peck made the following observation: "There are now (in St. Louis) as great a proportion of pious Christian church-members and of church-going people, in the ratio of the whole population, as in Philadelphia, New York, or any other large commercial city in our country."

In 1823, when Massachusetts Baptists came to the rescue of the Western Mission, Peck had become a real builder, conscious of a plan and a program. The days of hesitations and fear were behind him. A pathfinder who sensed the nakedness and destitution accompanying the birth of an empire, it was given him to remain at his chosen station long enough to enable him to have a large share in "guiding the thoughts, molding the manners, and forming the institutions of the West."

The home John Mason Peck established at Rock Spring, Ill., not over thirty miles from St. Louis, became Baptist headquarters for that vast unevangelized section. Where the need was greatest during the years that followed our Pioneer was found waging a patient warfare of faith and courage, of ceaseless toil and of poverty. The activities of the man who became known and loved as the "Sage of Rock Spring," cooperating with his neighbors in behalf of a wilder-

ness empire in ways seldom paralleled, furnished the elements of a story that may never be told in its entirety.

John Mason Peck was a real pioneer. With the knowledge that he had of the great migrations setting westward, he constructed the picture of countless communities in the Mississippi Valley destitute of gospel privileges, destitute even of the rudiments of a decent public school system. He foresaw on the American frontier as great a missionary opportunity as Judson and Rice had seen in the Orient. He became a competent rider of the dim trails of the Western frontier. His travels to the remote settlements in Missouri and Illinois were made in the saddle or on foot. There were practically no roads. The "traces" he followed through the wooded tracts and over the Mississippi River bottoms and barrens were often obliterated by the overflow of the swollen streams; his paths to his appointments were at their best mere bridle-trails. His pallet in the poor squatter homes he visited in most cases was his saddle-blanket laid upon a puncheon floor with his saddle for a pillow. He quickly adapted himself to the hardships of the trail as he brought to the frontier a body inured to toil and privation and a soul fired with the desire to meet life with all of its vicissitudes cheerfully and helpfully.

Missouri Goes Missionary and Organizes a State Convention

John Mason Peck had been sent out to the West by the Triennial Convention to organize churches on the frontier and to give them adequate oversight. He had dreamed of churches, schools, and colleges and he organized them. He taught churches how to plan for the Kingdom of God and to give their money for it. When the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions at the second Triennial Convention was impelled through the increasing needs of the Burman Mission to withdraw its support from the St. Louis Mission, the Massachusetts Missionary Society, two or three years later, made Peck its own missionary. It was John Mason Peck who gave the early Baptists in Missouri standing; who organized the long, hard fight against all antimitmission teachings and tendencies; and who made his name a blessing and a sign for reverence in Missouri for all time. He organized the first Baptist Church in St. Louis in February, 1818. In 1834 the Missouri Baptist State Convention was formed.

John Mason Peck created the influences which induced Jonathan Going to make a survey of the Western field and led to the formation of The American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1832. Christian education found no champion in the growing settlements more zealous

than this tireless itinerant missionary. He not only became the founder of Shurtleff College in 1827 (then known as the Rock Spring Theological and High School), but in 1842 accepted election as the Corresponding Secretary of The American Baptist Publication Society. He was an enthusiastic advocate of Sunday schools until his death in 1858.

Organization of Illinois Baptist State Convention

Old school Baptists of Illinois and Indiana, immediately following the organization of The American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1832, were especially active in their opposition to what they denominated the "inventions of men," such as salaries for ministers, Sunday schools, theological seminaries, and missions. John Mason Peck, the father of many forward-looking enterprises in the Mississippi River Valley, advocated all these. Many of the churches he founded turned against him and denied him their fellowship because of these "new-fangled notions." To train ministers, to establish Sunday schools or to send men and women with the gospel message to foreign fields—all such means were considered by some as the devices of men and not of God's choosing.

A mile-stone in the constant march of the missionary motive in the face of bitter opposition on the Western Frontier, was the birth of the Illinois Baptist State Convention. In a meeting at White Hall, Ill., held October 9-12, 1834, thirty-one were enrolled as delegates. John Mason Peck was chosen moderator and P. N. Haycraft, of Morgan County, clerk. The antimissionary members of the White Hall Church gave expression to their opposition in such fashion that the sessions of this first meeting of the Illinois Baptist State Convention were held in a barn belonging to Aaron Hicks. The Convention elected the following as its first officers: President, John Mason Peck; Secretary, Elijah Dodson; Corresponding Secretary and Field Assistant, Alvin Bailey; Treasurer, George Haskell. The four objects of the Convention were: "To promote fellowship, itinerant preaching, education and to collect and circulate information regarding the Baptist cause."

Baptists Organize Their First Church in Iowa

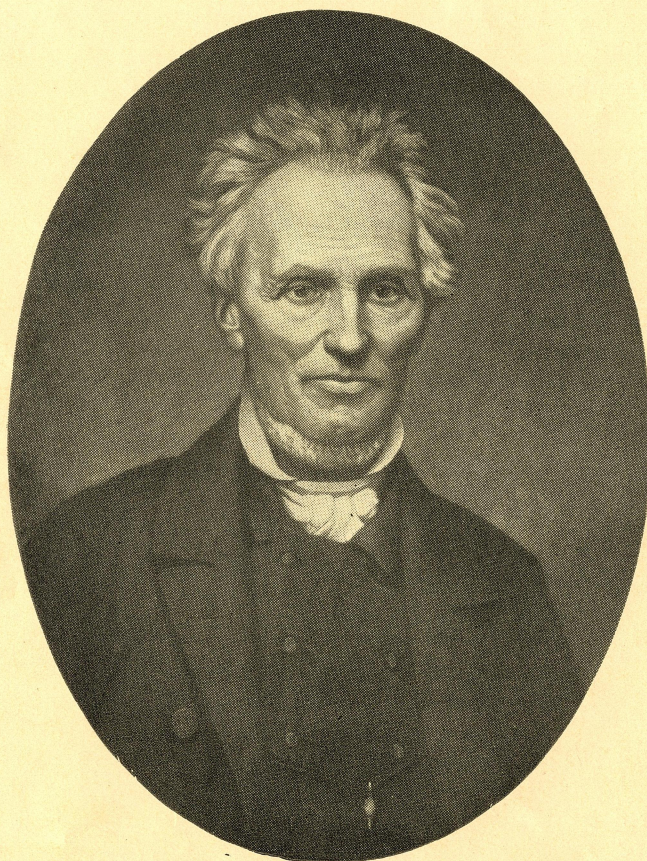
Immediately following the historic meeting at White Hall in October, 1834, that resulted in the organization of the Illinois Baptist Convention, Illinois made her first great gift to the Baptist cause in Iowa. From White Hall, in Green County, Illinois, John Logan

and Gardner Bartlett, missionaries of the Home Mission Society and of the Illinois Convention, rode northward. Scarcely pausing at their homes in the Military Tract, they continued their journey through the wilderness to the Mississippi River. The warm fellowship of their brethren at White Hall was freshly in mind as well as strong words of encouragement to carry the gospel of Christ to the farthermost settlements. Iowa had been open to white settlement but one year. A ferry had been established at Burlington, Iowa. At this time Iowa still was Michigan Territory and the defeat of Black Hawk but a few months old in memory.

Seven days after they left White Hall the two comrades of the Cross, after crossing the Mississippi into Iowa, arrived at the cabin of Noble and Naomi Hously on Long Creek, near the present town of Danville, Des Moines County. On this memorable Sunday—October 19, 1834—Logan preached; and on the following day he with the assistance of Gardner Bartlett organized the first Baptist church in Iowa, namely, the Long Creek (now Danville) Church.

This event Iowa Baptists will celebrate with fitting ceremonies at Burlington and Danville, Iowa, on October 20, 1934. A memorial tablet will be unveiled in honor of the memory of the two pioneer preachers. The bronze tablet will be embedded in a granite boulder placed upon the site of the little cabin wherein the church was organized. That delegates from Illinois will witness the unveiling will be a happy, attending circumstance as Logan and Bartlett are regarded by Illinois Baptists as among the stalwarts of the faith who with John Mason Peck, the Lemen brothers, and others planted the first churches in their state.

Two years after the formation of the church in the Hously cabin, Alexander Evans began work as the first missionary to Iowa appointed by the Home Mission Society. In 1845, from Iowa, Ezra Fisher and Hezekiah Johnson journeyed in covered wagons to Oregon as the pioneer Baptist missionaries of the Northwest. Among later workers of wide influence who went out from Iowa were John E. Clough of Ongole, Mrs. Sarah S. Newell, first general field representative of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, and John Y. Aitchison whose varied ministry in behalf of the Christian cause at home and abroad forms one of the brightest chapters in recent Baptist history.



JOHN MASON PECK

AT THE END OF THE LONG TRAIL OF THE BROTHERTOWNS' BAPTIST WORK IN WISCONSIN BEGAN

In 1743 there came to the doorstep of Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregational pastor at Lebanon, Conn., a Mohegan Indian youth, named Samson Occum, who desired to remain with the minister a few weeks in order to obtain enough knowledge to read the Bible and explain some of its passages to his people. The Mohegan was a recent convert in the Great Awakening under George Whitefield, the famous evangelist from England.

Samson Occum proved to be so apt a pupil that his sojourn with the far-seeing rural pastor was extended to four years. He was prepared to enter Yale College, but his eyes failed him. At his request he was sent as a missionary to the Montauk Indians on Long Island, among whom he had already formed acquaintanceships during fishing trips in the Sound off Montauk Point. He established a school for the Montauk Indians, making his home with an Indian who had acquired in some way the English name James Fowler.

In the Fowler home was the daughter, Mary, with whom Samson promptly fell in love and shortly thereafter married. In that home also was David Fowler who became a devoted pupil of Samson, his brother-in-law. In time David likewise entered Wheelock's Charity School at Lebanon, Conn. In 1759, Samson Occum was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry.

In May, 1763, Samson Occum and David Fowler traveled on horseback from Connecticut by way of New York to the country of the Mohawk and Oneida Indians. They went out as missionaries under Congregational and Presbyterian auspices with Eleazar Wheelock as one of the guiding spirits. Following this first mission to the New York Indians, David Fowler returned to the Oneidas year after year to teach school. Wheelock called him the Mercury of the Indian Charity School. In July, 1766, David married Hannah Garret of the Narragansett of Rhode Island. She was of distinguished lineage, being the direct descendant of the famous sachem of the Niantics, Hermon Garret (Wequashcut). As the Niantics had taken no part against the whites in King Phillips' War they had not been disturbed in their tribal life. But when the Narragansett refugees, as they surrendered, settled among them, "the whole body took the name of Narragansett." (*Handbook of American Indians.*)

The Church of the Narragansett in the town of Charlestown, R. I., was a Free Baptist Church, born of the New Light Movement following the Great Awakening. Samuel Niles was one of its early pastors. Hannah Garret Fowler, doubtless a member of the Narragansett Church, may have induced David, her Montauk husband to join it. That he became a Baptist is a matter of history.

At this juncture note should be made of the events that led up to two migrations of the Brothertown Indians, first from New England to New York (1773-1795) and then from New York to Wisconsin (1817-1850).

In 1766, Occum, at the suggestion of George Whitefield, was sent to England as "a living sample of well directed endeavors to Christianize the Indians." His public appearances created intense interest wherever he went. As a public speaker he won the respect of all classes. The leading pulpits of the different denominations in England, Scotland, and Wales were open to him. Lord Dartmouth became his patron and the president of the board of trustees of the funds contributed for Wheelock's Indian School. When the school was removed to Hanover, N. H., and there established as Dartmouth College under a charter granted by Governor Wentworth, it was given the name of its distinguished friend and patron. Samson Occum has been designated by historians as the most celebrated Indian convert of all time.

When Occum returned to New England he joined other Indian leaders, among whom were David and Jacob Fowler, Joseph Johnson and Elijah Wamby, in a movement that began in 1773 and culminated in 1795 and resulted in large migrations of destitute New England Indians from their little reservations in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Long Island to a tract in New York obtained from the Oneidas by treaty under the encouragement of Sir William Johnson, Indian agent in America under the British crown. The Stockbridge Indians of Massachusetts joined in the movement.

The new settlement in the Oneida country in New York, called Brothertown, was composed of the remnants of six New England tribes: the Narragansett (Charlestown Indians) of Rhode Island, the Stonington or Pequot of Groton, Conn., the Mohegan, Farmington and Niantic also of Connecticut, and the Montauk of Long Island. Under the leadership of intelligent Indian men, Brothertown formed laws to govern its inhabitants. Because the community was made up of refugees from several destitute New England reservations and because to these had been extended a welcome by the

Oneidas, the name unanimously chosen for the town was highly appropriate.

The Brothertown Indians did not long enjoy undisputed possession of the land allotted to them by the Oneidas. Through sharp practices white farmers acquired long-term leases and before 1810 were occupying half of the tract. The operation of Indian-made laws often conflicted with the laws of the state. The proximity of white settlements and the easy acquisition of alcoholic liquors had their deadly effects. As early as 1817 the Brothertowns were seeking a home elsewhere. Disappointed in an Indiana venture, they joined the Stockbridge Indians in the purchase of two million acres from the Winnebago and Menominee tribes of Wisconsin, but were prevented from taking possession of the tract. After a decade of uncertainties, the Brothertowns were given, with government sanction, a tract of land composed of one township (23,040 acres) on the east side of Winnebago Lake. To the Stockbridge was allotted an adjoining township. In 1839 the Brothertown Indians became citizens and attained title of their lands in fee simple. During the subsequent one hundred years they gradually disappeared as a people. Only a few remain. Indian graves mark their one-time abiding place. Their homesteads have passed into the hands of the whites.

In 1834 Elder Thomas Dick and Deborah, his wife, arrived at Brothertown, Wis., and about them centered the regular Baptist interest. Dick is said to have been eighty years old at the time (*Geneology*, W. De Loss Love). At his death the church of which he was pastor doubtless received its death-blow. Rev. Richard Griffin, who was the first missionary of The American Baptist Home Mission Society in Wisconsin, visited this church. (D. Spencer M. S., Library of the Wisconsin State Convention.) One item in the Minutes of the Central Baptist Association of 1841 is to the effect that the Baptists of Brothertown had sent a message to the Association.

Rev. T. S. Griffith, missionary of the Home Mission Society in Milwaukee as early as 1849, in a communication that is on file in the Library of Wisconsin State Convention, stated that "Mr. Dick was a most excellent man and preacher and a decided Calvinist. After his death, no attention being paid to this church, and no care exercised over it, it passed through a varied history. The covenant meetings were regularly maintained, however, till late in 1841."

The Free Baptist interest among the Brothertowns in Wisconsin (Elder Benjamin Garret Fowler was the migrating pastor of the flock), did not become extinct until near 1889 (*Free Baptist Encyclopedia*).

In 1840 a Methodist meeting-house was built at Brothertown and a remnant of an Indian church still worships in it, with an occasional preaching service. It is our hope that this little church—Thomas Commuck gave the land on which it stands—may live as a beacon to furnish evidence of that remarkable religious movement in New England before the Revolution out of which came Indian preachers and teachers of the sterling qualities that Samson Occum, David Fowler, Samuel Niles, Thomas Dick, and Benjamin Garret Fowler possessed.

Forty-four years ago, Thomas Commuck, a Brothertown Indian who was historian as well as pioneer said (Collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society):

Here we have taken our last stand in Calumet County trying to imitate our white brethren in all things except their vices. Here we have taken our last stand as it were, resolved to meet manfully that overwhelming tide of fate which seems destined in a few years to sweep the Red Man from the face of existence. The thought is a sad and gloomy one, but the fiat seems to have gone forth and we must submit.

Bibliography

"Samuel Occum," by W. DeLoss Love; Jones' Annals of Oneida County (New York); Collections of Wisconsin Historical Society; Dartmouth College Manuscripts; Record Book of the Brothertown Indians.

