

Milford Times, Jan. 18, 1896

Something About Early Preachers in Milford

The writer believes that the first resident pastor of a church in the village of Milford was the Rev. Albert Worthington, a Congregationalist who came from the city of New York in 1841 or '42. In the history of Livingston county it is stated that "the first Congregational church of Hartland Centre was organized in April 1844, and the Rev. Albert Worthington of Milford, Oakland county, was officiating minister, and continued to be their pastor for two years, coming once in four weeks to preach to them."

Mr. Worthington moved into an incomplete dwelling, situated on the hill in the northwest part of north Milford [near where Hector & Jimmie's Bar & Grill is in 2002], west of Pettibone Creek and Calvin Eaton's cabinet shop. The dominie soon arranged to have the necessary plastering done and when he found that hair for the mortar could not be easily or quickly obtained, he cut the hair from the head of his wife and sheared his pony. That at least was the story; and it is certain that the nag was shorn of its luxuriant mane and tail at that time.

To eke out their small salary Mrs. Worthington kept a select boarding school for young ladies, consisting of three nice girls, one of whom, a Miss Platt, afterwards became the wife of Dr. TenEyck, and settled in the village of Brighton. Mrs. W. kept faithful watch over her pupils, and it was considered a great feat for a young man to get consent of both teacher and pupil to take the girl out for an evening. It was done once however, but all three of the young ladies had to go to the sleighride, or none.

At the time written of, flour seldom was bought by either residents of town or country. It was not kept on sale except at mills, and with very few exceptions everybody went to mill with a grist, of which the miller took a tenth part to pay him for cleaning, grinding and bolting; the customer getting the proceeds of nine-tenths. Pastor Worthington was very unsophisticated and entirely ignorant of customs outside of a large city. Money was scarce and wheat abundant, and on visiting the farmer people of his parish it frequently happened that a bag of wheat was placed in his buggy, which he took to W.J. Wells' mill to be ground, the flour and bran of which he took home to nourish his family and pony. After a year or more he came to the mill, stating to the miller, Harry Andrews, that he was ashamed that he should have left his account for grinding remain unpaid for so long a time, that money with him was so very scarce that he was unable to pay before but was now ready to settle. The good man was astonished when "Harry" told him the facts in the case, and thankful that he owed naught to the miller.

The Rev. Worthington was succeeded by A. Smythe, D.D., who was thought by some to be a little eccentric, but a very worthy man and perhaps more of a preacher than his predecessor. One evening he came into church with a carefully prepared sermon, when, just as he reached the pulpit, the whale oil lamps expired and immediately he said, "Our lamps have gone out," proceeding at once from those words as a text to preach a good sermon. The genial Deacon Hubbell [Philip Schuyler Hubbell, wagonmaker] soon brought in candles so that the service was not all in the dark.

Again quoting from the records of the Hartland Centre Cong. Church as transcribed for the before cited history: "On the 21st day of February, 1847, the Rev. A. Smythe of Milford, preached and administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper." One more quotation from the history of Livingston county: "The first clergyman who ministered to the early settlers (of Brighton township) was Elder Cosart, though Elders Bibbins, Fleming and Gillet also held services during the first settlement of the township. Father Padley also held very early services in the house of Hiram Scollard near Woodruff's mills."

A few days since the writer asked an old-time resident of Milford for Padley's given name and the reply was that he never heard any other than Father Padley. Whether Padley was or was not an ordained preacher cannot be stated, but the fact of his being a kind, genial man is not to be gainsaid, as is evidenced by the cognomen by which he was popularly known. During a protracted meeting held in the little chapel built by A.S. Arms [on Washington St., at the end of Dean St.], at an experience service conducted by Father Padley, a goodly number of young converts being present, he desired all speakers to use but a little time so that all might have a chance. There was also at this meeting a good English brother,

something beyond middle age, who was feeling more than happy at the good results of the meetings and when started could find no place for his talk to stop. He got started but ere long Father Padley, well aware of the good brother's failing, interjected an emphatic, "Amen; be short, brother." The talk however flowed on, when again with increased emphasis Father Padley broke in with "Be short, brother; be short. Let the young converts speak." Still the flow of words was not stayed, when directly Father Padley advanced to the talking brother, placed his big hand on the brother's shoulder, saying in a tone of command, "Brother P____ts [Potts?], sit right down," –and he did.

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