WORSHIP IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONTIER DAYS

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From the beginnings of the expansion of what is now the United States on west from the Atlantic to the Pacific religion in its varied forms followed the frontier. For the most part the frontier (the "front") was the growing edge of the earlier frontier immediately to the east; consequently normally it was not geographically and culturally separated from it. However, it is important to realize that the Rocky Mountain frontier was hundred of miles west of what was previously the most western frontier to the east. Those who came for gold and for other reasons "leap-frogged," for the most part, from the middle west, the east, and the southeast by way of the Kansas and Nebraska frontiers. (Mormon Utah was a special case, and the Pacific coast frontier was the product of even greater "leap-frogging" by land or sea). Because of this isolation the first Protestant Episcopal church in Colorado was called St. John's in the Wilderness (the name it still bears) because the nearest Episcopal church was some six hundred miles to the east in Topeka. Consequently, this detached mountainous frontier was considered by denominational leaders and headquarters as being missionary territory.

It was extremely difficult to establish religion in this region on a permanent basis. First of all, many people back east considered that no permanent settlements could be established in the Great American Desert and in the Rocky Mountains. When the gold was exhausted the mountain regions would be incapable of supporting settlement, according to a widely held belief. The miners and other newcomers (it is misleading to term most of them "settlers") were extremely mobile, not only moving frequently from camp to camp, but also back to the States or out further west to the Pacific coast. In one extreme instance a church was organized and a church building was erected in a mining camp. The preacher went to Denver to obtain window glass for the church; during his absence the camp was deserted and the window glass was not needed. In the decade of the sixties almost as many people left Colorado as arrived. However, with the coming of the railroads in the seventies its future as a place of permanent residence became assured, with statehood achieved in 1876.

The first church building in Denver was erected by the Southern Methodists in 1860. After the outbreak of the Civil War the Episco-

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palians acquired their attractive chapel. The Northern Methodists refurbished a carpenter shop along Cherry Creek in 1863, which was washed away by the flood of 1864. In 1865 they built the large Lawrence Street Church.

A number of preachers, both "lay" and fully ordained, were among the early arrivals. Sharing the prevailing "go-west" fever, the first ones came for a variety of reasons, "free-lancers," without any official authorization or support by their denominations. They were almost as mobile as the laymen were. Some conducted informal religious services when and where they could, and gained some support by "passing the hat." A few started non-denominational or union churches, which had short lives. Rev. Lewis Hamilton, who had come to Colorado for his health, organized a somewhat successful union church in Mountain (Central) City as early as July, 1958, but despite his ability it also had a short life. Fortunately, before long other preachers who were official representatives or missionaries of their denominations arrived, usually with some financial support which was meager at best. Some established churches that were more or less permanent, indeed a number are still in existence.

The obstacles that confronted these pioneer preachers were all but insurmountable. First of all, there was a marked indifference to formal religious organizations on the frontier. Coupled with this, there was an acute shortage of women. Adriance reported that "A white woman or a child was a curiosity. Men would leave their glasses and cards, and rush frantically to the door, exclaiming, 'A woman, a woman, a child, a child,' as either appeared coming into town." One mining camp provided an extreme, but not wholly unique, example, for it contained forty-five men and but one woman. Women, as is well known, are indispensable in the ongoing operation of a church, with its choir, Sunday School, and woman's organization. The lovely Sopris sisters, who sang in the choir of the Denver Presbyterian church were a great attraction, a fringe benefit indeed for the males who attended. Moreover, a certain proportion of the frontier women, dance hall girls and worse, were not church goers as a rule. When Rev. A.M. Hough of New York was assigned to Montana, friends of his wife urged her not to go with him, because there was not one respectable woman in this Territory of 18,000 people! She spiritedly replied that if this were so it was time that there was one there; accordingly she accompanied her husband to "benighted" Montana.

A severe handicap was the all but total lack of church buildings. Consequently, religious services were held in a variety of places: out-of-doors; in tents; in log cabin homes; in hotels; in saloons; in dance

halls; in gambling areas; even in bordellos. From Sunday to Sunday there frequently was uncertainty concerning the place and time for the next service, if, indeed, there were to be one. In time rude churches were built, and a few not so rude. Many times there were doubts whether a preacher would be present. As has been mentioned, the free-lance preachers were very mobile as a rule, going from camp to camp with no definite preaching assignments. Quite a number of the official preachers, and not only the Methodists and Baptists, were circuit riders with numerous preaching points on a given circuit which they might visit once in two, three, or four weeks. If a community had a Sunday School, this could meet without a preacher. A number of Methodist churches had "classes," small organized groups, which might meet during a preacher's absence under the direction of a class leader.

Another serious handicap was the lack of suitable facilities for music, either for congregational singing or for choirs. At first there were few hymnals. Frequently a preacher or a song leader who owned a hymnal would lead the singing, at times "lining out" a hymn, that is, singing a line at a time, with the worshipers repeating each line after him. Musical instruments, pianos or reed organs, were obviously very scarce at first. In the 1860's Rev. B. T. Vincent and his musical wife owned a melodeon, a small portable reed organ designed so that the air was sucked not blown across the reeds. Some years ago we were able to obtain it for the Rocky Mountain Methodist Historical Society from a Vincent descendant who was living in Erie, Pennsylvania. There were some capable musicians in addition to the Sopris sisters and Mrs. Vincent, including Rev. Jacob Adriance, Mrs. Oliver A. Willard, the Episcopal Bishop Daniel Tuttle and his wife, and others whose names are unknown to us.

Beginnings

It is relatively easy to reconstruct the worship services on the frontier of the liturgical churches, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Episcopal. The other denominations had no fixed rituals, and, of course, they had no mimeographed or printed weekly bulletins with orders of service that a historian might consult. Instead, our information must be gleaned from incidental references (with a few exceptions) provided by a variety of sources. Even so, it is possible to obtain a fairly good idea of worship services of one type or another as these were conducted in the Rocky Mountain frontier.

Apparently the first preacher to conduct a religious service in Denver was Rev. George W. Fisher, a Methodist local (lay) elder, carpenter, and wagon maker. He came with the General William

Larimer party on November 16, 1858. The General, who laid out and named Denver City, was a devout Presbyterian. He asked Fisher to lead a religious service on the Sunday after their arrival. The general's son has related that the meeting was held at one end of a double log cabin, owned by two gamblers while gambling was in progress at the other end of the cabin. Those present, in addition to the general and his son, were six or eight other men and the squaws of the two gamblers. A Mr. McClane from Omaha led the singing, and Mr. Fisher preached from a suitable text. The clinking of money that was heard was connected with the gambling; no money went into Fisher's hat because Larimer would not allow a collection to be taken during a church service. Fisher continued with preaching and working at his trades in Denver and in Central City.

It was customary to provide some remuneration for a preacher by taking a collection by passing a hat, frequently the preacher's. On one occasion a Jewish listener passed the hat for John L. Dyer, with good results. Dyer stated that he was always glad when his hat was returned to him, even if it came back empty. Larimer arranged for a preacher other than Fisher to preach in Denver. However, since he was not permitted by Larimer to "pass his hat" he soon quit, saying, "No pay, no preach."

An early miner, David Spain, heard a Rev. Mr. Porter, a Southern Methodist, preach in Central City. He wrote his wife that the preaching was held out in the open in a ravine near the Gregory diggings (where the first pay lode was discovered). He sat on a pine stump, surrounded by about 1,000 hardy, rough looking miners, and heard a "plain, old-fashioned Methodist sermon based on the Ten Commandments," which I observe was a very suitable theme for that time and place. He saw tears running down the cheeks of many a miner, and he, too, was deeply moved, and thought of his dear wife and children back home. He does not say so, but since there were a number of Welsh and Cornish hard rock miners in Central City at the time who became noted for their singing, there probably was some spirited hymn singing, along with prayers, in addition to the preaching.

Official Church Organizations

Around 1856 a Roman Catholic church organization, still in existence, was officially established at Conejos near the New Mexico border. Apart from this beginning, the first official denominational churches were organized by two missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Dr. William Goode, who previously had founded Methodism in Nebraska, and Rev. Jacob Adriance, a young Nebraska preacher

from New York, who had a good singing voice which he used to "sing up" an audience prior to a church service. Arriving in Denver on June 28, 1959, these two missionaries posted notices for preaching on July 3 in the unfinished Pollock Hotel. Goode stated that in posting notices he used to ride around to ranches, houses, booths, tents, wagons, liquor stands, and card tables inviting those whom he saw to attend a religious meeting. Preachers also placed notices in the pioneer newspapers. Goode adds that one of the most effective means of attracting attention of people was to "sing them up" before a service, because "there is power in song." They held two services, one at 11:00 A.M. and the other at 3:00 P.M., with Goode preaching in the morning and Adriance in the afternoon. The congregations, despite their advance work, were small. Moreover, they met but two Methodists in Denver on this their first visit.

Goode accepted the invitation of General Larimer, a friend of his, to participate in the Fourth of July celebration scheduled for the next day. He gave the opening prayer; some one read the Declaration of Independence; and an unnamed speaker (could he have been General Larimer?) gave a "chaste" oration. Intervals were enlivened with band music. The celebration concluded with a benediction. Goode noticed no drinking, no rowdiness. He mistakenly states that this was the first Fourth of July Celebration in Colorado. It may have been the first in Denver and Auraria, but the Long expedition held one many years earlier, in 1820, that was marked with an extra ration of liquor.

Goode and Adriance proceeded to Central City. The Southern Methodist preacher, the Rev. Mr. Porter, who was scheduled to preach on July 10, graciously invited Dr. Goode to take his place. In the morning Goode preached to a large crowd assembled on a dusty street. His topic, appropriate for this mining center, was "Treasure in Earthen Vessels." In the afternoon he and Adriance conducted an old fashioned Methodist "experience" meeting, on a mountain spur. "The vows of reconsecration, the weepings, the rejoicing, will not be forgotten in time," so Goode reported. Of the approximately one hundred Methodists in Central City at the time, about forty-five formed a church, called the Rocky Mountain Mission, the first official Protestant denominational church in Colorado which is now known as the St. James United Methodist Church. Its attractive native stone building is probably the oldest extant church structure in Colorado, for the older Roman Catholic adobe building at Conejos was destroyed by fire many years ago. On the following day Goode conducted a quarterly conference, a distinctive Methodist meeting, during which the Lord's Supper may possibly, but by no means certainly, have been celebrated.

The missionaries next moved on towards Golden. On July 17 they worshiped in a large cloth pavilion, called the "round tent," which was a leading gambling establishment. Unlike Fisher's experience in the gambling cabin in Denver, on this occasion gambling was suspended for one hour, with some of the congregation seated on whiskey kegs. Dr. Goode was listened to respectfully as he preached "home truths to them in all plainness and fidelity." He was able to effect a partial church organization, which was the ancestor of the present Golden church. The missionaries returned to Denver, where, on August 2 they organized the Auraria and Denver City Mission, which, after a number of name changes, is now known as Trinity United Methodist Church. Goode soon went back to his home in Iowa, leaving young Adriance in charge. Adriance founded the Boulder church before the end of the year. These four churches were the first official Protestant churches in Colorado; three of them are thriving to-day, but the one at Central City has a small membership.

Early Experiences of Rev. John L. Dyer

One of the best known and best loved pioneer preachers was Rev. John L. Dyer, affectionately called "Father" Dyer even though he was a Methodist. He was also known as the Snow-Shoe Itinerant, because he traversed the high mountains on home made skiis (called snowshoes) carrying both the mail and the gospel message. He was one of the first Colorado skiiers of record. He had been a Methodist preacher in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota (he had also done some lead mining) when at the age of forty-nine he decided to come to Colorado, partly to see a son in Denver. When he reached Omaha he had very little money, a bottle of Sloan's Instant Relief for his sore (probably infected) eyes, a Bible, a hymnal, a Methodist *Discipline*, and a copy of Lorain's *Sea Sermons*, which would not seem to be very appropriate for the mountain regions.

He attached himself to a Denver bound train of eighteen wagons. He paid $15.00 to cover the cost of his food en route and the transportation of his carpet bag and gun (which some one stole). Since he had no money for his fare, he walked the entire distance alongside the train to Denver, a distance of about 600 miles.

The wagon train stopped at a place about 75 miles from Julesburg, Colorado, on a Sunday. Arrangements were made for him to preach in a cedar log house. He had about forty "very attentive hearers," including one woman. Following the service he was told that he had disgraced himself, because he had preached in a house of ill fame. Instead of being ashamed, he scathingly denounced the men who had

patronized this bordello, which may have been operated by the one woman in his audience.

He arrived in Denver on June 20, 1861. Accepting the invitation of Rev. Walter A. Kenney, the Methodist Episcopal minister in Denver, he preached on the Sunday evening following his arrival. Fortunately, he has told us his theme. He exhorted about repentance, and the full and unconditional surrender of the sinner to God, so as be taken into his favor. Since the Civil War was underway, he illustrated his remarks by stating that the "rebels," as he termed them, could never be received back except on the basis of unconditional surrender. Several in the audience "rose to their feet in sympathy with his patriotic sentiment." He was somewhat daring, for there were quite a number of Southern sympathizers in Colorado.

He soon was assigned to the mountain area as an itinerant. He relates that he preached in a newly completed house near Gunnison on a similar theme, "repentance and conversion." The audience was attentive, save for the housewife, who said that she had to wash the dishes. He received about twenty dollars in gold dust in his hat. The amount was most welcome at this time.

He had a more dramatic meeting in a poorly chinked log school house. A severe blizzard of powdery snow cut the attendance to about twelve people. The floor was soon covered with about two inches of drifted snow, and the worshipers became snow clad. He planned to preach briefly, and then to dismiss them with a prayer. However, a young woman had a different idea, for she knelt on the snow covered floor and never stopped praying until the "blessing" came. Then she "shouted" all of the snow off of her clothes, whereupon the others sang, quite appropriately, "Jesus washes white as snow." Emotional experiences were by no means uncommon in the frontier meetings.

During one Christmas Dyer stayed at a hotel in Lincoln City, where he was given a free Christmas dinner. He refused to attend the dance that was to follow. Whereupon the "lady of the house" said to him: "This is an extra occasion, and it will do you no harm to dance with me; why can't you accept my offer?" Despite the meal that she had given him, he ungallantly replied: "You're a lady, but not quite handsome enough for me to dance with." Thereupon he retired to his room. Dancing and drinking continued throughout the night. In the morning the men forced him to go to Walker's saloon and ordered him to preach a temperance sermon. One of the group had been chosen to be their moderator, but Dyer states that they were too drunk to be moderated. Standing on a box he began by saying, "Gentlemen, first I will tell you what I think." When he told them that their families

would be ashamed of them, they stamped their feet and hollered: "That's so." He continued by saying that if they were not so drunk they would not be they. They cheered and yelled: "That's so." He added that if they were a little more drunk they would not be able to do what they were doing. There were more cheers followed by "That's so." Finally the moderator moved that "We vote that everything Mr. Dyer has said is true." The men, about forty in number, gave him a rousing vote of approval, and put about twenty dollars in his hat.

Rev. John M. Chivington

Initially the preachers in the Rocky Mountain frontier were on their own, with no immediate supervision from their ecclesiastical superiors, whether bishops, superintendents, or presiding elders. The very first ecclesiastical administrator to reside in Colorado was Rev. John M. Chivington who, on March 15, 1860, had been appointed by the Kansas-Nebraska Conference to be in charge of the Methodists, preachers and laymen, in Colorado as their presiding elder (now termed a district superintendent). A forceful, dynamic, and experienced preacher he soon made an impression not only upon the Methodists in Colorado but upon others as well. For example, he was the first Grant Master Mason in the Territory; he was also one of the founders of Colorado Seminary (that is, an academy), the legal predecessor of the University of Denver.

With the outbreak of the Civil War Governor Gilpin urged him to become the Chaplain of the First Colorado Regiment of Volunteers. However, since he asked to be made a field officer instead, he was appointed to be a major. He recruited and drilled troops and for a period of time he also continued with his ministerial duties as well. Later on he was promoted to be full colonel for his important role in the defeat of a Confederate Army at Glorieta Pass in New Mexico, a battle termed the Gettysburg of the west, and later on he destroyed an Indian village at Sand Creek, Colorado, in an all day pitched battle which many have called a massacre.

Around the first of February, 1861, he was scheduled to preach in Denver. John L. Dyer had gone to Denver at this time dressed in miner's clothes, and, of course, without a vest. He attended the church service where Chivington was scheduled to preach, trusting that he would be unnoticed. Chivington, dressed "in his military suit, with belt, bowie knife, and revolver," saw Dyer, came to where he was sitting, grasped him by the collar, pulled him out into the aisle, and said, "Come, preach for me." Although he was embarrassed by his rough attire, minus a vest, Dyer consented, for Chivington's request was all

but an order from his superior. He asked Chivington to "give out" a hymn, probably to "line it out." Dyer followed the singing with a prayer, and then proceeded to "whet" his "scythe," that is, to preach. While doing so he forgot about his lack of a vest. The next day a store keeper hailed him and presented him with one. Dyer said that he was never without one after this. An informal service like this one could scarcely have occurred save on the frontier.

Two Substitute Speakers

The Episcopal Bishop Franklin Spencer Spalding on one Fourth of July went to a grove near Steamboat Springs to witness the patriotic celebration. Since the speaker who was to have given the oration failed to show up, Spalding agreed to be his substitute. The presiding officer before presenting him remarked: "Ladies and gentlemen, you know the story of the old maid who prayed for a husband, and an owl in a tree hooted 'Who? Who?' and she, thinking this an answer to her prayer said, 'O good Lord, anybody.'" The frontier was no respecter of persons, not even of bishops.

Rev. Oscar F. Sensabaugh tells about his experience as a substitute preacher during an annual conference session of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, that convened in Trinidad. The noted preacher who was to have preached during one session had not arrived from Denver. Accordingly, Sensabaugh, although he was a very young preacher, was drafted to preach the sermon. Before the service he went to a little ridge where he prayed for strength. When he arrived at the church he found that it was crowded to the doors with people who had come to hear the celebrated preacher. Accordingly, he had to climb through a window near the pulpit. He was so scared that all he could see was a mass of blurred faces. No announcement was made of the change of preachers. He asked a fellow preacher to lead in a hymn and to pray. He himself stood up to read the scripture lesson, but could not see to read it. Fortunately, he was able to recite it from memory. Next, another hymn was sung. He then announced his text to a surprised audience, and began to preach. In a short time some one gave out a hearty "Amen," giving him the tonic that he needed. From there on, he writes, "I swung clear and soon had a 'shout' in the camp." This is the most complete account of a worship service that I have been able to find in the numerous sources that were consulted. The elements are basically those of many a church service to-day: hymns, prayer, scripture reading, sermon text, and sermon, but with the addition of "amens" and a "shout in the camp," which were com-

mon in an earlier day. In time Sensabaugh, despite his baptism by fire, became a leading preacher in Colorado and in Texas.

A "Typical" Prayer Meeting

Rev. G. H. Adams became the presiding elder of the Northern District of the Colorado Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1872. He published a quarterly entitled *The District Methodist* from 1873-1876 designed mainly for the Methodists in his district. Not only was he the editor and also the author of much of the material, but he also set the type and printed this early frontier publication. The weekly prayer meeting, usually held on a Wednesday evening, was an important feature of both Methodist and other churches. In one of his issues Adams gives a somewhat ironical account of a typical prayer meeting of his times, followed by his suggestions for improvement. I shall summarize his description of what actually occurred.

After the worshipers had drifted slowly in, the preacher begins the prayer meeting by saying:: "Let us sing." Accordingly a hymn, in this instance "Come thou fount of every blessing" is sung with more or less success. Next, the preacher kneels and utters a typical Methodist prayer. The Lord is respectfully reminded that where two or three are gathered together a flame of sacred love is requested to be kindled in their cold hearts, and the heavens are urged to shine around them with beams of sacred bliss. The Lord is urged to blot out their iniquities, and to lift upon them the light of his countenance reconciled. The whole field of human want is rather thoroughly gone over, sufficiently, at least, to indicate to the Lord his duty with reference to the same. Throughout his prayer those present utter "Amens," half of these, perhaps, in the right places. Following another hymn, the meeting is thrown open for personal prayers, with the preacher urging the reluctant ones to "Improve the time," "Don't let the moments run to waste," "Take up your crosses." Accordingly, one after another says a prayer, frequently one that had been used many times before. Adams, for some reason or other, does not mention the testimonies concerning sins that have been committed, repented of, and forgiven that were were usually interspersed among the prayers. Following the prayers some more hymns are sung, the preacher makes a few final exhortations, and the meeting is closed. Despite its shortcomings the prayer meeting provided an opportunity for lay participation that is all too frequently missing to-day.

A Sunday School "Exercise"

As was true of some of the early churches, the first Sunday Schools might be "union" or interdenominational, but before long the separate churches had their own Sunday Schools. An obvious lack at first was the scarcity of children and of women to teach them. A further problem was the deficiency of Sunday School literature which was not adequately remedied until the railroads entered Colorado.

Rev. Bethuel T. Vincent became the preacher of the Methodist Church in Central City in 1863. His brother, Rev. John Heyl Vincent, was one of the two founders of the interdenominational Chautauqua, originally designated for the instruction of Sunday School teachers, and he also was instrumental in starting the well known interdenominational Uniform Lesson Series. Rev. B. T. Vincent was also vitally interested in Sunday Schools. Consequently, he edited and published Colorado's first magazine, *The Rocky Mountain Sunday School Casket* (1864-1868). His purpose was to supply a Sunday School paper locally during the time when "America" (*sic*) was so far away.

In an early issue he states that he had prepared and used several types of "order of exercises" (opening worship services) for Sunday Schools in order to increase the "interest among children and teachers." One that he published in the *Casket* is worth citing in its entirety. We should recall that in those days and later the entire Sunday School met together for these "exercises" before going to their classes.

1. At the opening of the school the Superintendent will say:

   "The Lord is in his Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before him."

   After a few moments pause he will read four or five verses of a psalm of praise, and closing the book will say:

   "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" –

   During which the school shall rise and say:

   "Our feet stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."

   A familiar song of praise shall then be sung, when the Superintendent will say:

   "O come let us worship and bow down."

   School – "Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

   All kneeling, the Superintendent will lead in a short extempore prayer – the school joining in the Lord's Prayer.

2. Read a Scripture lesson of the day.
3. Sing a selected hymn.
4. Call Teacher's Roll
5. General recitation (the nature is not specified) will begin.
6. At the close of the recitation the Superintendent shall say:
   "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."
   During which the school shall rise and say:
   "The testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple."
7. Public Examination (nature is not stated), Remarks, Notices, &c.
8. Singing one or more hymns.
9. Closing prayer of one minute's length by the Superintendent, ending by ascriptions of praise to the Trinity, the School joining –
   "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."
   The School should retire quietly, by classes or divisions.

Since the *Casket* had a wide circulation among Methodist churches and a limited circulation among non-Methodist, doubtless Vincent's "exercise" for Sunday Schools was probably used by others than his own in Central City. This is not the pattern that might have been expected on the frontier, and probably was untypical.

The Camp Meeting

The camp meeting was a distinctive but not exclusive feature of frontier Methodism, moving from the Middle West and South to the Rockies. Sensabaugh describes a frontier "cowboy" camp meeting, so-called because he had initially designed it for cowboys, held in a grove (as was true of most camp meetings) near Durango. He himself went to the grove some days in advance, and cut brush for a preacher's tent, and for a preacher's stand or pulpit. He also made some rude and uncomfortable seats out of long poles. On the appointed day the cowboys with their captain (foreman) arrived with a chuck wagon, and provided some food for the tired and hungry preacher. There were to be four services on Sunday, and three on each of the following weekdays. Since the seats were not very comfortable,

it was agreed that the sermons would be brief. On the first day Sensabaugh, so he states, did all of the singing and praying, and since he was the only preacher, also all of the preaching. Reinforcements came the next day from Hay Gulch, Parrot City, and Mancos; they helped with the singing. A good and friendly time was enjoyed by all; apparently there was little emotion and few if any conversions, which the "captain" accounted for by saying that Sensabaugh's branding iron was not tough enough for the cowboys' hides.

Both Beardsley and Dyer tell about a thrilling camp meeting held in conjunction with the annual conference of 1867. The site was an island on Fountain Creek, near Colorado City (Springs), which was running high at the time. Bishop E. R. Ames rode in a buggy driven by Rev. O. P. McMains from Denver accompanied by a number of others who were armed since the Indians were hostile. On arrival the bishop walked over to the island on a foot bridge. McMains tried to ford over with the horse and buggy, but the swift current overturned the buggy. Fortunately buggy, horse, and driver were saved, but McMains' luggage containing a flask of communion wine (*sic*) was washed down stream. The luggage, minus the wine, was recovered later on. About ten tents had been brought to the island, one from as far away as Pueblo, another from Canon City. Rude seats and a pulpit were provided. The bishop was the main speaker. Although no conversions were reported, the meeting was said to have been a success. Doubtless the bishop had a stirring story to relate about the Rockies when he returned to the States.

Beardsley also tells about another camp meeting held near the present site of Fort Logan in 1870. During the preaching and following it the audience was swayed as by a tempest for an hour, and the altar was filled with penitents. This camp meeting, characterized by emotion, was more typical than the other two. Beardsley himself had been converted during a highly emotional experience in a camp meeting back East, during which he saw "Jesus" dying on a cross on an island for him personally. The Fort Logan camp meeting had two interesting spectators, the Indian chief Colorow, who at the time was friendly, and his eighteen year old daughter, who was dressed in a well worn buckskin suit, fringed here and there, with her long black hair hanging down her back and bangs above her eyes. The chief stood against a tree, watching the strange doings of the whites. His daughter sat like a statue on her horse for an hour, while holding the bridle of her father's horse. We may wonder what they thought about the camp meeting proceedings.

Baptizing, marrying, and burying were among the important services rendered by the preachers on the frontier as was also true elsewhere. However, few records of these events are available. Rev. L. B. Stateler, a Southern Methodist pioneer who went to Montana during the War where he had a notable ministry, preached morning and evening one Sunday in the kitchen of the Stover house on the Lupton bottoms along the Platte. The men were armed, because the Indians were on the war path. Following the evening service he married the Stover girl to her fiance. Save for the armed guard, this was not an unusual wedding.

Dyer reports a much more exciting wedding. A young couple, the bride was but sixteen, had eloped from Denver and were married by a justice of the peace. The girl's irate father with some companions, all armed, followed them on horseback, catching up with them as they were eating on the bank of a creek in South Park. The father angrily demanded the custody of his daughter, saying that the marriage was invalid because the justice of the peace had no commission. The plucky girl stood between her armed father and her husband while the latter hitched the horses to their wagon. Then they both jumped into the wagon and escaped into the mountains. Dyer does not explain why men on horseback could not have caught up with them again. Dyer happened to be holding services nearby. Accordingly, they asked him to marry them, in order to satisfy the father with a religious ceremony. Dyer proceeded to marry them, because he thought there would be no harm if they were married a second time. The groom gave him a fee of two half dollars. We do not know if the girl became reconciled to her father.

An even more exciting marriage was performed by Rev. Thomas Harwood in New Mexico in 1870. Mr. Lucien Maxwell was the rich and powerful owner of a huge ranch called the Maxwell Grant. The family was Roman Catholic. The daughter Virginia had returned from a finishing school in the east. Her father wanted her to marry a wealthy New Mexican sheep man. However, the girl fell in love with an impecunious army captain, A.S.B. Keyes, a Protestant, stationed nearby. The couple eloped, and were married by Harwood on the third story of a grist mill owned by Maxwell, with the operator of the mill and his wife as witnesses. The fee given to Harwood was $20.00. It is possible, though not probable, that the girl's mother was a party to the elopement. Maxwell was furiously angry, he vowed that he would have Harwood killed. For some period of time Harwood, who was a

courageous veteran of Sherman's army, lived dangerously. The couple went east, and apparently Virginia never became reconciled with her father.

There were many deaths and burials on the frontier, but the one account that I have found about a funeral service, and this was scanty, is related by Dyer. He had preached one evening to miners at Georgia Bay. The next morning he was told that one of their group, a young man, had died suddenly during the night. He agreed to "attend" (conduct) the funeral rites, so that the young man would be given a decent burial. About forty men and one (*sic*) woman were present. This was the first funeral that most of them had witnessed in the mountains, and they were deeply moved.

Ecumenicity

Union or non-denominational churches and Sunday Schools have been referred to. Moreover, persons who could find no church of their denomination in their camp or settlement might worship in the church of another denomination. This was true of the Sopris sisters, Congregationalists, who sang in the Denver Presbyterian church choir because there was no Congregational church in Denver. Rev. O. P. McMains was sent to Loveland to organize a Methodist church. He could find no Methodists in the community; however, he was able to persuade two couples, one United Brethren members, to form a Methodist "class" which was the nucleus of a church that is still in existence.

There was, of course, very little rapport between the polygamous Mormons and the "Gentiles." Even so, Brigham Young made a pretense of tolerance by inviting preachers of different faiths to preach in the Tabernacle, only to have them subjected to derision and ridicule. Although he was warned about Young's ploy, Bishop Calvin Kingsley of the Methodist Episcopal Church en route to Nevada uncautiously accepted the invitation to preach in the Tabernacle. He preached a stirring sermon, concluding with a moving picture of the delights of resting on Abraham's bosom in heaven. Brigham Young, however, had the last word, for he reminded the bishop that in that event he would be resting on the bosom of an old time polygamist!

In 1869 Rev. Lewis Hartsough, the newly appointed superintendent of Methodist missions in Utah, was treated most cordially by the Episcopal bishop, Daniel Tuttle, whose headquarters were in Salt Lake City. For Tuttle not only graciously offered the Methodist preacher the use of the Episcopal place of worship, Independence Hall, for his first Methodist service, but he also said: "Our choir will do the singing, wife will play the organ — won't you dear? — and I will sing bass." The

availability of an organ, an organist, a choir, and a bass soloist was most unusual on the frontier.

The co-operation was reciprocal, as another Episcopal bishop, Franklin Spencer Spalding (mentioned earlier as a substitute speaker) discovered. He, a High Church Episcopalian firmly believed that a church service could not be properly conducted without the use of *The Book of Common Prayer*. In traveling about he went into many communities where there was no organization of "church" people, as he termed the Episcopalians, no Episcopal church building. Consequently, he was frequently offered the use of a church building belonging to some other denomination. In these instances, forgetting his high churchmanship for the time being he would ask the local minister, Methodist or otherwise, to assist the services by reading the scripture lesson, and more surprisingly he would invite all who were present, "church" people and others, to come to the Lord's table. He regretted that he could not make himself preach to a crowd out on the streets, gathering them together by beating a drum.

At Steamboat Springs he held services in the Methodist place of worship. He states that on this occasion he preached "horribly," for "What is one to do when on the front row there are three deaf men with hands to their ears?" Moreover, he added, "Nor can I get used to noisy babies" (he was unmarried at the time). As a result, on this occasion he tired himself out by shouting. Surprisingly, he had a very successful career on the frontier.

Some years ago I wrote an article about the Penitentes in New Mexico, according to eye witness accounts by Rev. Thomas Harwood and his wife Emily, in the 1870's. For the most part the "brothers" were of Spanish, not native, descent; they were Roman Catholics more or less tolerated by the church authorities; and their strange rites of penitence go back to Spain, and especially to Seville. Their rites should be included among the worship services on the frontier. Dyer, as well as the Harwoods, has given an eyewitness account of what he saw in the late 1860's while en route from Taos toward Red River. It is somewhat earlier than the report by the Harwoods, and is worth repeating verbatim:

> It was in the time of Lent, and in almost every village the people were doing penance. Some carried a joist sixteen feet long, two inches thick, and twelve broad, with a piece of scantling nailed across, the hind end dragging on the ground. They were all sizes, down to those small enough for children — eight to ten years old — to carry. At one country church I saw a dozen or

more boys crossing a field, quite a number of women in company. They were heavy laden, and one boy fell under the weight of his cross. A woman ran and helped him up, and he staggered on to the church, where they all thrrew down their heavy crosses and went in. It was a strange sight, and I was never more astonished than to find that we had people in the United States who were so low and heathenish. I was more than two days among the cross bearers.

Coming near a church, I saw three men standing in the road. One had a large cross on his shoulder, and was naked, except a rag around his hips and a green veil over his face. As he walked with his heavy cross, he lashed his naked back with a long-tailed cactus. The other two men had each a little book, and one would suppose that it might be a ten-cent revival hymn book. At any rate, it looked as though they were singing some kind of a dirge for the poor fellow carrying the cross. I rode along-side of them, and saw blood on his back, and running down on the cloth that was around his hips. I wondered if this was in place of a revival, as it was taking up the cross and giving blood for their sins, and his two brethren singing a penitential song. I passed on to the church. There must have been a hundred crosses laid up against the house, nad as many people as there were crosses. When the three I had left came in sight, these began to shout. One man had a large horse-fiddle. He ran up the church by means of a ladder, and began to tune his fiddle. My horse was so badly scared, and jumped so much farther than I thought he could, that he came near landing me in the church-yard. But I gathered him as he ran, and went on. It was the first horse fiddle that I had heard for forty years, and I trust that it will be the last.

Unlike Harwood, who was probably the first outsider of record to witness the secret rites within a church or morada, Dyer saw only the external procession. His account is factual and by reason of its data valuable. He was not too much in error when he compared the Penitentes Lenten rite of repentance with a Protestant revival meeting (he might also have included a camp meeting) with its emotional emphasis upon repentance for sins. A "brother" of the Pentitentes might have been as surprised in witnessing a camp meeting in full swing as Dyer says he was when he saw a procession of the Pentitentes.

Admittedly, this has been a somewhat sketchy account of worship in the frontier days of this Rocky Mountain region, with special reference to Colorado. The sources of information are scanty, and for the

most part the accounts in these sources are incidental and sketchy. Even so, it is hoped what has been gleaned and assembled under topical headings may give the reader not only an acquaintance with the worship services of the time and place, but also an appreciation of what was accomplished despite the obvious handicaps.