

# Early Anglican Missionary Served West Prince Well

In this age of speed when one can cross the Atlantic by ocean liner in a week or by air in a matter of hours, it is difficult to realize that one hundred years ago passage from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Charlottetown might take three weeks and that the only way to travel by land from Charlottetown to Alberton was by a horse drawn vehicle.

Travelling thus, Rev. Robert Dyer, pioneer missionary of the Anglican Church, came to this province to establish the first parish west of St. Eleanors at what is now Alberton.

Robert Dyer was sent from England under the Colonial and Ecclesiastical Society in 1839 to teach school and serve as lay reader at Greenspond, Newfoundland. Later he was ordained. The work of the schoolmaster and clergyman at this mission extended all along the northeast coast of Newfoundland so that he travelled by small boat or walked through swampy marshes in summer and travelled by dog-sled or walked across ice that was often treacherous in winter.

**FOR A BRIDE**  
In 1845, Mr. Dyer sailed for England where he was married to Miss Elizabeth Bartlett and together they returned to Newfoundland where a royal welcome awaited them.

In addition to his work as teacher and rector, Mr. Dyer often helped the doctor at operations when chloroform was used. During times of epidemics—typhus, measles, smallpox and even cholera—which swept over the country at different times, he visited the sick and buried the dead, while at all times from over his district came calls to bury children, and men who had frozen to death or drowned. As many as one hundred and twenty-five young girls, and even married women came to be taught by Mrs. Dyer whom they all loved and esteemed.

Twenty years of devoted service in Newfoundland came to an end when Mr. and Mrs. Dyer and their four children set sail from St. John's on July 7, 1859, to take up work in the parish of Cascumpeque, now Alberton.

In his diary, which covers a period of forty-two years, Mr. Dyer writes of the voyage: "The wind kept ahead for several days, and everybody on board was sick and then we became becalmed in a very dense fog. Hoping that we might pass the night quietly, we lay ourselves down to rest, but it was not for long. "About half-past ten o'clock an alarm was given by the man at the helm, that some noise was heard in the distance. It came nearer and we found to our horror that a large steamer was coming down upon us. The darkness of the fog and night, the sounding of the horn, with the feeling that, for all we knew, we might in a few minutes all be drowned, were to us all a most anxious and agonizing prospect. I can compare the noise to nothing else than a drove of mad bulls bellowing out in their fury to destroy us in the dark.

"It was quite calm. We could not by any possible means get out of their way. The only means we could and did use was to keep up our lights and sound the coach. These means, by God's interposition and blessing, no doubt saved us. When coming up nearer they shouted, 'Port your helm' at the same time giving their own a starboard turn, and so escaped us. A glow of mingled feelings pervaded all of us when we found ourselves delivered from the jaws of death. Thanks be to God who gave us the victory."

By July 11 they had reached Burin and on the 17th arrived at Sydney Mines. On the 23rd, they were at the Gut of Canso and on the 27th they reached Charlottetown shortly before midnight.

**AT ST. PAUL'S**  
Mr. Dyer writes that he had the pleasure of preaching at St. Paul's which had been established a number of years earlier.

He soon went to his mission, leaving Mrs. Dyer and the children with Mrs. Palmer, wife of the Chief Justice. He stopped at Crapaud and in his diary records that this ride from Charlottetown to Crapaud was the longest by land he had taken for fifteen years. In Newfoundland he always travelled distances by water. Mr. Pointher, another of the Society's missionaries, was in charge at Crapaud.

Mr. Dyer travelled in Mr. Pointher's chaise to St. Eleanors and was welcomed there by Rev. Dr. Read who later drove him to

Cascumpeque, a distance of forty-eight miles. Mr. Dyer describes it as a "tedious journey through many miles of forest under a burning sun." They stayed their first night at Mr. Hockin's at Kildare Bridge.

**TO CASCUMPEQUE**  
Soon Mr. Dyer returned to Charlottetown for this family. A steamer conveyed them to Summerside where they found two wagons and horses waiting to take them to Cascumpeque. "I drove one of the wagons in which Mrs. Dyer and my little daughter rode, and Mr. William Buckerfield drove the other. About five miles before we reached home we had to cross a wide ferry in

a scow. This affair seemed rather formidable as well as dangerous, that is, to see two carriages and two horses riding over in a low open boat. However, we got over without any accident and arrived home about eleven o'clock."

Their first trip to Kildare Capes was by water, eight miles, and writes Mr. Dyer, "It was so shallow Mr. Woodman had to carry us all ashore on his back." His service here was the first for many years.

The only part of the mission at which there was even the beginning of a church was Kildare Capes, where the framework was up. The land on which it was situated had been given by the Misses Travers who were loyal supporters of the church. The first organ was given by one of these sisters. She died very suddenly and it was played for the first time at her funeral. Charles Travers, a nephew, married Mr. Dyer's daughter.

**COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
Near Tignish was a church built by Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians. Mr. Dyer had the pleasure of opening the new church. In this little church Bishop Binney had his first confirmation. There were forty-four candidates. One of the candidates confirmed on that day, was able, more than sixty years later, at the age of ninety-one, to recall much of the Bishop's sermon on that occasion.

In 1866 Bishop Binney consecrated the church at Kildare and three years later the one at Alberton.

Under the date May 8, 1875, Mr. Dyer writes, "A passenger train

came into Alberton for the first time this evening." Later he says "Went to Yowla in the railway cars about one o'clock; arrived at ten in the evening. I like the cars. It is all so comfortable. We seem to be more and more civilized."

Being in very poor health, Mr. Dyer took his first trip away from the shores of P.E.I. in company with his daughter Bella. They stopped at Pettitcodiac and Sussex before going on to St. John to visit his old friend, Mr. Pointher.

Throughout the years of his ministry in Alberton parish, Mr. Dyer was constant visitor among his people, travelling on foot, on snowshoes, by boat, by wagon, by sleigh and on horseback, sometimes as much as thirty miles a trip. He found this mode of travel most fatiguing. He held prayer meetings and Sunday Schools in houses, schools, halls, wherever there was opportunity to present the Gospel message. In February, 1887, Mr. Dyer

was laid to rest in the churchyard near his home in Alberton. Mrs. Dyer lived some eight years longer. A gentleman, speaking of her, once said, "We looked up to her as we would to Queen Victoria, she was so noble and good."

Mr. and Mrs. Dyer were loved and respected by people of every denomination who recognized them as true followers of the Master of Life, whom they considered it a privilege and opportunity to serve by serving their fellowmen regardless of class or creed.

Condensed from extracts from Mr. Dyer's diary compiled by Mrs. W.T. Hallam and published in the "Canadian Churchman" some years ago.

**QUEEN'S PRIZE**  
Queen Elizabeth I offered a prize of £10,000, a fortune in the 16th century, for an apparatus to take salt out of sea water cheaply.

# No Parade On Labor Day Is Scheduled

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CP)—This port city won't celebrate Labor Day this year with a traditional parade.

"We don't see anything to celebrate," explained a St. John's and District Labor Council spokesman. "Labor is nothing in Newfoundland, nothing to the premier anyway."

He said labor would remember 1959 as the year the legislature unanimously approved a bill decertifying two localizing International Woodworkers of America (IWA).

One of the locals was on strike against the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company in Grand

Falls at the time. The locals were replaced by the Newfoundland Brotherhood of Woodworkers, an independent loggers union sparked by Premier Smallwood.

Stirling Thomas, an executive member of the NBWW is completing plans in Grand Falls for a parade.

Eleven unions were scheduled to take part.

Corner Brook labor leaders were expected to make plans at a meeting Wednesday night.

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**NOTICE TO FARMERS**

As one of the largest feed manufacturers in this Province and also one who has been assisting farmers with credit for the promotion and finishing their livestock we are now advised by our bankers that regulations from Ottawa do not permit them to grant any more credit to farmers and also that no new loans be made. All loans outstanding to be paid in full at maturity

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