

Methodists Have Been Worshipping Together Here Over 125 Years

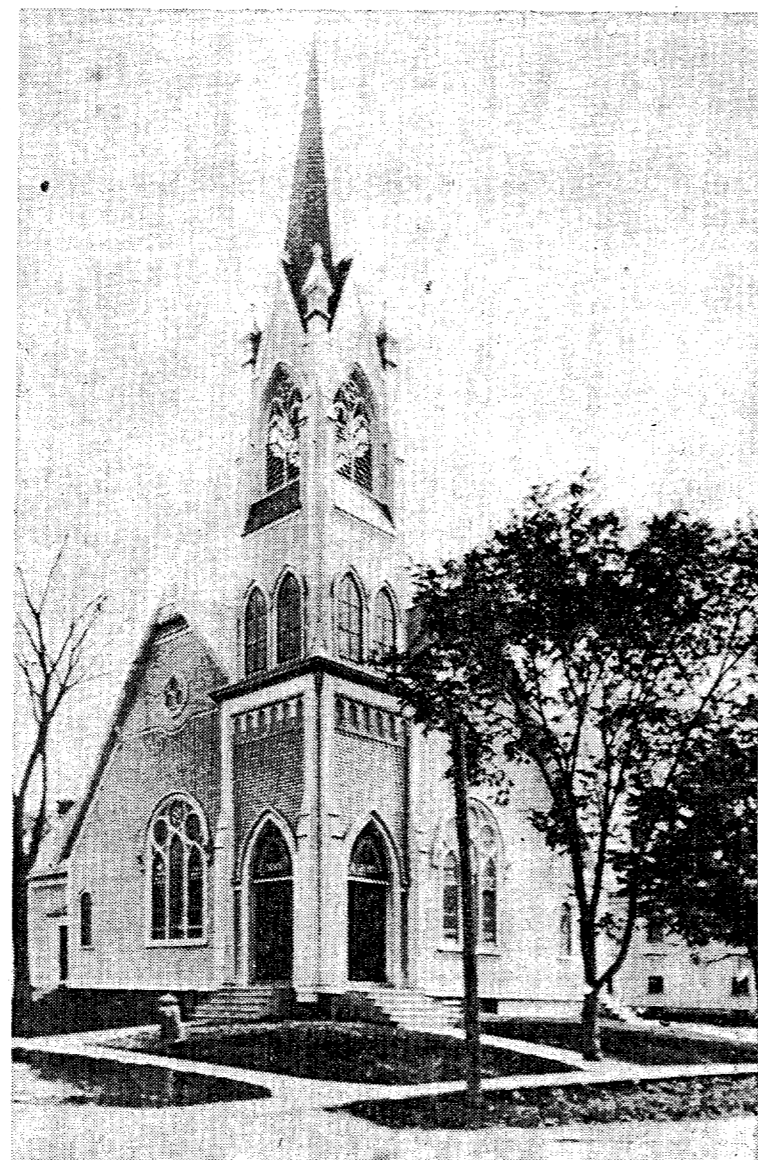
The beginning of the long and distinguished period of ministrations to its parish by the Methodist Church in Houlton is not a difficult date to remember if one is familiar with the history of the town. Houlton was organized as a plantation in 1826 and in 1831 was incorporated as a town.

The same year also marked the advent of Methodism into this then remote area with the arrival, from Massachusetts, of Rev. Joseph Lull, then newly appointed as a minister to this area at the age of 21.

Since the first settlers in this township had only been in residence here slightly more than a quarter of a century, it is not easy to conjecture the feelings of this courageous young minister, as he made the long and arduous journey to his new wilderness pastorate via boat from Boston to St. John, via barge up the broad river to Fredericton and thence overland to Woodstock and finally the

We are grateful for the records of the Methodist Church, so thoroughly prepared by Miss Elmeda Thompson, for much of the material by which it was possible to write such a complete story of the long history of this church. Additional material was derived from the columns of the Aroostook Pioneer and the Aroostook Times.—Ed.

last dozen miles through the woods to his new home.



This was the second church edifice to be occupied by the Methodist Church here. It was built in 1893 and was dedicated January 5, 1894. It had a seating capacity of 300 as compared to the accommodations for "200 sittings" in the small frame wooden building it supplanted. It served the church until it was destroyed by the fire of 1902.

RETURNS FOLLOWING YEAR

He was described as an upright and sincere man, a plain, faithful preacher, who was unusually successful in his labor. The historic record of the period reports that Rev. William Marsh followed Rev. Lull to Houlton the following year and it is thus assumed that the latter returned to Massachusetts. But it apparently was not from any lack of enthusiasm for the parish here because it is noted that he returned again to serve the church the following year.

Rev. William Marsh was described in the records as "a rare man in character, influence and ability". In that same year it was also noted that 1832 was made

ing participated in by Revs. Mark Trafton, E. Robinson, (presiding elder), J. H. Jenne and S. Pray. These "cross bearers" as they were called, traveled an aggregate of 554 miles in midwinter to help the lonely missionary in his outpost parish in Northern Maine.

The services were conducted in the local school house and a "wonderful revival" is reported to have taken place. Maj. E. Robinson made a special request that Rev. Mark Trafton be assigned to the fort here as there was no chaplain there at that time. However this request could not be granted.

75 MILE TERRITORY

Lull came back to Houlton in 1833. He was followed in 1834 and 1835 by Abel Alton. In 1836 came D. P. Thompson, in the following year, Richard H. Ford. In 1838, Rev. John G. Pingree became the circuit rider with a territory extending for 75 miles north and south of Houlton.

Of his home base Rev. Pingree is reported to have said, "I regard it as an important point and, as the Unitarians had no minister, they invited me to occupy their church."

In 1839 Charles Adams served the local church, to be followed in 1840, the year after the establishment of Aroostook County, by B. F. Sprague. Abijah Kendall was here in 1841, C. B. Dunn in 1842, E. H. Whitney in 1843, N. E. Rumery in 1844, E. F. Blake in 1845 and, in 1846, T. P. Tupper who was assisted by W. T. Jewell.

SERVICES EVERY SUNDAY

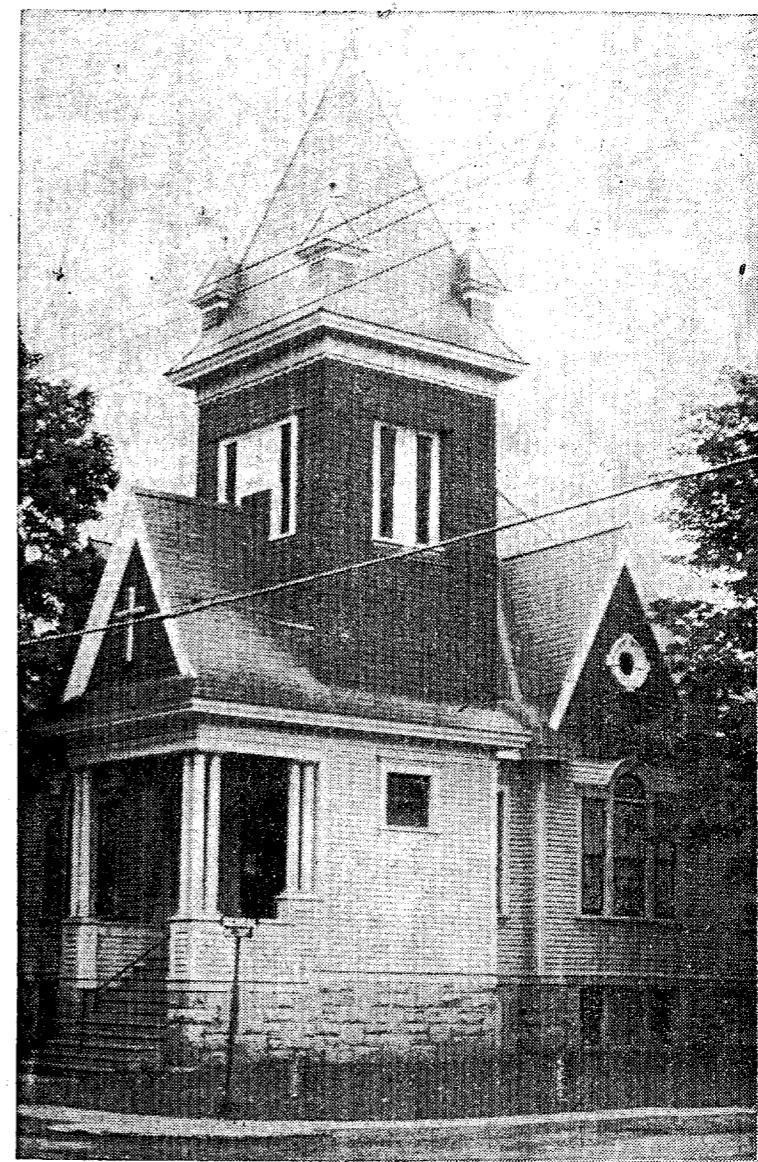
This was an eventful year in several ways. It turned out to be the first period when the Methodists of Houlton were able to have preaching on every Sunday in their town. There were eight or nine towns that made up the circuit, of which Houlton was the appointed meeting place. Hitherto, meetings had been held in school houses, the Unitarian Church, in the court room and now, again, in the Unitarian Church.

Rev. W. T. Jewel also had good cause to remember the year because during it he was wed to Miss B. V. Williams, about whom church historians said, "She changed only her name and not her nature in becoming a Jewell".

There was a succession of Methodist ministers here during the next decade. Rev. William J. Wilson was pastor in 1848 to be followed for the next two years by Kendrick N. Meservey. In 1851 Samuel S. Sargent, described as a local preacher, took over the pastorate and the following year there was another local pastor in the pulpit of the church in the person of Rev. J. H. Soule. Rev. Sargent returned to preside in 1853 but, according to the records of the church, he did not become active.

A MEMORABLE REVIVAL

In 1854 and 1855, the Methodists were holding their church meetings in what was known as Hussey's Hall and it was during the pastorate of Nelson Whitney, who was here for that period, that



This Methodist Church being used for worship today was the edifice that arose from the ashes of the second one after fire had destroyed it. Two years after the flames had cooled, this building had replaced it on the same site. This structure was considerably enlarged by an addition in 1950.

ed the church between the years of 1878 and 1880. He lost his wife during his tenure here. A son of Rev. Hanscom was afterward to occupy the pulpit of the "Little Brown Church in the Dell." It was during the next three years that many probationers were added and the church edifice thoroughly renovated within, during the term of Rev. Albert L. Lewis.

PASTOR EULOGIZED

At the conclusion of the three year pastorate of Rev. A. A. Lewis in 1884 and following the preaching of his farewell sermon on April 6, the Aroostook Times had this to say about the event and also the three preceding years: "The church was crowded and many could not even obtain

the Heywood lot, having situated on it a large two-story house "sacred to memory as the home of the Heywood sisters."

Class meetings had been held in this house for years and it was generally expected that the sisters intended to bequeath their home to become the property of the church. For some reason they failed to make the required legal arrangements. Accordingly the church itself had to act in its own behalf and, in 1891, this property was purchased as the first step toward the erection of a new Methodist Church.

Plans for the structure were given to John L. Chadwick, local architect and contractor, and it was also planned to make use of the old church for vestry activi-

The corner stone was laid in the new church in June, 1891.

PARISH IS DIVIDED

The last quarterly conference during that same year was one long to be remembered by those who took part in it. There were 45 members present, almost the entire official boards from the three towns of Houlton, Hodgdon and Linneus. The big question before the session was whether or not the circuit would be divided into two charges with Houlton standing alone.

After much discussion, the nature of which we are not at this late date able to comment on, it was decided that Houlton should stand alone and should pay \$300 each to Hodgdon and to Linneus for their part in the parsonage.

While the new church edifice was moving to completion the congregation found refuge for its services in the Opera House on Court street and then in the vestry of the Unitarian Church.

NEW CHURCH DEDICATED

The Sunday before Christmas they held services in the unfinished auditorium of the church. The big day finally came on January 5, 1894 when the new edifice was dedicated. It was a great occasion with the services being conducted by Rev. J. W. Hamilton, D. D. in connection with the Freedmen's Aid anniversary, assisted by presiding Elder B. C. Wentworth, who saw his dreams of previous years finally realized. A feature of the services was the presence of the East Maine Conference quartet.

The entire cost of the new church, including the expense of clearing the corner lot, was \$8,008.88. The building had a seating capacity of 300.

The trustees who served during the building were Andrew J. Porter, and his sons, David, Hardin and Ira J., James Hagan and his son, James A., Charles D. Merritt Delancey McIlroy, George H. Wiggin, Ira G. Hersey, William McIlroy and the faithful treasurer of the church, O. B. Hathaway.

CONFERENCE ENTERTAINED

One of the high points of this history of the church before the turn of the century came in the year 1894 when the Methodist Church of Houlton entertained for the first time the East Maine conference, an event that was looked forward to with keen anti-

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to the

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MILLINERY and ACCESSORIES
OF ALL TYPES



memorable by a four days meet- As has already been said, Rev.

a memorable revival with lasting results took place.

The next half dozen years were unsettled ones for the local colony of Methodists. They were served by several different pastors during that era with indifferent results but the perseverance of their determined leaders finally achieved success and, in 1862 they were finally able to purchase a lot on Military street and erect a plain church measuring 30 by 42 feet in size and containing "about 200 sittings", the record states.

This was indeed a glorious day for the small church when its members were able at last to worship under their own roof. A great debt was owed to Eleazer Hutchinson who came to the parish in 1861 and who must have had much to do with translating this dream of years into fact.

THE CIVIL WAR ERA

In 1863 the pastorate passed into the hands of J. D. Day and it is reported that this concurrence with the Civil War brought dark hours to the tiny church, patronized now mostly by women whose menfolk were away to war. Mary Frisbie as reported as the mother of the church who showed great strength during this trying period.

Additional misfortune befell the parish when sickness came to their minister, prostrating him for weeks at a time.

In 1866 and 1867 the pastor was Harrison B. Wardwell and he was followed during the years up to 1870, by Rev. H. W. Bolton whose pastorate was marked by a revival and the erection of a parsonage on a lot presented to the church by Prof. C. H. Fernald.

Rev. Bolton must have been an unusually large man because the historian of the church notes that, "The room used for his study was six feet, six inches by eight feet six inches in size, hip-roofed and containing but one window. How so big a man could work or grow in so small a room was a mystery. He did both, however."

SORROW IN THE PARISH

In 1871 there came E. R. Thorndike, later to be presiding elder of the Springfield, (Mags.) District, New England Conference, to fill the pulpit and, after him, Moses D. Mathews for the two years 1872 and 1873. In 1874 it was David Sherman and, from 1875 to 1877 John Morse.

There was much sorrow in the church during the pastorate of Rev. Loren L. Hanscom who serv-

standing room. Rev. Mr. Lewis is a sincere and active worker in his denomination. During his pastorate here, he has preached 300 sermons, attended 450 social meetings, officiated at 50 funerals and 51 marriages and made 1000 pastoral visits. At his first social meeting there were nine members present; at the last one, 150.

"The Official Board unanimously agree that the three years, under Mr. Lewis' charge have been the most prosperous the church has ever seen. The congregation and Sabbath school have thrived—90 persons were received to church membership. The society will probably enlarge the church edifice the coming year, or build a new one. Mr. Lewis has already received invitations to several charges, also has been invited to return to Houlton as soon as the rules will allow. Mr. Lewis' departure will not only be regretted by the church but by the entire community as well.

NEW CHURCH DISCUSSED

Many new members were also added to the rolls in the next two years by Rev. B. C. Wentworth who "wrought faithfully and successfully". At this time the need began to be felt for a new church and plans began to be discussed to bring the erection of a new edifice to reality. Rev. Wentworth had an important hand in this planning just at the time he was removed. But inasmuch as he then went to become presiding elder over the Bangor District, East Maine Conference, he did not lose his interest in the Houlton church and its needs.

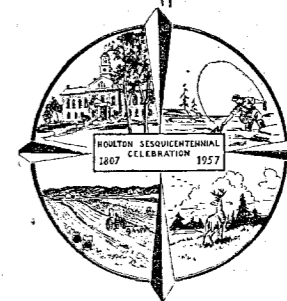
In 1886 and 1887 the pastor was Rev. Henry W. Williams. He was followed by Rev. Comfort L. Haskell, both of whom endeared themselves to their parishioners.

This era was the eve of important developments in the history of this church. In 1890 Rev. Herbert E. Frohock came to be pastor here. During his tenure in the parish an Epworth League was formed in the church with 18 members, a new organ was purchased and, during the winter of 1891 a revival was held which doubled the membership.

NEW CHURCH HAD TO COME

The die was then cast. A new church had to be built to accommodate a growing parish.

The church lot on Military street then measured five rods by ten rods in size. Between it and School street was another lot of about the same size, known as the



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WELL... AND
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