

# Indian Preachers, and Work Among Long Island Indians

[By Rev. Earnest E. Eells]

(Continued from last week)

Here he had the pleasure, "and" he says, "it was a great pleasure to me to hear three Indian girls sing a hymn of Dr. Watts, intitled, 'The Blessed Society in Heaven,' 'Rise my soul, fly up and run,' which hymn they had got partly by heart, having heard some English people often sing it, and when they could not remember the words they kept the tune along. O joyful season, 'he adds' night to be remembered with everlasting praises and thanksgiving! Here of a truth the power appeared to be of God and not of man." These three Indian girls were converted in the evening, and he records they "seemed to be ravished with a sense of the Love of Christ, and their mouths filled with praises."

Not only did the young respond, but one of the most rational and intelligent of the Indians. "He" says Horton, "appeared to have a deep sense of his own weakness, and of the fullness of Christ; and the Holy Scriptures, he said, appeared different to what they had before, and that what he now read was applied to his own soul, and was sweet and satisfying." "It may be noted that he could read in the Bible tolerably well, hard words excepted."

I could go on and read passage after passage of affectionate phrases recording Horton's work at Montauk and at Shinnecock, but have time only to include mention of the beautiful Christian spirit shown by Horton in the "time of sickness among the Indians, three grown persons having died in a week and several others dangerously ill," in February, 1742. During this time Horton visited from wigwam to wigwam. He was in Fresh Pond, which he notes, "is about six miles westward from that part of Montauk where the Indians in general are now seated. It may also be noted that some few live about four or five miles eastward; and the reason of their thus dispersing is that they may more easily get provisions; and some move from the more usual place of their abode in the summer season, in order to attend the whaling design, in which they are engaged with some of the inhabitants of East Hampton." Horton himself was sick, and offered this prayer, "O that God would hereby purify the hearts of his own children more and more, and make this sickness a happy means of awakening the Christless Indians to deep concern for their own souls, and to make speedy and diligent preparation for the time of their departure hence." When still weak from the sickness he preached "and the Lord was

pleased to send the reviving and comforting influence of his blessed Spirit into the hearts of some of his children; it was undoubtedly a sweet season to their souls, and concern came afresh upon them that were enquiring the way to Zion. And this day I trust the Lord manifested his strength in my great weakness and gave me an humbling and sweet discovery of mine own unworthiness, and of Christ's glorious excellency and suitableness, and enabled me in the language of a lively faith to appropriate him to my own soul, and say, 'My Lord and my God.'"

The depth of the soul of this first Presbyterian Missionary is revealed in his prayers, "Oh that these kind visits may prove as pledges of more remarkable effusions of God's spirit! to refresh them that love Christ, to encourage the distressed, to make speedy flight to the alone physician of souls, and to awaken the secure to be up and doing, to use diligence in the important business of their eternal salvation." "O my soul, how astonishing great are the wonders of free grace and redeeming love, and how remarkable and illustrious are the influences, among these once poor despised ones of the earth; not to me, not to me, but to the name of the Lord, be all the praise, and all the glory."

These expressions show us the spiritual father of David Brainard, and the source of his flaming zeal. Horton was sent twice to prepare the way for Brainard. First in April, 1742, when he was "in New Jersey, and made several attempts to find an interpreter, in order to go among the Delaware Indians, and not succeeding." "I saw" he writes, "near 20 of the Delaware Indians at Elizabethtown, in New Jersey, and thereabouts, and conversed with some few that could speak broken English, and they appeared very backward to the things of another world, and were deaf to the proposals of peace and salvation made to them." The second trip was made in April, 1743, after Brainard's visit to Montauk, and Horton "After a long and tedious journey arrived at Smithfield upon Delaware, where," he says, "I found but a few Indians." He spoke to them on the next day and arranged "that one should come to teach them, (mentioning a particular time) when their chief ones, and a great number of others would be at this place."

The man who was to be sent had already been under the tuition of Abariah Horton, and had itinerated with him in February, 1743, when Horton

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due on the 15th day of April, 1935, at 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon of that day, at the front door of the Court House, in the village of Riverhead, N. Y.

W. C. McCollom,  
Sheriff, Suffolk County, N. Y.

Dated at Riverhead, New York, this 25th day of February, 1935.

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records, "Mr. Brainard preached, (a hopeful young gentleman designed to go among the Indians upon Delaware, to preach the Gospel). He spent the evening in giving them instructions, and encouragements, admonitions, according to their different circumstances," and again on February 23rd, at Montauk, Mr. Brainard preached, attended with an encouraging prospect of success."

At the ordination of David Brainard, which took place in New Ark, (Newark), June 12, 1744, the correspondents published with the Ordination Sermon by Ebenezer Pemberton, an account of Horton's success. "A general reformation of manners was soon observable among most of these Indians, and about 20 of them gave lasting evidence of their saving conversion to God. Mr. Horton has baptized 35 adults by 44 children. He took pains with them to learn to read, and some of them have made considerable proficiency." Horton himself, in his guard-ered way says, "The Indians of this place in general are steady in attending public worship; are attentive to the words preached, and are very desirous from time to time that I should continue with them, more than I possibly can; considering the extensiveness of my present charge."

Horton formally organized the Shinnecock, or Poose-patuck tribes into Indian Churches. They have continued to this very day. Shinnecock for a time was under the New York Missionary Society but is now again Presbyterian. Poosapatuck is now being carried on by a missionary of the Christian Church. Montauk was always considered part of the East Hampton parish. No record remains of Horton's part in the unhappy division in the church at the end of Mr. Huntington's pastorate. Mr. Whitefield's second visit promoted it, and he says he noticed "seed sown here had sprung up abundantly." It is doubtful if he actively led the party who wanted Mr. Huntington to resign, but certainly it was the "Honorable Correspondents" who journeyed here and held a meeting called a "Council" immediately after forming the New York Synod at Elizabethtown. How these Presbyterian ministers, members of the Pres-

bytery of New York, could come into an independent parish, unaffiliated with that presbytery at that time, and advise the pastor to resign is a problem in church politics. They very wisely refused to let a party call David Brainard as the new minister however, and promised the people to save them the expense of another "Council" by sending them an acceptable candidate later.

This promise they kept by sending Samuel Buell with letter or recommendation to the church. Strangely enough all worked smoothly. Mr. Huntington resigned, 1746, and the members who had withdrawn from his Bridgehampton to Ebenezer White, they came back and Buell was ordained and installed by Jonathan Edwards.

Dr. Buell's tact soon healed the wounds in the East Hampton Congregation. He and his church joined in forming the second Presbytery of Long Island in 1747. This affiliation has continued until this day.

Azariah Horton found support from Whitefield and in 1744 when Whitefield visited East Hampton a young Mohegan Indian came over from Wheelock's Indian School to attend the meetings. This young Christian Indian was Samson Ocom. Dr. Buell and Mr. Williams got the Boston Commissioners, to pay Ocom to come and teach the Montauk Indians to read. By this time many Montauk and Shinnecock Indians were Christian. In 1750 Horton, annoyed by Separatists, felt his work was done, and could safely be left in the hands of Samson Ocom, and so he took the church at South Hanover, (Bottle Hill) New Jersey, now Madison. There he labored for 25 years, at times in such poverty that his wife had to keep a store, but educating his sons in Princeton and aiding in its support, and leaving on his death a legacy of \$533 to the fund to educate pious young men. He died March 27, 1777, of small-pox contracted while ministering to the Continental Soldiers at Chatham, and his grave is now marked by a stone erected, it is supposed, by his descendant, Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler.

Before Azariah Horton had been long on the field he complained of the divisions and opposition of "exhorters." Samson Ocom was continually harassed by these "separatists," who had taken advantage of the enthusiasm of the "Great Revival" to organize the dissatisfied members of several parishes into "Strict Congregational Churches." The leader in this movement was Elias Paine, who when he was condemned by the Windham County Ministers Association, in Connecticut, came over to Long Island, and organized churches in Bridgehampton, Aquebogue, Sound Avenue and several other places. The work of these churches seems to have

included exhorting the Indians even where there was an established mission as at Montauk and Shinnecock. Samson Ocom "was under God," says Wheelock, "instrumental to cure the Indians of Montauk of the wildness of some exhorters from New England."

This Mohegan Indian was the grandson of Tomokham (Tom Ocom) and the son of Joshua Ocom who founded the Indian settlement now called Mohegan. Samson Ocom's mother's name was Sarah and she is said to be a descendant of the famous Mohegan chief, Uncas. She was a Christian and when her son was 17 years old he was converted by Davenport's preaching. When Samson was 20 years old, of his own accord he went to Eleazar Wheelock, James Davenport's brother-in-law, at Lebanon, December 6th, 1743, and at his request was taken into the school for white boys established in that worthy clergyman's home. Those four years spent in such intimacy, are told in his diary, kept with religious regularity from the first day. In his studies with Wheelock and with Rev. Ben Pomeroy, he became a scholar, as Dr. Buell says, the equal of any college entrant of his day. A wonderful record for one who by his own account was born in a wigwam in the midst of heathenism. Such application naturally resulted in impaired health and especially in weakness of the eyes, and in the summer of 1745 he came over to Montauk, as the Peguots and Mohegans often did, to fish, and also to rest. He did more than fish however, preaching and visiting from wigwam to wigwam, assisting Azariah Horton, he met a Montauk Indian maiden, Mary Fowler, daughter of James Fowler, whose wife, Elizabeth, called "Grey Eyes" was the grand-daughter of Wyandanch, and acknowledged to be the most beautiful Indian of her time.

The Indians at Montauk were so pleased with Ocom's efforts that they requested him to return in the fall, and though they were very poor, they agreed to pay him ten pounds for teaching school six months. To this was added 40 shillings given by some of the white residents of East Hampton. After the first six months the Boston Commissioners paid Ocom at the rate of 10 shillings per year, due to the intercession of Dr. Buell, and Wheelock's brother-in-law, Mr. Williams. No wonder that Ocom had to hunt and fish, and work by a flaring rush light to make spoons, ladles, gunstocks, palls, piggins, and churns, and most important of all, to bind the books of Dr. Buell and others in East Hampton who could boast a library, and whose descendants today treasure the handiwork of the First Indian Preacher.

Ocom tilled four acres of land, he could make that pay, and in addi-

tion to all else preached three times on Sunday, and during the week had a service on Wednesday night.

Ocom married Mary Fowler in the fall of 1751 and thus became a member of the Montauk tribe or nation. He signed the agreement June 28, 1754 to exclude all foreign Indians, as a witness. Mary Fowler was the mother of 10 children, many of their descendants living today, some honored by our national government. When she and Samson Ocom were first married "His house was a wigwam. In the summer season it was near the planting grounds and in the winter they removed with the tribe so that he was near the woodland. Later he occupied a house, commodious enough to be the summer home of East Hampton's first summer resident, Sir William Johnson.

Mary Fowler Ocom's brothers, David and Jacob Fowler, were Ocom's pupils, and Wheelock's also in the school he opened in 1754 for Indian boys. They played an important part in later events, and were always devoted to Ocom. She, like every minister or missionary's wife, bore all the hardships of poverty, separation, and injustice, suffering the pain of the shafts aimed at her husband. Her part deserves remembrance as well as his.

In 1751 Aaron Burr, the President of the New York Correspondents, asked him to go with John Brainard to the Susquehanna River for the Scotch School, but an Indian uprising there made that impossible, so he stayed at Montauk with his 30 scholars. In teaching them he was most ingenious, for instance, he would cut out letters of the alphabet and paste them on cedar chips, sending the pupils to bring back the proper chip at his command, thus using both sight and sound.

In his letter to Rev. John Devotion he gives the names of 32 families among them Pharoah, Fowler, Peter, Charles, etc. In all he counts 162 Indians living at Montauk.

[To be continued next week]

A gentleman just released from a Minnesota penitentiary is to marry a woman who has waited 23 years for him to get out. Such is the inconsistency of man, however, that by next week he'll be married than hops if he keeps him waiting 10 minutes for dinner.

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(Continued from last week)

At the suggestion of Whitefield, the Commissioners moved November 12, 1756, to have him licensed to preach, and this was done by the Windham Association, after examination at the house of Solomon Williams in Lebanon, July 13, 1757. Some rivalry existed even at this time as to whether Occom should be considered a Presbyterian or a Congregationalist, and under which Board he should labor. Eventually the Boston Board and the Windham Association released him in order that he might take up work among the Cherokees under the New York Correspondents, at the solicitation of their president, Rev. Samuel Davies, afterward president of the College of New Jersey. This was the desire also of Dr. Buell and Mr. Brown, who urged Occom's Ordination by the Suffolk Presbytery. This was carried through though the Cherokees went on the war path, and the prospective field became the Mohawk nation.

So it happens that the First Indian preacher was ordained in the East Hampton Presbyterian Church, much to the chagrin of Eleazar Wheelock, who refused the invitation to be present and preach the ordination sermon. The following is the record of Occom's examination in the minutes of the presbytery: "East Hampton, August 29, 1759. Sampson Occom, candidate for the Indian mission, having had a text given him to compose a trial sermon upon and a subject for an exegesis, now offered himself upon examination with a view to ordination. The Presbytery entered upon the preliminaries of his ordination, and having examined him

in the learned languages, entered upon theology, and heard his trial sermon from Psalm 72:9.

"August 30, renewed the examination of Mr. Occom, and then proceeded to the Ordination of Sampson Occom in the Meeting House, a numerous assembly, upon notice given, attending.

"Mr. Buel began the public worship with prayer, and preached the Ordination Sermon from Gal. 1:16.

"Mr. Browne introduced the solemnity of the ordination and made the Ordination Prayer during the imposition of hands.

"Mr. Barker gave the Right Hand of Fellowship.

"Mr. Prime gave the Charge and made the Concluding Prayer.

"Mr. Occom pointed out the Psalm and pronounced the Blessing."

What an event, and what a moment, when before an audience of white and red Christians this Mohegan Indian knelt in our Church, and the members of the Presbytery gathered around him, laying their hands on his head! How thrilling the words, "We give you the right hand of Fellowship to take part in this ministry with us!" Samson Occom never forgot that occasion, and though offered degrees in Scotland and preferment in the Episcopal Church when in England, he refused to leave the Presbytery.

Dr. Buell's sermon on this occasion was published a few years later, and with it a letter to Mr. Bostwick, in which he says, "Occom adds force to the Doctrines he preaches by the prevailing charms of unspotted life, and a conversation as becomes the Gospel.

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In England and Scotland Occom spoke over 400 times. He was presented to the King, who gave 200 pounds, to the Earl of Dartmouth, who gave 50 guineas, and to the Countess of Huntington who entertained him. He raised 2,529 pounds in Scotland, which has grown to over 6,000 pounds and is still there in trust, the interest only being spent, mostly in Canada. In England he raised 9,500 pounds, mostly in small sums given in collections in chapels, for the bishops turned against him when he refused Episcopal orders. He refused a D. D. degree from Edinburgh, had two portraits painted, and after two years away from his home and family, of which with reason his wife complained he sailed for home without his white companion, Rev. Whitaker of Norwich, arriving in Boston May 20, 1768.

This unexpected success of Occom in England remains as an outstanding achievement, for any one Indian or white, and Dartmouth College stands as a monument today to this marvelous journey. It also stands accusing Wheelock of one of the most unworthy actions in America's academic history, the gratuitous neglect of the man who raised the money, by the white men who profited by his efforts and discredited him after they had exploited him.

For four years Occom was neglected, and unemployed. The Boston Board had been offended before he sailed for England. The New York Board had released him against their judgment, and would not take him back. The Connecticut Board, subservient to Wheelock spread abroad the story that he was inebriate when after examination by the Presbytery this fabrication was found to be based not on a moment of excess, but the Presbytery was "fully of the opinion that all the sensation of intoxication, which he condemned him-

self for, arose, not from any degree of intemperate drinking, but from having drunk a small quantity of spirituous liquor after having been all day without food." Here were sympathetic hearts, and here was a pitiful spectacle, the man who raised 12,000 pounds for Wheelock, now without food, and accused of intemperance, when he was really starving, and that by the very man who profited most by his exploitation!

Wheelock also accused Occom of pride, and this accusation has been repeated by one biographer and another, yet on what grounds we have never been able to discern. Considering his proved ability he seems rather too humble.

He certainly was a bigger man than Wheelock, and perhaps in that fact lies the cause of Wheelock's desire to humiliate Occom.

Samson Occom was the first American hymn writer, and the first Presbyterian to publish a hymnal. His collection reached three editions and contains a number that must have been original, one at least, has stood the test of time and can be found in all but the most recent Presbyterian, Congregational, or Episcopal Hymnals. "Awaked by Sinai's Awful Sound." Three Indian Tunes should be mentioned in this connection, "Indian Hymn," "Montauk," and "Occom." of the first it is legendary that the Indians heard this melody in the air long before the white men came, and recognized it in one of the hymns used by Eliot. The other two were doubtless Montauk Indian melodies, and have been used by modern composers to very good effect.

Occom's only printed sermon was preached in the historic church of New Haven, on the occasion of the hanging of an Indian convicted of murder while drunk. It is probably the best temperance sermon ever preached, and

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shows how practical a preacher Occom was.

Occom's last years were spent in leading the Christian Indians of Montauk, Mohegan, Tunxis, Farmington, and Niantic to settle among the Oneida Indians, in Brotherton, now Vernon and Deansville New York. In this effort he was in East Hampton in the years of the Revolution, with his son-in-law, Joseph Johnson. Not to be confused of course with Sir William Johnson, who was here in 1773.

The Oneida Indians made a gift of land, to the New England and Montauk Indians, adopted them into their nation, and made them welcome. Thirty young men from Montauk went with the first group, but their settlement was interrupted by the Revolution, in which every able bodied Indian served, and many died, a number from Montauk. The influence of Occom and the Montauk Indians, then in Central New York, kept the six nations neutral. After the Revolution, not only the tribes already mentioned but also the Christian Indians at Stockbridge migrated to Oneida County, and founded New Stockbridge a few miles from Brotherton.

Occom was pastor of one group and Sargent of the other until Occom's death which took place on July 14th, 1792. He was working in his shop, in the pightel when his wife saw him start for his house, and later looking up saw that he had fallen, when she reached him he was dead.

Kirkland preached at his funeral, which was attended by Indians from distances around. His grave is unmarked and unknown, but somewhere near the farm of a Mr. Tuhie, a descendant of the Montauk Indians who settled there. It should have a monument and be a shrine of our church's missionary history.

The Montauk families that moved to Brotherton, New York, moved once again to Brothertown, Wisconsin, and today, on the shores of Winnebago Lake is their town.

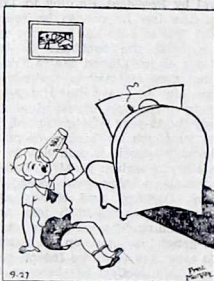
Let us go back to the time that Azariah Horton left Montauk and Shinnecock. The exhorters who harassed him there took up the charge when he left, and soon they ordained an Indian without education, but naturally gifted, and sincerely converted, Rev. Peter John. He preached in Shinnecock and at Poosepatuk, and also at Hayground where he was born, and where these Separatists had organized a "Strict Congregational Church." His ministry lasted until his 88th year. He

is buried on the Poosepatuk reservation, where once he was visited by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Gen. Wm. Floyd, but now his grave cannot be found.

Peter John was succeeded by his grandson, Paul Cuffee, who also was converted and led into the ministry by Elisha Paine. After a wild youth he completely changed his ways, and was ordained by the Congregational Church, in 1790. This man, the third Indian preacher in succession to serve these churches, was the son of Peter Cuffee, and a Christian negress. He lived at Canoe Place and his church stood west of the canal about one quarter of a mile. Part of that building is now the Shinnecock Presbyterian Church. The oldest Indian church in America is still active. The other part is still used as a chapel, not far south of its original location. On the site of the original church is the grave of Paul Cuffee, with a monument set up by the members of the New York Missionary Society under whom he served. The inscription reads as follows: "Erected by The New York Missionary Society in memory of the Rev. Paul Cuffee, an Indian of the Shinnecock Tribe, who was employed by that Society for the last 13 years of his life on the Eastern part of Long Island, where he labored with fidelity and success. Humble, pious, and indefatigable in testifying the Gospel of Grace of God, he finished his course with joy, on the 7th day of March, 1812. Aged 55 years and 3 days."

Such is the story of the Indian Preachers, other chapters have been written since that time which we will hope to look into later. Those glorious days have gone, may their memory be kept green by the churches of our denomination, and by the people of East Hampton.

## PAPA KNOWS—



"Pop, what is minimum?"

"The last drop."

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