

A Harrison Valley Celebration

compiled from the Conference Archives

Editor's Comments

This is the story to accompany the picture chosen for the cover of this volume of *The Chronicle*. In a volume that seeks to recognize the individuals of the conference who labor namelessly and without thought of reward, what better picture could embody that spirit. While the archives have many such pictures, this is one of the very few of that era that comes with complete information about the place and people involved.

The place is identified on the back of the picture. This is the front of the sanctuary of the Harrison Valley Methodist Episcopal Church in Potter County. The first Methodist class in Harrison township was organized in 1855 at North Fork. Methodism began in the village of Harrison Valley as the result of three days of evangelistic meetings held in a local barn in 1878.¹ A class was organized March 14, 1881, and the congregation worshiped in the Baptist church and a hall until their building was completed. Ready for worship in the summer of 1883, the structure was formally dedicated August 30, 1883. This occurred while the area was part of the Genesee Conference.²

The people in the photograph are also identified on the back of the picture. Named from left to right, as designated by the scribe, they are as follows.

seated on the 1620: Aleda Hubbard, Mrs. Dean

standing left front: Mrs. Martin, Betsy Dean

standing left rear: Myrtle Schofield, Mrs. Marvin, Amelia Michelfelder,

Mrs. Fish, Mr. Fish

Miss Liberty: Gretchen Parks

standing right: Emma Church, Esther Bartoo, Eva Thompson, Hattie Dibble,

Mattie Works, Mr. Martin, Clella Michelfelder

Unfortunately, the date of the photograph is not given – but there were enough clues on the front and back of the picture to make a determination. The first clue comes from the two American flags: the flag on the left has 45 stars, and the flag on the right has 46 stars. When Oklahoma was admitted as the 46th state of the union on November 16, 1907, the new 46-star flag became official on July 4, 1908. This means the photograph could be no older than 1908. While it might be tempting to date the photograph as 1908, comparing the birthdates of the

¹ Sources identify this as the barn of Malachi Hober and add that “one minister present counted one thousand different persons present” during the three days.

² In general, the entire present Wellsboro District came into the Central Pennsylvania Conference in 1962, when the Methodist Church redrew the conference boundaries to match the state lines. Prior to that the western portion of the district had been in the Genesee Conference, and the eastern portion had been in the Central New York Conference – with the dividing line being approximately US route 15.

persons in the photograph with their appearances indicates that such is not the case and that the date must be considerably later. The prominent 1620 date on the rock, might suggest that the photograph was taken at a 1920 patriotic presentation celebrating, in part, the 300th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims – and that the two older flags were chosen for an historical backdrop. But three of the persons in the photograph did not appear in the 1920 census for the area – and further investigation revealed they lived in Harrison Valley only from the summer of 1922 to the summer of 1924. And so the date for the photograph is taken to be 1923.

The early 1920's were crucial years in the history of the Harrison Valley Methodist congregation. For over 20 years it had been the base church on the four-point Harrison Valley charge consisting of Harrison Valley, North Fork, Mills, and Potterbrook – with the church buildings at the first two locations owned by the Methodists, and the other church buildings being community property shared with other denominations. But Methodism was not strong in the region. Perhaps the 1920 report of the new district superintendent says it best:

Our first year has largely been a year of study and becoming acquainted with the work. On coming to the field we found 55 charges, ten of which were left without pastors when conference adjourned, and 103 churches, nineteen of which had been deserted. These were churches built by our fathers in years gone by because they felt the need of them. Twenty-five years ago they were crowded with eager worshipers, when the population of this country was far less than it is today. By the growth of worldliness in the community and indifference in the church, there has been a process of narrowing up, while the world outside has turned pagan, with vastly more people spending the Sabbath day in pursuits of profit or pleasure than attend the house of the Lord. These things are a sad comment on the work of the generation through which we have wrought.

And so the long-standing four-point charge was dismantled.³ Despite a fine church building and parsonage, Harrison Valley was served from Ulysses in 1919 and from Westfield in 1920. But there was a way to preserve a local congregation. From the beginning, there was always cooperation between the Methodists and Baptists in Harrison Valley.⁴ In November 1921, the two congregations formed a Federated congregation – with each society retaining its identity, but working and worshipping together. For several years, including the time of the photograph, both buildings were used on an alternating basis. By

³ This was due more to population dynamics than to any failure of Methodism. At one time Harrison Valley was the fastest growing town in Potter County and claimed more than 12% of the county's population. In the 1890's it had several hotels and stores, its own newspaper, a post office, a high school, a major tannery, and railroad and telephone connections. A major fire in 1899 destroyed a large part of the business district, and the town never again achieved its pre-1900 population or status.

⁴ In Potterbrook, the cooperation was even more evident. *The Peoples Church of Potterbrook* was chartered July 7, 1890, to erect a house of worship for joint use by the Baptist and Methodist societies. By the time that area was transferred from the Genesee Conference to the Central Pennsylvania Conference in 1962, however, the arrangement had been dissolved and the entire congregation was Baptist.

1928 it was time for better stewardship of resources, and the Methodist structure was sold to the Harrison Valley Grange. When the property was later sold to an individual in 1969, and the church was torn down. A large storage shed now occupies the site of the church, while the adjacent parsonage remains as a private dwelling.

The Federated congregation continued meeting in the Baptist building until it was destroyed by fire in 1958. A modern structure erected on the same site housed the congregations until May 31, 1998 – when the United Methodist constituency voted to withdraw, and all property remained with the Baptists.

Persons in the Photograph

The following information was obtained from various sources. It is fitting that these persons are identified in this volume of *The Chronicle* which recognizes the ordinary people who worked behind the scenes to strengthen the cause of Christ within our Conference.

Esther Bartoo. Mary Esther Hendrickson was born October 27, 1893, in nearby Troupsburg NY, the daughter of Charles and Mary (Cady) Hendrickson. She married Herbert Ray Bartoo, son of Henry S. and Clara (Grover) Bartoo, on July 2, 1911. Mr. Bartoo graduated from Harrison Valley High School in 1910, took a course in teachers' training at Grove City College and taught school for eight terms. He was appointed rural mail carrier at Harrison Valley in 1919 and held that position continuously for over 35 years. He was president of the Mills Cemetery Association and of the Harrison Valley Public Library. The Bartoos were the parents of two children: Raymond, Ronald and Donald. She died December 30, 1969, and is buried in the Mills Cemetery.

Emma Church. Emma J. Church was born in Harrison Valley about 1907, the daughter of John Francis and Evelyn (unknown) Church. On October 20, 1928, she married Lawrence J. White, born in nearby Troupsburg NY to James and Jennie (Sweet) White. Mr. and Mrs. White farmed, had no children, and were members of the Harrison Valley Federated Church. Mr. White died in 1975 and is buried in the Ulysses Cemetery.

Betsy Dean. Betsy Dean was the 13 year old daughter of widow Nola Dean.

Mrs. Dean. In 1923 Nola Dean was a 46 year old widow with two daughters: 22 year old Mabel and 13 year old Betsy.

Hattie Dibble. Harriet E. Haynes was born about 1893, the daughter of Lewis E. and Carrie (Grover) Haynes. She was married to Frank H. Dibble, son of Sylvester and Annetta (White) Dibble, about 1913. The Dibbles had at least one child, a daughter named Martha. Mr. Dibble died in 1978.

Mr. Fish – Harry G. Fish taught high school science and Latin in the Harrison Valley School 1922-24.

Mrs. Fish – Joyce Fish, the wife of Harry G. Fish, taught grades 1-3 in the Harrison Valley School 1922-24.

Aleda Hubbard – Aleda Emma Kibbe was born January 23, 1890, in Harrison Valley. She married Newton Floyd Hubbard, son of Curtis and Elsie Ann (Williams) Hubbard, on October 20, 1909. Aleda was Newton's second wife, the first Mrs. Hubbard having died September 25, 1907. She raised Mr. Hubbard's two small children from his first wife, Howard C. and Eleanor M., and she and Mr. Hubbard were the parents of one daughter, Virginia B. Mrs. Hubbard died October 17, 1967, in Marysville CA.

Mr. Martin – pastor of the Baptist Church. No other information is available on the Martins.

Mrs. Martin – wife of Mr. Martin

Mrs. Marvin – This lady was the former Celia Blanchard of Covington, Tioga County, the daughter of William A. and Anna (Wilcox) Blanchard. She was the wife of Edward Ellis Marvin, principal of the Harrison Valley School 1922-24. While residing in Harrison Valley, the Marvins lived in the house across the street from the church. Professor E.E. Marvin, the son of Levi Crosby and Tena (Sechrist) Marvin, was born in Covington, educated at Mansfield Normal School and Bucknell University, and taught at several schools and served as principal at five (Little Marsh, Osceola, Covington, Oswayo and Harrison Valley). He was named assistant superintendent of schools for Tioga County in 1926, and superintendent in 1934. Mr. Marvin was previously married on May 16, 1904, to Lulu Boughton of Little Marsh, who died in October 1909 at the age of 28. His marriage to Celia took place June 28, 1911. There were 3 children from the first marriage, all raised by Celia.

Amelia Michelfelder – This sister-in-law to Clella Michelfelder was the daughter of George and Christina Michelfelder. In 1923 Amelia was 37 years old, lived with her parents, and worked as a domestic. She later married a Mr. Martin.

Clella Michelfelder. Clella Lucille Stevens was born February 12, 1881, in Harrison Valley, the daughter of George Watrous and Zittilla (Goodman) Stevens. A graduate of Mansfield State Teachers College and of George Washington University, she taught school for six years before her marriage on June 22, 1911, to George Michelfelder, Jr., of Harrison Valley, the son of George and Christina (Truthan) Michelfelder. George (Jr.) Michelfelder conducted a clothing store and an insurance business in Harrison Valley for many years. The parents of two children, Richard and Ruth, the Michelfelders were two of the leading promoters of the two successful dry campaigns conducted in Harrison Township. He died September 26, 1933. A member of the Baptist Church, Mrs. Michelfelder served as president of Harrison Valley W.C.T.U. for thirty-five years, president of Potter County W.C.T.U. for fourteen years, and recording secretary of Pennsylvania State W.C.T.U. for four years. She was active in civic projects – including chairman of the Women's Republican Committee, chairman for many years of Red Cross drives, and a Sunday School teacher for more than fifty years. She died April 4, 1963, and is buried in the Mills Cemetery, for which she had been one of the leading promoters of the fund for perpetual care of the cemetery.

Gretchen Parks – Gretchen Holbert was born October 27, 1897, in nearby Knoxville, Tioga County, the daughter of Charles F. and Mary Virginia (Goodspeed) Holbert. She married James Gordon Parks, a miller born in St. Paul MN to James M. and Emma (Kilbourn) Parks, on June 13, 1917. Mr. and Mrs. Parks had four children: Martha, James Gordon, John Goodspeed, and Benjamin Reed. Mr. Parks died in 1925, just two years after this photograph was taken, leaving his wife to care for 4 small children, and is buried in the Mills Cemetery. Gretchen was not totally alone, however, as the 1920 census indicates that her husband's parents lived next door. Mrs. Parks died in 1987 in Sebring FL and is buried there.

Myrtle Schofield. Myrtle was the wife of farmer Leland Schofield. In 1923 she was 25 years old and had two small children: a son 8 years old and a daughter 6 years old.

Eva Thompson – Eva Dyke was born March 3, 1853, in Coudersport, the daughter of Chancey and Vesta Cordelia (French) Dyke. She was the wife of William W. Thompson, son of Zenas J. and Julia A. (Shuart) Thompson. The Thompsons were married October 4, 1882. Mr. Thompson was originally in the newspaper business in Coudersport, and later in the jewelry and optical business. They had one daughter, Vesta Ellen. Mrs. Thompson died October 27, 1932, and is buried in the Eulalia Cemetery in Coudersport.

Mattie Works – Mattie (Butler) Works was the wife of blacksmith Tom Works. She was the daughter of May Butler, who according to the 1920 census resided as a widow with Mr. and Mrs. Works.



Harrison Valley Methodist Episcopal Church and parsonage, circa 1900.
The church was sold in 1928 and torn down in 1969. The parsonage is still standing.