

JOHN L. DYER: PIONEER COLORADO PREACHER AND SKIER

MARTIN RIST

The outside of the dome of the Colorado State Capitol in Denver is gilded with gold foil which gleams magnificantly in the bright Colorado sunshine. The interior is embellished with individual stained glass portraits of sixteen Colorado pioneers. One of these notables was a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Rev. John Lewis Dyer, affectionately known as "Father" Dyer. He is also remembered as "The Snow-Shoe Itinerant," the title of his celebrated autobiography published in 1890 and in 1891.

The term "snow-shoe" is somewhat misleading, for we usually consider a snow-shoe as being composed of a webbing or network of sinews or thongs stretched on a fairly long and wide somewhat oval wooden frame (on the order of a tennis racquet) used for walking over deep snow. However, Dyer used the term to designate a ski, one of a pair of long and narrow wooden slats slightly curved upward at the front end, and attached to the feet, and used for gliding over snow or ice.

The snow-shoe in one form or another originated among the North American Indians and Eskimos. The Scandinavians have used skis for thousands of years. One, 4,500 years old, was found in a peat bog in Hoting, Sweden. A carving of a ski on a rock at Roedoe, Tjoetta, Norway, is about 4,000 years old, according to Roland Palmedo ("Skiing," *Encyclopedia Britannica*).

The term "itinerant" also needs clarification. A salesman who travels a more or less fixed route may be an itinerant; so is a judge who makes the rounds of a circuit to hold court, hence he is a circuit judge. A clergyman (frequently a Methodist) who made the rounds of a number of preaching points is likewise an itinerant. He may have traveled on foot, he frequently rode a horse, and was a circuit rider. In rare instances he traveled over the snow on skis.

DYER'S LIFE PRIOR TO COMING TO COLORADO.

A number of persons have written about Dyer. For the most part they have relied almost solely upon his remarkable autobiography, which has been favorably compared with the *Autobiography* (1856) of Rev. Peter Cartwright (1785-1872), the famous Methodist circuit rider of Kentucky and later of Illinois, where he served about fifty years. Indeed, Dyer has been termed the Cartwright of Colorado.

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I, perforce, have also relied up *The Snow-Shoe Itinerant*, using it critically, and checking wherever possible with official church records. Moreover, I have used a variety of other sources (some unpublished), thereby adding to what Dyer writes about himself.

John Lewis Dyer was born in Ohio on March 16, 1812. His father, Samuel Dyer, was both a homesteader and a justice of the peace. John went to a three months' winter school where he learned spelling (spell downs were a common feature) the three R's and orthography. At the age of eighteen he studied for four months under the county surveyor, improving his knowledge of mathematics and securing "practice as well as theory in surveying." Despite his meager formal education, his book is well written. Possibly the editor, Rev. David H. Moore, at one time the Chancellor of the University of Denver, "improved" Dyer's English and spelling somewhat.

In September, 1830, Dyer went to a camp-meeting, an important factor of frontier religion, where he may have experienced a conversion. He became a probationer member of the local church, and he also attended class-meetings, a feature of Methodism. A "class" was small, with a dozen members more or less, presided over by a "class-leader," who, though usually a layman, was the spiritual and moral guide of its members. Since a preacher might visit a preaching point once in two weeks, classes were important institutions.

A year later, when he was tempted to go with other young people to an amusement resort, he had another experience: The Holy Spirit left him, his hair seemed to stand on end nearly pushing his hat off his head; darkness pervaded his mind. He repented, struggled back into the light, and gave up "worldly amusements" for all time. Moreover, he preached against them throughout his ministerial career.

During this same year (1831) the family moved to Illinois, settling in Fulton County, west of Peoria. Here he had another emotional religious experience, which he relates in detail, and despite his youth became a class leader. Before long he was licensed as an exhorter, his "first step towards preaching." Unfortunately, the license which was signed by Peter Cartwright has not been preserved.

On December 4, 1833, he married a Methodist neighbor, Harriet Foster. They had five children, three boys and two girls. In 1844 he took his family to Potosi in the southwest corner of Wisconsin, a lead mining region, and became engaged in prospecting, mining, and surveying. His beloved wife died on July 14, 1847, "in full assurance and hope." An infant daughter died soon afterwards. Left with four children to raise, he hastily married a woman who had survived her first husband and, unknown to Dyer, was still married to her second. Upon

discovering this Dyer obtained an annulment. This episode was a cloud upon his life for some time, delaying his becoming a preacher.

He had taken his "letter as an exhorter" signed by Cartwright with him, and became a class leader again. In 1850 (he mistakenly says 1849) a quarterly conference at Mineral Point licensed him as a local preacher, that is, as a layman who pursued his secular occupation but who might be assigned to a church or a circuit of churches.

This license as a local preacher is extant. It is on a plain piece of yellow paper, 8 by 4½ inches in size, and is signed by his ecclesiastical superior, his Presiding Elder. It states:

The bearer, John L. Dyer, is hereby licensed
to preach in the Methodist E(piscopal) Church.
Signed in behalf of the quarterly meeting
Conference of Mineral Point, held
August 10, 1850.

Elmer Yocum P(residing) E(lder)

Platteville Dist(rikt)
Wis(consin) Conf(erence).

He soon became a supply preacher, preaching every fourth Sunday in a stone church. Following still another religious experience, which occurred when he was in a mine pit, he decided to become a full time preacher. Accordingly, in 1851 at the rather late age of 39 he was admitted on trial in the Conference. This gave him a probationary status under guidance and instruction. The instruction was a course of studies, mostly theological in nature, under the tutelage of ordained ministers. In 1853 he was admitted to the Conference as a deacon; in 1855 he was ordained as an elder.

During the next few years he served very effectively on several circuits in Wisconsin and Minnesota. In 1860 he was appointed to the Mindora-Melrose Circuit in Wisconsin, which was within the bounds of the newly formed North-West Wisconsin Conference. An item in the history of Fillmore County, Minnesota, has the following candid appraisal:

Rev. John L. Dyer, rough, uncouth, eccentric, was one of the noblest soldiers of the cross who ever set foot in Fillmore County. He labored in the vicinity for six years. Undaunted by hardships, this valiant Christian, wearing a dilapidated plug hat, presenting with (his) gaunt, strong, rugged physique, a strange picture on his raw-bone horse, rode his circuits enduring untold hardships and deprivations, serving his people wherever he found them.

This evaluation is supported by Bennett and Lawson in their *History of Methodism in Wisconsin*:

John L. Dyer reached an enviable distinction, which was not won by discoveries in science, inventions in art, or brilliant pulpit orations, but by self-sacrificing toil.

After serving the new circuit for about four months he experienced eye trouble:

I was only on the work about four months, when I was taken with sore eyes, I still kept up with my work until April; not able to read — could hardly read my letters; stood in front of the light at night; had the lids of my eyes turned over and burnt with caustic, and concluded to rest a while.

In addition to the drastic caustic treatment he wet his eyes every morning to get them open, and applied Sloan's Instant Relief daily.

He began resting by leaving his work on the circuit, and "located," that is, he ceased to be a "traveling elder" making the rounds of his circuit, but with the option of resuming his ministerial duties as his physical situation might improve. He writes: "I took a note from my presiding elder (Rev. T. C. Golden) stating the cause of my leaving my work." Fortunately, this note is extant. It is written on white, ruled paper, about 5¼" by 7½" in size. It is undated. The ink has not faded very much; however, the paper is badly mutilated, as if it had been chewed by mice. Even so, the pertinent parts are preserved:

This may certify that the bearer
Rev. John L. Dyer, is a minister in
good & regular standing in the
North, West, Wisconsin Conference
of the M.E. Church, and Preacher
in Charge of Mindoro Circuit
in the above Conference. Bu(t)
eyes is in
(depa)rting from the
(w)ork for the present.
is every way work
(recom)mended
(to) the Christian love & confid(ence)
of the Church & the Ministry (*sic*)
T.C. Golden, P.E. LaCrosse District
Northwest Wisconsin Conference.

Enough of this historic "note" of recommendation is intact to al-

low a reconstruction of the main points: Rev. John L. Dyer is a minister in good and regular standing the Northwest Wisconsin Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, preacher in charge of the Mindora Circuit. Since he has experienced some difficulty with his eyes he is departing the work for the present. He is in every way worthy, and is recommended to the Christian love and confidence of the Church and Ministry.

Actually, he did not "rest" as he planned to do. Instead, he went to nearby Lenora, Minnesota, where his daughter lived, to look after some pressing business affairs. He had a close relationship with Lenora. In 1856 he had set aside forty acres of a quarter section which he owned as a townsite, with the proceeds of the sale of lots to go towards the building of a stone Methodist church. Due to the 1857 financial situation the church was not completed, but later a smaller stone church was erected within its incompleted walls. In time the church fell into disuse, and disrepair. However, it was rehabilitated in the 1920's. In 1862 a plaque in memory of Dyer was affixed to the church:

LENORA METHODIST CHURCH
OLDEST CHURCH IN FILLMORE COUNTY
Started in 1856 — Completed in 1865

In Memory of
Rev. John L. Dyer
First Pastor and other Pioneer
Church Members of Southern Minnesota.

Moreover, he planned to go to Denver to visit his son Elias, who was working for Sprague's store in "West Denver." He owed hundreds of dollars. The \$1,600.00 savings that he had six years earlier was gone. During the past six months he had received but \$50.00 in salary. He sold a house and lots, but the proceeds did not cover all of the debts. In fact, he still owed \$700.00. His visible assets by now were:

- - - a good horse, saddle, and bridle, a few little things in a carpet-sack — Bible, hymn-book, Discipline of our Church, and a copy of Lorain's Sea Sermons, with a change of linen, and fourteen dollars and seventy cents in silver and gold.

Almost blind, and all but poverty-stricken, this dauntless man, forty-nine years old, set on May 9, 1861, for Denver by way of Newton, Iowa, and Omaha. At Newton his horse foundered by eating too much of the corn that had been stored in his stall. He led her a few miles from Newton, and then traded the horse that was worth \$150.00 for a gun, an old watch and \$15.00.

At Omaha he joined a wagon train headed for Denver about 600 miles away. He paid one of the men \$15.00 to board him on the way, and to haul his carpet-sack and gun. But he had to walk the entire distance. They reached Denver on June 20, 1861. Weary, footsore, all but blind, and without funds, he took his meager belongings in the carpet-sack and with his gun on his shoulder went to Sprague's store to meet his son Elias.

UP IN THE MOUNTAINS

He visited briefly with his son. (On July 3, 1875, the son, by then a probate judge, was assassinated in the Lake County Court House by a gang of desperadoes). The newly arrived Methodist Episcopal preacher in Denver, Rev. Walter A. Kenny, invited him to preach on Sunday. He probably was duly impressed by Rev. T. C. Golden's note of recommendation. He preached on a favorite theme, repentance, involving full surrender to God. From this he drew the conclusion, conditioned by the Civil War, that only by unconditional surrender could the "rebels" (Confederates) be received back into favor, a patriotic statement that was well received by his hearers, who were Northerners.

He swapped his watch for about twenty dollars' worth of provisions; his son gave him a buffalo skin and a quilt for bedding. "Bent on a mountain trip," on July 3 he resumed his travels, on foot again, having joined a wagon train which hauled his "stuff." He ended up on July 9 at Buckskin Joe, about a hundred miles away. Quite unofficially (as was true of many preachers in Colorado) he began to preach in the mining camps of the region. He also worked "by day and contract," and did some prospecting, but without much success.

About the first of February, 1862, he returned to Denver, walking the entire distance of about 100 miles in two days and a half! During his first stay in the mountains he had traveled on foot about 500 miles, visiting numerous camps, and preaching about three times a week. He had received a total of about \$43.00 in collections. Moreover, his clothing, including his shoes, was about all worn out.

He arrived on a Saturday evening. He went to the Methodist place of worship the following day, expecting to hear Rev. John M. Chivington, the former Presiding Elder, but now a major (not a chaplain) of the First Regiment of the Colorado Infantry Volunteers preach. Chivington, wearing his army uniform, with belt, bowie knife, and revolver, prevailed upon Dyer, whom he had met at Buckskin Joe on July 18, 1861, to preach the sermon.

Rev. B. C. Dennis, the new Presiding Elder, sent a letter to Dyer

in the latter part of March appointing him as a supply preacher in the Blue River Mission in Summit County. He was, accordingly, re-admitted to the active ministry, and on July, 1963, became an original member of the newly organized Rocky Mountain Conference, soon to be termed the Colorado Conference.

He had, of course, been accustomed to severe snow storms in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. He quickly discovered that those in the mountains could be very much worse. For example, on January 7, 1862, he started out from California Gulch to Buckskin Joe, by way of Weston Pass. At timberline he encountered a very severe snow storm. He tried to light matches (possibly in order to start a fire), but they would not burn. The prospect was fearful. He prayed and dedicated himself to God, who, he thought, might pull him through. For five or six hours he waded through snow waist deep. Almost exhausted, he leaned against a tree to rest; he thought that his life had come to an end. However, he kept on moving. If he could go no further he planned to hang his carpet-sack up and write on a smooth pine tree his own epitaph: "Look for me in heaven." But through God's goodness he reached the toll gate an hour after dark, and a Swede who was there cared for him. This and similar experiences probably suggested to him that he probably should resort to the use of skis to traverse the snowy mountains.

THE SNOW-SHOE ITINERANT

It has been suggested that skiing was first introduced into North America by Leif Ericson around 1,000 A.D.; this is an undocumented surmise. More definitely, Scandinavian immigrants brought skis with them into Eastern Canada around the middle of the 18th Century. There is no written record of skis being used in the United States prior to 1840, when some Norwegian settlers brought them to upper New England. According to a book for juveniles, *Snowshoe Thompson*, published in 1957, John A. Thompson (his Norwegian name was Thorson) came to California to find gold. Instead, he began in 1856 to carry mail, by contract, on home made skis, over the snowy sierras from Placerville, California, to Carson Valley, Nevada, a round trip of about ninety miles. He continued to do so for twenty years or more. Fiester, in his book *Blasted Beloved Breckenridge* (1973), notes that in the January 13, 1936, issue of *Time*, cited by the Canon City Record of February 3, 1938, Rev. John L. Dyer, a Methodist preacher, had carried mail to his parishioners in the early 1850's, thus introducing skiing to this nation. As Fiester observes, Dyer was not even in this region in the 1850's. Interestingly enough, the *Time* reference to the Methodist preacher was in a sports column!

The memoirs of Daniel Ellis Connor were published in 1970 under the title: *A Confederate in the Colorado Gold Fields*. edited by Donald J. Berthrong and Odessa Davenport. He relates that his party arrived at Jefferson on April 27, 1862. He started on foot over the Snowy Range for Georgia Gulch, a distance of sixteen miles. The sun softened the crust of the snow enough to break through easily (making the going difficult). At the top he met a man from Georgia Gulch (about five miles from Breckenridge) who had been traveling most of the night carrying a hundred pound sack of flour. He apparently was on snowshoes (skis). He learned that miners during the latter part of the winter had carried their provisions in this manner, instead of using pack horses or mules. These "snowshoes" were made of slats of wood about four inches wide and eight feet long, with pieces of leather or old shoes affixed across the middle into which the skier inserted the tips of his feet. Obviously, Dyer was not the first skier of record in Colorado. The nameless miners preceded him, but he is the first one known to us by name.

He states that he reached Georgia Gulch on April 2, 1862 (twenty-five days prior to Conner and his party). He probably had seen Scandinavians ski over the deep snows of Wisconsin and Minnesota, and now he possibly saw some of the skiing miners of Georgia Gulch mentioned by Conner. But he himself apparently had not skied up to this time.

His appointments were Park City (Georgia Gulch), American Gulch, Galena Gulch, Delaware Flats, Gold Run, Lincoln City, Mayo Gulch, and Breckenridge. It took him two weeks to make the rounds of this circuit. He reports that without exception his audiences were characterized by "good behavior and good attention," and were generally liberal, usually putting a dollar apiece into the collection.

It was at this time that he made himself "a pair of snow-shoes." These were of the Norway style, nine to eleven feet long. He also made a staff or pole. This was used as an aid in balancing, propulsion, guiding and breaking. When the skis became packed with heavy snow, it was used to jar the sticking snow loose. He states that of course he was not expert, and at times would fall down.

"On one occasion," probably in April when, as Conner states, the snow was heavy, he relates, "as I was going down the mountain to Gold Run my shoes got crossed in front of me as I was going very fast. A little pine tree was in my course, and I could not turn, and dare not encounter the tree with shoes crossed; and so threw myself into the snow and went out of sight." He usually skied alone, as did the miner encountered by Conner, a hazardous procedure. He fails to

tell us how he extricated himself from the snow. This may be the earliest first-hand account of skiing in Colorado by a skier.

Not only was Breckenridge on Dyer's first circuit, but later on he was the pastor of the church there, even after his official retirement when he served it as a "supply." In 1880 he was responsible for building its very first church. He writes: "I nailed the first shingle, and did more work on it than any other man." He was 68 years old at the time. A recent pastor, Rev. Mark L. Fiester, becoming keenly aware of Dyer's close relationship to this church, had the building thoroughly renovated, making it "a living testimonial to the courage and spirit of Father Dyer."

Moreover, a memorial plaque was affixed to the building. There are two upright skis at the top of the plaque, crossed by a staff. The legend below this design reads in part:

SKI
and
STAFF
"FATHER DYER"
(Snow-Ski Preacher)
BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO
METHODIST CHURCH
1880
Known As Father Dyer's Church
The "Snow Shoe Itinerant"
Mark L. Fiester, Minister

In February of 1863 the man who had the contract to carry mail "from Buckskin Joe to Cache Creek by Oro (California Gulch) a distance of thirty-seven miles" on mule back said that he could do so no more, and offered Dyer eighteen dollars a week to carry it on snowshoes. Apparently the snow was too deep at times for the mule to travel. Dyer accepted the offer, saying: "I can preach about as often as I have been doing, and am not obliged to go on Sunday." Accordingly, he carried the mail, crossing Mosquito Pass (altitude 13,180 feet) every week, and preaching three times a week. In addition, he became an expressman for miners, taking their gold dust and exchanging it for money. This netted him three times as much as he received for carrying the mail (nearly \$60.00) and much more than the \$40.00 he received for preaching.

The mail sack weighed twenty-three to twenty-six pounds, and the express from five to seven pounds. In addition, at one time or another he was an agent for *The Rocky Mountain News* and the Amer-

ican Bible Society. He also did some prospecting. What a man! Snowshoe Thompson is apparently the first skier of record to carry the mail, and Dyer may well be the second.

He relates three "lonely trips" that he took on his skis, all of them hazardous, and one nearly fatal. One morning he left Mosquito at two in a snow storm, a good time to start because the snow would have a hard crust. As he plodded along near timberline he felt a sudden jar, and a noise like a "death knell." Fearing that a snow slide was imminent, he went up the mountain as fast as possible. There, about one hundred and fifty feet ahead, he found a crack in the snow about six inches wide. He felt better (who wouldn't?) when he got to the upper side of the break. Two weeks later a snow slide from that break filled the gorge below.

On another occasion he discovered that the snow would scarcely bear him up. When he went three steps, then he would sink up to his waist, and it would take him three more steps to get on top again. Very prudently he decided to stop around midnight. Accordingly, he set his mail on end in the snow, rolled and crawled until he reached some timber, made a fire out of a stump which he had turned over, and made a bed of pine boughs! He gave thanks to God, went to sleep, awoke at dawn, recovered the mail sack, and resumed the trip to Oro.

The third "lonely trip" was nearly fatal. He left California Gulch in mid-March of 1864. Snow and sunshine alternated; the snow on the ground was thawing, sticking to his "shoes," making the traveling very heavy. He observes: "None but those who have tried snow-shoes when the snow sticks to them can understand how soon it will tire a man down, knocking the snow off at every step." When he approached the pass at the head of Evans Gulch he saw a black cloud to the north, driven by the wind. Removing his snow-shoes, he stuck them upright deep in the snow so that when the terrific storm struck he was able to stand by bracing himself against them. The visibility was about ten feet. He started to ski again, but had to rest after going fifty feet, holding his hand over his mouth to keep the snow out so that he could breathe. Since the wind had blown the snow off the ground, he removed his skis and began to walk. After his third stop he rested against a granite rock, "poured out" his "soul to God for help," and renewed his trip.

As he was groping his way, he turned east instead of west, and slipped off a precipice. He threw himself back into some snow, removed his skis, holding one under each arm, with the "crooked" (curved) end in each hand, and used them as rudders in the storm. After commending himself to God, he extricated himself from the six

or eight feet of "new snow" which had covered him. His feet struck the "old snow" pitched at an angle of more than forty-five degrees. With his feet forward, his weight carried him down at railroad speed for about a half a mile, beyond the steepest part, where he was able to stop. He found himself on the Horse-shoe Flat between the range and the timber on Mosquito Creek, which he went down, with his shoes running "like skates," to his cabin.

He started a fire, and put his aching feet in cold water, but this did not help them. He ate some supper and got some sleep during the night. In the morning "Uncle Tommy Cummings" brought him a balsam sapling; they made a poultice for his feet from the bark. He sent to H. A. W. Tabor, a storekeeper, for a pound of corn, which cost sixteen cents. He then made some hominy, which he considered to be a great luxury. Confined to his cabin for two weeks, he kept busy by reading and doctoring his feet. Three weeks after his nearly tragic adventure he was carrying the mail again!

Dr. Lowell B. Swan, for many years the pastor of the Arvada Methodist Church and the Warren Methodist Church in Denver, and then the president of The Iliff School of Theology until his tragic death in a plane accident, wrote his doctoral dissertation dealing with Methodist beginnings in Colorado from 1863 to 1876 under my direction. Furthermore, he more than shared my enthusiasm for Dyer. Accordingly, in 1956 he obtained a suitable 300 pound granite monument inscribed as a memorial to Dyer:

1	J. L. "FATHER" DYER	1
8	METHODIST PREACHER	9
1	AUTHOR	0
2	SOUTH PARK MISSIONARY	1
	CARRIED MAIL AND GOLD	
	OVER THIS PASS - 1864	
	"THE SNOW-SHOE ITINERANT"	

He acquired a suitable site at the top of the 13,180 ft. pass from the United States Forest Service. Accompanied by his wife and two other ladies he drove a Jeep loaded with the monument, cement, and sand to the site, which was surrounded by a dense fog bank. They dug a suitable trench, made a cement base, and placed the monument upon it. When asked how he obtained water for the cement mixture he whimsically replied: "I wrung it out from the heavy fog bank." Just as he began to utter a dedicatory prayer the fog lifted, and the monument was bathed in the bright mountain sunshine. This is probably the highest memorial monument in Colorado, possibly in the nation.

In March, 1863, Dyer was appointed to South Park, with a two-weeks' circuit consisting of Montgomery, Buckskin Joe, Mosquito, and Fairplay. Buckskin Joe was named for a prospector who wore buckskin. Rich claims were opened at another site, which brought thousands to it. All of the claims were taken up; but many hopefully tarried, hence Tarryall. Some, however, struck pay dirt in the Platte, and called the site Fair Play, because they claimed to be more liberal (fairer) than other camps. At another site there was disagreement concerning a name. The secretary of the planning group left a blank in his book for the name. When he opened the book at the next meeting a squashed mosquito had filled the blank space.

On April 3 he left Lincoln City for Montgomery. He stopped at Mr. Silverthorn's in Breckenridge at two in the morning, with his carpet sack well-filled. The snow was five feet deep. He went up the Blue River and arrived at Montgomery at nine. The snow had drifted above the doors. He stayed there eight days, holding a service each evening and twice on Sunday. He probably stayed at a two story log hotel, forty by twenty-five feet in size, and he may have held meetings there at one time or another.

Dyer had been appointed as the Presiding Elder of the South Park District in 1864, and continued in this position until 1868. In 1867 he purchased the log hotel in Montgomery, which was nearly deserted, for \$100.00 and had it moved log by log twelve miles down the mountain to Fairplay, where he and the newly appointed pastor, Rev. W. F. Warren, rebuilt it to be used as a church and a parsonage. Dr. Swan learned that this building, which had been used as a private residence for a number of years, was to be destroyed. Under his leadership it was purchased by the Historical Society of the Colorado Conference, and moved intact to a site near the historical South Park Village, a veritable museum. The church was reroofed and in other ways rehabilitated, and was furnished with period pews, pulpit, and organ. I prepared a bronze plaque which has the following legend:

IN 1867 REV. JOHN L. DYER
FAMOUS SNOWSHOE ITINERANT
HAD THIS FORMER HOTEL MOVED
FROM MONTGOMERY. HE AND
REV. W. F. WARREN REASSEMBLED
IT LOG BY LOG CONVERTING IT
TO A METHODIST CHURCH

The church was rededicated August 14, 1960, both as a historical monument and as another memorial of Dyer.

THE END OF THE RUN

He continued to ski until late in life. Indeed, in 1880 when he was 68 years old with Breckenridge as his headquarters, he at times went on skis when preaching or prospecting. He states:

When the snow was deep, I went on snow-shoes, always feeling that a preacher had a right to earn his own living if he could not get it by preaching; but no right to leave his charge. I could preach three and four times, and work three or four days in the week. In fact, I sometimes earned more by moonshine labors (cf. our "moonlighting") than I could by preaching. In the summer of this year my wife (he had remarried) boarded some men, and helped in this way.

In this same year he retired from the active ministry. However, he continued preaching and doing other work. For a period of three years he supplied at Breckenridge, doing so until he was 76 years old. His wife died in 1888, shortly before his autobiography was published. Towards the end of his life he lived in Denver, in University Park, with a daughter and son-in-law. He became very infirm and nearly blind. He died June 17, 1901, at the age of 89. Thousands came to Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church where he lay in state to pay their sincere respects. He was buried at Castle Rock, where his father and his son Elias were interred. There were many eulogies. A notable one appeared in the *Denver Post* of May 26, 1901, less than a month before his death:

Neither brilliant nor cultured, not even eloquent, save for the eloquence which flows from sincerity and deep-seated conviction, uneducated according to the standards of theology, despite it all this humble, tireless, modest, and God-fearing man leaves behind him a memory as sweet as a mother's benediction, and an example which is a rebuke as well as an inspiration.

John M. Chivington, not a sentimentalist, paid the following tribute, which is cited in Beardsley's *Echoes from Peak and Plain*:

Mr. Dyer did not rest from his long journey (of life), nor to replete his depleted empty purse, nor to take his bearings that he might find out the way the popular breeze was blowing; but at once drew his gospel bow at a venture, and let the arrows fly thick and fast. He never so much as said "Sinners, if you do not want to get wounded, look a little out," but drew the sword of the Spirit, throwing the scabbard away; and it has been flashing in the sunlight of peak, valley, and plain ever since. As I write, I hear him shouting as he goes on his snowshoes, "See on the mountain top the standard of your God."

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