

Everybody Turned Out for a Celebration in the Olden Days — Either to March or Watch



Call them what you will, the "horse and buggy days, the "good old days", the "gay nineties", a time of celebration before the turn of the century was the signal for the outpouring of the populace to witness the doings of the day. Without the diversions of the movies, TV, golf or the automobile, holidays then had no competition. This is a typical turn-out of Houlton people 60 to 75 years ago, to watch the proceedings in Market Square.



This is a real old picture dating back to Civil War days. It is not especially clear but it is of the old Cornet Band that was organized in the early sixties and went away to follow the boys in the war between the states. This scene was supposed to have been taken as the musicians were being bid farewell by their fellow townsmen.



A parade through Market Square in 1892 was entirely motorless. Capt. Black Hawk Putnam, center, on white horse, was the inevitable marshal of the procession, led by the Houlton Band. This picture was taken before the Mansur Block was built, the willow trees in the left rear then occupying the site, and when the Rice Block, right rear, was only partially completed. Other units may be seen in the background, proceeding down Main street.

Court Street, just opposite the Court House and next door to the Aroostook Times building, plus, it is to be assumed, the moving and restoration of the church itself, amounted to \$4,500 divided \$800 for land and \$3,700 for the building.

Of this amount, \$2,850 was the amount raised in Houlton, and \$1,650 from other churches in the American Congregational Union. On the Sunday of its re-dedication, March 21, 1879, the church stood free from debt, the Ladies Society having assumed the obligation for the \$225 that had to be spent for furnishings.

HISTORIC MILESTONE

The year 1879 was, then, a milestone in the history of the First Congregational Church of Houlton. It was on March 20th of that year that a new church edifice, the second that the congregation was to occupy since its founding here almost 70 years before, was dedicat-

ed and the church launched on a firm course.

The news report of the events of that memorable evening, as they appeared in the Aroostook Times of March 27, 1879, said that "the house was filled to repletion", for the occasion.

The decorations within were described as "very handsome, presenting a picture of great beauty." Conspicuous in front of the pulpit was a large floral cross, a special decorative effect for the occasion, and, beside the sacred desk, were piled bouquets of flowers. The singers' stand was also bedecked with flowers and evergreens.

It probably could be said without fear of contradiction that, to the officiating pastor at the exercises of re-dedication, the Rev. Zenas Crowell, should go most of the credit for the rejuvenation of the Congregational Church of Houlton and for the actual construction of the new edifice.

A GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENT

He had been sent to Houlton only three years before by the Maine Missionary Society to minister to this little church after it had been without an active pastor for six years. He had accomplished much in that brief time.

The dedication sermon was delivered by Rev. Dr. G. W. Field of Bangor. Other pastors present and taking part in the dedication services were Rev. J. E. Pond of Warren, Rev. C. N. Sinnett of Fort Fairfield, Rev. W. M. Merrill of Richmond, N. B., Rev. Isaiah Record and Rev. L. L. Hanscom, pastor of the Methodist Church, both of Houlton, in addition to the pastor, Rev. Crowell.

In referring to the sermon of dedication, the Aroostook Times observed that it was inspired by Luke VII, 18, "Take heed therefore how ye hear." From this text Dr. Field "preached a powerful sermon

on the relation of congregations to pastors. The points taken were discussed in a clear and comprehensive manner and many practical suggestions were made. It was a very able and elaborate discourse." All of the visiting clergymen had a part in the exercises.

MEMORABLE ACHIEVEMENT

It was only about a year before this date that the movement arose within the church to remove it to its new site. It had been a year of memorable achievement. The building that was dedicated was a vastly different one from the original. It had been thoroughly repaired and remodelled, a tall spire was erected, surmounted by an elegant weather vane, a chancel and

two convenient vestibules added, the latter making available more space for pews.

Beautiful stained glass windows replaced the old ones and other improvements were made including a change in the form and arrangement of the pews, replastering of the interior and repainting both inside and out, the installation of a new and modern pulpit and chairs to replace the old and the erection of a handsome chandelier to light up the interior at night.

BEAUTIFUL CARPET LAID

The floor was covered with a beautiful carpet and the description carried in the local press agreed that "The effect of the whole is very pleasing to the eye, and reflects great credit upon the

church was without a pastor but was served by different ministers.

NEARLY CENTURY OLD

Exactly at the turn of the century there came to the church as its minister, Rev. Daniel E. Putnam, a graduate of Dartmouth College and of the Bangor Theological Seminary. The life of the church was nearing the century mark of its history. It was moving into the 50 year period of its existence that was to see a far greater stability of its pastorates and a wider expansion of its service to its parishioners.

This was the start of an era of Congregational history when, for the most part, its ministers would remain for longer periods of time. It was the auspicious beginning that was to be climaxed by the greatest disaster in all the long and distinguished record that had been written of the First Congregational Church of Houlton.

Rev. Putnam remained in this pastorate for the next six years. On his resignation in April, 1906,

erty of the united church but the church edifice itself remained the property of the Presbyterian Church, the governing body of the church. It was later sold to the Christian Science Society and is still used by them.

Rev. Thompson's Houlton pastorate lasted from 1915, when he came to the Presbyterian Church, to June, 1923, when he accepted a call to Millinocket. He was succeeded by Rev. David Lewis Yale for five years, and by Rev. William G. Kirschbaum who was pastor here for ten years, from 1928 to 1938. For the next six years, until 1944, Rev. David Jones occupied the pulpit, resigning to transfer his ministry to the Church of England.

Rev. Gilbert H. Condit, who came to Houlton as a supervisor of a fund raising campaign for Ricker, remained to become pastor of this church, a position he filled until his death in Jan. 1950. For a few months of that year Rev. Royal Davis, then a student at Bangor Theological Seminary, served as

Following a period of substitute preachers, Rev. Davis responded to a call from the congregation and began his pastorate here in March, 1955.

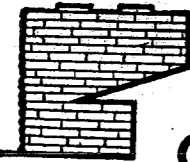
On New Years morning, 1956 the Congregational Church of Houlton suffered the most disastrous blow in all its 145 years' history as flames completely destroyed the meeting house that had been occupied since 1878. It was a crushing catastrophe but one from which they had the courage and the determination to recover. At that time of this seemingly ruinous misfortune, it so happened that the Unitarian Church had been without a pastor for a time. What more natural thing could happen than for the two churches to quickly discuss the proposition to reunite again to work and worship together?

Both bodies were agreeable and Rev. Royal Davis became the pastor of the united churches. After 121 years, the First Church of Houlton stood reunited.

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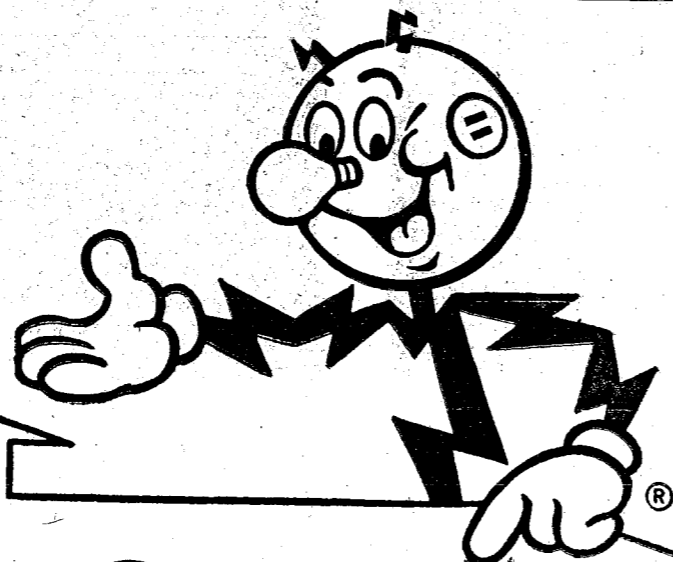


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was done. The reconstruction of this beautiful edifice is largely due to the untiring efforts of the pastor and the ladies of the Society."

Tablets containing the ten commandments and the Lord's Prayer hung on the wall on either side of the pulpit, the gift of Col. E. B. Babbitt, U.S.A., who moved from Houlton in 1840. They were made by an artist named W. McGregor, who was serving in the U. S. Army and who was stationed at that time at the Hancock Barracks here.

The pulpit was the gift of Mrs. A. J. Mallon and Mrs. C. B. Prescott, both of Boston, and the Bible and Hymn book were presented to the new church by Mrs. Rufus Mansur of Houlton.

Rev. Zenas Crowell was associated with the church for five years, comprising a memorable period in its history. He tendered his resignation as pastor, to take effect June 1, 1881. Three months later the parish issued a call to Rev. B. P. Snow of Alfred, who accepted and remained here for two years. He resigned to take charge of the schools in Biddeford.

SEVERAL MINISTERS HERE

In 1883 the Maine Missionary Society sent a Rev. Haynes to Houlton as a supply pastor. He remained until June of the following year when he was obliged to leave on account of ill health. He was followed by Rev. Charles H. Percival who served until April 19, 1888, and who was described by the historian of the era as "a man faithful, genial, liked by all the community. When he quit, his resignation was accepted with regret."

There was an interim period of five months when the pulpit was filled by a Rev. Harp who was on his way to Harvard to take a special course. He was followed by Rev. William I. Cole who came to Houlton from Andover, Mass. and who was ordained and entered upon his pastorate here Sept. 19, 1889.

Rev. Cole's work in the local parish covered a period of nearly five years. His resignation took effect May 1, 1894 and he was followed within a few weeks by Rev. H. L. McCann, a graduate of the Bangor Theological Seminary. He was ordained and installed as a pastor on Dec. 6th of that year, the ordination sermon being preached by Rev. H. L. Griffin of Bangor.

Rev. McCann remained here for five years, resigning Feb. 2, 1899, effective the first Sabbath Day in March. For the next year the

empty. In May of that year the congregation issued a call to Rev. T. P. Williams, then holding a Congregational pastorate in Searsport. They offered a salary of \$1000, which Rev. Williams saw fit to decline. The following February 2, 1902, a second call was extended with a \$300 higher salary than had been proffered before. This offer was accepted and Rev. Williams took over here not long after that.

A LONG PASTORATE

His was a long and distinguished record of conducting the affairs of this church and saw many changes and improvements. Rev. Williams was beloved by his congregation and by the community and his passing in 1919 was a sad event that was universally mourned.

The very next year after Rev. Williams' arrival here, the church was remodeled at a cost of about \$8000 and was rededicated.

The building was raised to a concrete foundation, a vestry was built underneath in the basement, an extension was added on the rear which made possible the installation of a kitchen, a primary Sunday School room, a parlor and choir loft. The walls and ceiling were redone, a modern lighting system installed and new oak pews added.

The sermon of re-dedication was delivered by Rev. David Nelson Beach, President of Bangor Theological Seminary.

Prior to his death in 1908, Almon H. Fogg had presented the church with a pipe organ in memory of his wife, who had pre-deceased him in that same year. The new organ was dedicated on Feb. 7, 1909.

Following the death of Rev. Williams, January 23, 1919, whose funeral sermon was preached by Rev. David Nelson Beach, the church remained pastorless while the congregations of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches both considered the idea of uniting. Both decided in the affirmative and the date of March 16, 1919 was set for the event to be held.

TWO CHURCHES UNITED

On that Sunday Rev. Beach was again on hand to officiate for the Congregationalists in a memorable service in the history of this church. The Presbyterians met at their church and, led by their minister, Rev. A. M. Thompson and Mrs. Thompson, marched down Military street to their new church home.

The terms of the merger left the manse on High street as the prop-

was here between Sept. 1950 and Nov. 1954.

Houlton is to have the electric light. — Aroostook Times, Nov 1885.



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