

**The Huntingdonian Missionaries to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick,
c. 1785-1792**

Jack C. Whytock

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the transatlantic connexion between the Countess of Huntingdon and her missionaries sent to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In part this is a corrective to a much neglected aspect of the Countess' North American vision which has too much focussed upon her relationship with Bethesda in Georgia. Time does not allow an in-depth treatment of the four Huntingdonian Missionaries sent out from England to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, so only brief mention will be made of all four. However, one missionary has been selected for the primary focus of this paper. This will establish the transatlantic connection of the mission but also highlights the intricate web of colonial church life as we advance the study. We turn first to the patroness of the Huntingdonian mission - Selena, the Countess of Huntingdon. “

The Patroness

Born Selina Shirley in Leicestershire, England in 1707, the second daughter of Washington Shirley, the second Earl Ferrers, she married Theophilus Hastings, the ninth Earl of Huntingdon, hence the title, Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon.¹ It would appear that sometime in 1738 she was converted under Methodist and Moravian leaders but shortly afterwards distanced herself from Moravianism, associating with Methodism, yet remaining within the Church of England. By 1748 she had parted company with the Wesleys over the same basic doctrinal matters that had separated George Whitefield from the Wesleys. Thus she became aligned with Calvinistic Methodism and Whitefield served as one of her Chaplains.² As a peeress

1. Peter J. Lineham, “Huntingdon, Selina” *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, 1 (ed) D.M.Lewis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 585-586. Full details of the life of the Countess are provided in the two recent biographies: Edwin Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim: A Reassessment of the life of the Countess of Huntingdon* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995) and Boyd Stanley Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists: The Countess of Huntingdon and the Eighteenth Century Crisis of Faith and Society* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1997). Also the standard biography by Seymour is being reprinted from the 1840 edition and will be available early 2000.

2. For a helpful discussion of the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion's theology see: Kenneth Morey, “The Theological Position of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion” unpublished B.A. in Theology Thesis (United Kingdom: Council for National Academic Awards, 1990) and for Selina's religious pilgrimage, John R. Tyson, “Lady Huntingdon's Reformation” *Church History* 64 (1995), p. 582 and Gilbert W. Kirby, *The Elect Lady* (Reshden, Northants: The Trustees of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, 1972, revised edition 1990), pp. 77-82.

she exercised her right to having her own chaplains, which she gladly did, using them to conduct preaching missions and later to serve in her chapels, such as where the aristocracy would holiday, like Brighton or Bath. Prominent evangelical Anglican clergy who were Calvinistic she gladly sponsored to preach and conduct the liturgy according to the Anglican form.

From 1765 onwards she was increasingly involved in the need to train preachers. In 1768 she established her own training college, at Trevecca in Wales made up firstly of expelled students from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford who were "Enthusiasts who talked of inspiration, regeneration and drawing nigh to God."³

Increasing disputes arose in the late 1770's and early 80's over her unlimited right to build chapels. This led in 1783 to 'the Secession' whereby she registered her chapels under the Toleration Act. The Connexion adopted its own doctrinal standards, The Fifteen Articles of Faith. These standards were a modification and collation of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England and reflect a Calvinistic Methodist Theology.⁴

Finally, we must take note of her concern for missions outside of England and Wales. She inherited Whitefield's Bethesda orphanage in Georgia to which she gave vast resources but this was not her only foreign longing. Her eye roamed to the South Sea Islands, France, the Indians in America, the East Indies, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. It is with the last two mentioned that we now turn our attention.⁵

The Call from Macedonia

The Countess of Huntingdon sent four missionaries to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick:

And on Whitefield/Countess of Huntingdon relationship see, Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 172, 213-215.

3. Lineham, "Huntingdon", p.585; Dorothy Eugina Sherman Brown, "Evangelicals and Education in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Study of Trevecca College, 1768-1792" unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992). The subsequent history of Trevecca College is most fascinating and worthy of study. S.C. Orchard, *Cheshunt College: A Record of the College Founded by Selina, Dowager Countess of Huntingdon at Trevecca in 1768, moved to Cheshunt in 1792, and to Cambridge in 1905*. (n.p.: The Governors of Cheshunt College, 1968).

4. Morey, "The Theological Position of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion", pp. 23ff, 39ff.

5. Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, pp. 124, 172; B.S. Schlenther, "'To Convert the Poor People in America': The Bethesda Ophanage and the Thwarted Seal of the Countess of Huntingdon" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77, No. 2, (1994), pp. 233, 244, 245, 249, 251. It would also be worthy of a separate study, to explore the Countess' involvement in sending missionaries to Newfoundland. See, Laurence Coughlan, *An Account of the Work of God, in Newfoundland, North America...Humbly Dedicated to the Right Honourable The Countess of Huntingdon* (London, 1776).

Revs. William Furmage, John Marrant, Charles Milton and John James. Rev. Furmage was the first to arrive and it would appear that he arrived in Nova Scotia either in 1784 or very early in 1785. Furmage evidently established a chapel in Halifax (Calvinistic Methodist) and worked with the Poor House and with the blacks of that area.⁶ John Marrant is perhaps the most remembered of the four Huntingdonian missionaries for at least two reasons: he was the most published of the four and his followers retained the name of Countess of Huntingdon Connexion in their new land of Sierra Leone.

The ministry of Rev. Marrant is a most fascinating story and deserves a proper treatment.⁷ Marrant was summoned to Nova Scotia through the request of his brother a Black Loyalist living in Nova Scotia, to come over as a missionary. The Countess read the letter and arranged for Marrant's ordination at her chapel in Bath to go forth as a Huntingdonian missionary to Nova Scotia.

Closer at hand for us today we come to the "Call from Macedonia" (New Brunswick) for Huntingdonian missionaries to be sent. The two men who were sent were Revs. Milton and James. but we need to more fully appreciate the "call to Macedonia". The call for a worker to come to New Brunswick (a separate province from 1784) can be traced to one man Dr. John Caleff, a prominent Loyalist, Surgeon and evangelical. Caleff was born in 1726 in Ipswich, Massachusetts and settled in New Brunswick (Parr Town) in 1786. Notice needs to be made of the fact that Caleff participated in the siege of Louisbourg (1745) of which George Whitefield led in prayer, preached to the gathered soldiers, and furthermore that Caleff was one of George Whitefield's pall-bearers in Newburyport, Massachusetts (1770).⁸ In fact Caleff was left money by Whitefield for the making of a mourning ring "the custom being usually to weave a lock of

6. This paper does not explore the ministry of Rev. Furmage but will only mention it in passing. Cheshunt College Archives, Westminster College, Cambridge. The letters of William Furmage to the Countess of Huntingdon, A3/12, #13, (9 May, 1785), #14, (3 Dec., 1785) and #15, (12 Nov., 1786).

7. "Ordination of the first Colored Minister in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion", *The Harbinger* (1856), p.78. (Housed at the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion Archives in Cottonham, England, Mrs. Margaret Staplehurst, Archivist); John Marrant, *The Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black, Now Going to Preach the Gospel in Nova Scotia*, (ed) W. Aldridge (London, 1785). This may be found in George Elliott Clarke's *Fire on Water*, 1 (Lawrencetown Beach, N.S. & Pottersfield Press, 1991), pp.40-48; John Marrant, *The Journal of the Rev. John Marrant...[1785-1789]* (London, 1790). This work may be viewed in the British Museum, London; A. G. Archibald, "The Story of Deportation of Negroes from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leona" *CNSHS* 7 (1891), pp.129-154.

8. Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield II* (Westchester, Illinois, Crossway, 1979), pp.201-203, 506; David R. Jack, "The Caleff Family" 7 (1907) *Acadiensis*, pp.264-266; Ann Gorman Condon, "Caleff, John" *DCB*, V (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), pp.134-135. Jack and Condon give two different years for John Caleff's birth.

the hair of the person whose memory it was intended to honour into the design of a ring.”⁹ These details of Caleff’s association with Whitefield are important to the story which follows. Others have drawn attention to books which Caleff possessed such as Edward Leigh’s *Critica Sacra* and William Ames, *Human Happiness*, standard Calvinistic writers of the Puritan period.

Students of New Brunswick Loyalist history associate Caleff with the effort to form New Ireland and to fix the borders at the Penobscot River with the United States. Our focus here is to see the interplay of the religious and since Caleff made two trips to England concerning fixing the Penobscot as the border this allowed him to interchange with Whitefield’s patroness, the Countess of Huntingdon. Caleff’s first trip (1780) lasted two years during which time he became acquainted with the Countess of Huntingdon.¹⁰ It is through this friendship that we trace the Macedonian call to New Brunswick. Caleff requested, likely during his second trip to England in 1784, that the Countess send one minister to New Brunswick. Instead the Countess not only sent one but two. Caleff’s reaction was one of deep appreciation. In a letter written from New Brunswick to Mr. Whitwer of the Tower, London, 24th May, 1788, Caleff wrote:

Sir,

Your very kind favour of the 25th of Feb., 1788, I have received by the hands of the faithful bearers, Messer. James and Milton, after a long passage. They are in tolerable health, though much fatigued. Oh, Sir! Could I have thought that the glorious God would have been pleased, when I asked of him to send one faithful minister to the province, that he should send me double! May God abundantly bless Lady Huntingdon for her care in this mission. I trust there will be a great ingathering of souls to the Lord Jesus Christ in New Brunswick, through her instrumentality; and that these are the first dawning means of bringing about a glorious reformation in this land. I wish my Lady knew the joy I have in receiving her missionaries. The Rev. Mr. David Phillips is also arrived in South Carolina. And from letters received, there is every reason to hope the Lord will attend his going out with a special blessing.¹¹

The first sentence of this letter may imply that Mr. Whitwer arranged for the large supply of bibles and hymnbooks which the Countess had sent to New Brunswick, care of Dr. Caleff for

9. David R. Jack, “The Caleff Family” *Acadiensis* 7(1907), p.266; Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, pp.280-281 on the ecumenical makeup of the pallbearers being Presbyterian, Anglican and Congregational.

10. Henry Wilmot, “Life and Times of Dr. John Caleff, A Prominent Loyalist” *NBHSC* 4, issue 11, p. 277-281(1919-1928); J.W. Lawrence, “Medical Men of Saint John in its first half-century” *NBHSC* 1, issue 3 (1897), pp.278-279. Also see, Raymond Collection, F18-2 at New Brunswick Museum Library and Archives, Saint John, N.B.

11. Caleff to Whitwer, 24 May, 1788, printed in *Countess of Huntingdon New Magazine*, 1852, p.181.

distribution.¹² The last two sentences concerning Rev. Phillips is a reference to the mission the Countess inherited by Whitefield at Bethesda, Georgia. It makes for a very interesting triangle of exchange between England, Georgia and New Brunswick.¹³ The middle of Caleff's letter gives clear reference to his evangelical beliefs and factually mentions the two Huntingdonian missionaries, Revs. James and Milton.

The commissioning of these two missionaries was accompanied by the publication of Rev. John Bradford's, *An Address to the Inhabitants of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, In North America, occasioned by the Mission of Two Ministers, John James, and Charles William Milton, sent out by the Countess of Huntingdon, From Her College in South Wales, to preach the Glad Tidings of Salvation by Jesus Christ to Lost Sinners*, London, 1788. This was a tract of 23 pages asking the question of all who would read it – "What do you know of conversion and new birth?" and also stressing the duty of sending out preachers.¹⁴ Caleff rallied to the support of the two missionaries upon their arrival in New Brunswick, a matter which it appears placed Caleff in a position of controversy.

Caleff was a Vestryman at Trinity Church, Saint John and was the one pressing for James and Milton to be afforded the opportunity to preach at Trinity Church. Bishop Charles Inglis refused to ordain James and Milton and it appears a protracted controversy/scandal followed between Caleff and the Bishop with the Bishop seeing Caleff as a "religious enthusiast".¹⁵ Caleff, it should be said, served as the Chaplain of the 24th Regiment at Penobscot in addition to his position as surgeon, and conducted services according to the forms of the Church of England.¹⁶ The question which naturally arises is where did James and Milton minister? For a few months

12. Jack, "The Caleff Family", p. 267. This Jack is quoting from Edward Jack who had written a series of articles on Charlotte County which were published in the 'St. Croix Courier' in 1892.

13. Rev. Philips was a student of Trevecca College and was sent out by the Countess in 1788 as a missionary for Bethesda. See, Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim*, p.173; Schlenther, "To Convert the Poor People in America", pp.247-248.

14. John Bradford, *An Address to the Inhabitants of New Brunswick...* (London: Hughs and Welch, 1788), pp.4, 12. Bradford was the minister at Spa-fields Chapel, London at the time and a Connexional minister.

15. Condon, "Caleff" pp.134-135; Jack, "The Caleff Family", p.267; Raymond Collection, F18-3, New Brunswick Museum Library and Archives, Saint John. Milton and James had been ordained in England but within the new Countess of Huntingdon, Connexion, thus were not "episcopally ordained". The Secession from the Church of England had only occurred in 1783/4 and these missionaries were in New Brunswick in 1788. See on the nature of the scandal, Brian Cuthbertson, *The First Bishop: A Biography of Charles Inglis* (Halifax: Waegwoltic Press, 1987), pp.102-104 and a brief quotation on page 251 of Inglis concerning Caleff "a man who would alternately pray with the Methodists, get drunk and blaspheme like an Atheist".

16. Jack, "The Caleff Family", p.268.

they journeyed up river preaching in Maugerville to the Congregationalists but in Saint John where did they preach since both preached in Saint John with Dr. Caleff's favourable impression? Both F. E. Archibald and David Jack conclude that Rev. Milton preached for the Presbyterians (a crowded chapel in Saint John). Hence David Jack includes Milton in his *History of Saint Andrew's Church, Saint John, N.B.* as one of the earliest preachers for this congregation and makes mention of the fact that Milton performed 100 marriages while in Saint John. Milton may very well have supplied the Presbyterian Church in Saint John.¹⁷ We know conclusively of his evangelistic work in the jail through his *Narrative of the Gracious Dealings of God in the conversion of W. Mooney Fitzgerald and John Clark, Two Malefactors, Who were executed on Friday, Dec. 18, 1789, at Saint John's, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, for Burglary; in a Letter from the Reverend Mr. Milton to the Right Honourable The Countess Dowager of Huntingdon* (London and Dublin, 1790). It would appear that Milton also supervised the distribution of the bibles and hymnbooks sent out by the Countess. In total he distributed 3,000 books. The hymnbook in question was no doubt the Countess' own hymnal for her Connexion, a work reflecting the theology of Calvinistic Methodism.¹⁸

We leave off in this paper now Rev. Milton's ministry in Saint John and his subsequent removal to Newburyport, Massachusetts. Likewise we pass from Dr. Caleff's time in Saint John as he moved to Saint Andrew's in 1791 remaining there until his death in 1812.¹⁹ The remainder of this paper now focuses upon the other Huntingdonian missionary who was sent out to New Brunswick through Caleff's 'Macedonian Call' – Rev. John James.

Rev. James and the Maugerville/Sheffield Church

Rev. John James, like Milton, was sent out after a course of studies at Trevecca

17. F.E. Archibald, "Contribution of the Scottish Church to New Brunswick: Presbyterianism from its Earliest Beginnings until the Time of the Disruption and Afterwards, 1784-1852" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh,), pp.35-36; David Russell Jack, *History of Saint Andrew's Church, Saint John, N.B.* (St. John: Barns & Co., 1913), pp.39, 210. A.E. Betts also lists Milton as having served the Presbyterians in Saint John, N.B. It is unclear as to Betts' source. A.E. Betts, *Our Father in the Faith: Being on Account of Presbyterian Ministers Ordained before 1875* (Halifax: Maritime Conference Archives, 1983), p.95. Another question which needs to be addressed are the nature of these 100 marriages by a non C. of E. minister.

18. William Milton, *A Narrative of the Gracious Dealings of God...*(London & Dublin, 1790), pp.19-20; Hugh D. McKellar, "The First Denominational Hymnbook" *The Hymn* 31, issue 1, (1980), p. 32-37; S.E. Boyd Smith, "The Effective Countess: Lady Huntingdon and the 1780 edition of 'A Select Collection of Hymns'" *The Hymn* 44, issue 3, (1993), pp. 26-32.

19. Much more can be said about Milton and Caleff but we end our discussion on them at this point. They will be written of in forthcoming papers. Suffice it to mention here: E. Vale Smith, *History of Newburyport* (Newburyport: n.p., 1854), pp. 376-378 which includes an engraving of Charles William Milton.

College.²⁰ The two men alternated preaching at the Congregational Church in Maugerville during the summer of 1788. The congregation arranged for their board and lodging that summer and on 22 July, 1788 the congregation accepted the Board's recommendation that "Rev. Mr. James might preach with us one half of the time and the Rev. Milton the other..."²¹ It seems however by the autumn that Rev. James was the sole preacher and Rev. Milton was centring his work in Saint John. Thus on 10th November, 1788 the congregation at Maugerville extended a call to Rev. James and on the 25th of November, 1788 Rev. James accepted the call. The next month, 15th December, 1788 Rev. James' request, that a 'call for subscription' be signed, was acceded to and the congregation voted to remove the meeting house from Maugerville to Sheffield, a distance of five miles.²² It would appear that the sole reason for moving the church building centred around a land dispute with the Church of England who claimed the land upon which the meeting-house stood. This often described scene of the one hundred yoked oxen taking the church down the frozen Saint John River occurred during the pastorate of Rev. James, a Huntingdonian missionary.²³ In 1789 Rev. James was now well settled in the Sheffield Church but intimated that he did not see an obligation to necessarily stay more than the year with them and that the salary was inadequate. The Countess of Huntingdon intervened in the matter, urging the congregation to meet Rev. James' terms of remuneration as much as they were able. This by now was 1790 and the congregation did comply, "for the sake of the pious lady their benefactress."²⁴

During Rev. James' ministry the church renewed the church covenant at Sheffield, the terms of which need to be noted to fully appreciate what follows. The Church Covenant of 1774 stated: "...we cordially adhere to the principles of religion (at least the substance of them) contained in the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, where with also the

20. S.C. Orchard, *Cheshunt College: A Record of the College founded by Selina, Dowager Countess of Huntingdon at Trevecca in 1768, moved to Cheshunt in 1792, and to Cambridge in 1905* (n.p.: The Governors of Cheshunt College, 1968), p.23. John James is likely listed a "J. James" in Orchard's Alumni list which unfortunately lacks a date.

21. "Documents of the Congregational Church at Maugerville" *NBHSC* 1, issue 1 (1894)pp.86, 131. Readers will note that M.W. Armstrong in *The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia, 1776-1809* (Hartford: American Society of Church History, 1948), makes one reference to Calvinistic Methodists on page 127.

22. "Documents of the Congregational Church at Maugerville", pp. 137-138.

23. E.A. Betts, *Congregational Churches in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick 1749-1925* (Hantsport, N.S.: Maritime Conference, 1985), pp.43, 188, 190. The present church at Sheffield is not the building which came down the Saint John River from Maugerville, a common mistake found in many sources, such as, Kim Ondaatje, *Small Churches of Canada* (Toronto: Lester and Orphen Dennys, 1982), p. 54.

24. "Documents of the Congregational Church at Maugerville", p.143.

New England Confession of Faith [Cambridge Platform] harmoniseth..."²⁵ The Covenant as renewed on 4th of September, 1789 under Rev. James was in all points the same: "...And after having perused the covenant on which this church was originally settled we do firmly and cordially adhere to the same, both in matters of Faith and Discipline."²⁶

Such a covenant is basically in accord with the Fifteen Articles of the Countess of Huntingdon, Connexion. However, not all within the membership of the Sheffield Church were in accord with it as is evidenced in the tension between one female member of the church and Rev. James.

The member in particular was Mary Coy or McCoy, born 1 Sept. 1771 in Gagetown, of whom several particulars of her life are worth reviewing from her own published *Narrative*.²⁷ As a youth, Mary had heard Henry Alline preach, "a new light travelling minister", and described the scene like "cloven tongues of fire" were upon the congregation.²⁸ Mary was not converted directly under Alline even though she "felt a great weight" from his preaching. She was converted several years later on 1 January, 1787 at 4 o'clock, age 16 years: "All my sins, a guilty conscience, my temptations, and besetments, my weaknesses, and fears, and everything that could annoy my peace and happiness, like a dark and heavy cloud, then passed away; and the sun of righteousness rose upon my soul, with healing in his wings."²⁹

In her narrative she goes on to give an account of several of her dreams after her conversion which mainly centre around the theme of judgement and The Judge. Then in June of 1788, the same month Revs. Milton and James commenced their preaching in Maugerville she made her personal covenant with God and solemn dedication a "Covenant never to be forgotten".³⁰ Four months later she was present when the Lord's Supper was celebrated by the Huntingdonian missionaries at "the Presbyterian church in Sheffield". (This of course was a Congregational Church which technically speaking in September of 1788 was still in

25. "Documents of the Congregational Church at Maugerville", p.119.

26. "Documents of the Congregational Church at Maugerville", p.136 and William Williams, "Sketch of the History of the Congregational Church in Sheffield, N.B." (Unpublished, n.d.) At Maritime Conference Archives, Sackville, CH-1327, p.3.

27. The church covenant of Sept. 1789 contains two signatures which may be part of Mary's family Edward Coy and Anna Coy. Williams, "Sketch of the History of the Congregational Church in Sheffield", p.3; Mary Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life and Christian Experiences of Mrs. Mary Bradley, of Saint John, New Brunswick* (Boston: Strong and Brodhead, 1849), p.9.

28. Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, p.16; J.M. Bumsted, *Henry Alline* (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1984 edition), pp.47-48 confirming Alline's preaching tour of 1779 for the first time up the Saint John River valley (and page 62).

29. Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, p.35.

30. Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, p.38, 45.

Maugerville.) Being present at the communion service created a desire to join the church and thus she was subsequently examined by Rev. James and properly received by the congregation. Her first communion did not prove an immediate blessing because as she took the bread “something said [to her] ‘throw it away.’”³¹

During Rev. James’ ministry [fall, 1791] at Sheffield a Methodist minister Rev. Abraham John Bishop originally from Jersey, came to Sheffield and was conducting meetings to which Mary Coy went. Upon one occasion she prayed and then fell to the floor and was then speechless. Afterwards she met with the church officers of the Congregational Church and told them that a great revival was to come. This resulted in a division amongst the church officers some who believed her others who did not.³² Tensions continued to mount in the congregation and then Mary began to publicly read scripture in the Meeting House at which point Rev. James left the meeting. Then Mary requested a meeting with the elders and Mr. T. T. (Rev. James) who was also to appear before her “that I might declare before his face the base design manifested by him to injure me.”³³ Rev. James refused to attend the meeting but it would appear that Mary took some church members and together they went to accuse him of “some scandalous Indecencies”. The exact nature of these ‘indecencies’ is never specifically revealed but we find her saying that he began to take “strong drink”.³⁴ It would appear that there was an undercurrent of religious tension in Sheffield at this time with various ‘parties’: New Light sympathizers, a rising Methodist element, and a church with a Puritan-Calvinistic heritage, pastored by a Calvinistic Methodist. Mary eventually withdrew from the Congregational church when Rev. William Black came to preach, and she and others from the Congregational Church joined the new Methodist Class in Sheffield.³⁵ Rev. James proceeded in the spring of 1792 to announce to the church that he was in future going to throw his lot in with the Church of England of “which he first drew breath, the most indulgent and least censorious church in the world”.³⁶ Also in future, he would conduct worship “according to the rites of the church of England”. Rev. James continued to live

31. Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, p.48-52.

32. Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, pp.75-77. For a brief account of Abraham Bishop’s work in Saint John and in Maugerville areas, see E. Arthur Betts, *Bishop Black and His Preachers* (Sackville: Maritime Conference Archives, enlarged edition, 1976), pp.40-43, 129.

33. Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, pp.81-82.

34. Compare the versions of this incident in: “Documents of the Congregational Church at Maugerville”, p.145 with Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, pp.75, 82.

35. Bradley, *A Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, pp.83, 89; Betts, *Bishop Black and His Preachers*, pp.45-46. Where a discussion is given on Black’s tour of New Brunswick in 1792 and in particular his preaching at Sheffield, “where he organized the first class, and is said to have brought into Methodism a number of pious Congregationalists.” (P.46)

36. Williams, “Sketch of the Congregational Church in Sheffield”, p.3.

in the parsonage and to use the attached meeting house now for services of the Church of England. It appears that this continued through 1792 and shortly after this he left Sheffield and further land disputes arose between the Congregational party and the Church of England.³⁷

Mary Coy left Sheffield and moved to Saint John where eventually she joined a Wesleyan Chapel on Germain Street. She recorded that her reasons for joining this chapel were a dream which helped her decide and the minister's willingness to sign the terms of church membership: "allow Mary...liberties...to improve her talents and bring her gifts into the sanctuary, as the Lord shall direct her, by his word, and Holy Spirit; also to reprove anyone,...for anything that shall come to her knowledge, of them, contrary to the commands of God."³⁸ In her own words she writes that she had come "to think differently on some points" from the Shorter Catechism.³⁹ It is little wonder after reading Mary's narrative, and given the religious atmosphere of Maugerville/Sheffield in the late 1780's that there were tensions.

To date I have only located one letter from Rev. James back to England. It is dated 18 October, 1792, Sheffield, New Brunswick and was sent to Lady Erskine who received it on December 27, 1792. Lady Anne Erskine, together with Thomas Haweis and John Lloyd, acted as the practical overseers and patrons (trustees) of the Countess of Huntingdon, Connexion, as the Countess had died the year earlier, 17 June, 1791. Anne Erskine had lived with the Countess in Spa Fields Chapel, London the last few years of the Countess' life.⁴⁰ After her death she was kept busy corresponding with many concerning connexional affairs. The letter provides information concerning Rev. James connections with the Church of England folk, comments on the itinerant Methodists, and his own desire to return to England which from all accounts must have been spring, 1793. Mr. Best in the letter is, Mr. George Best, the Countess of Huntingdon's Secretary, who had served the Countess from 1787 until her death.⁴¹ What follows is a transcription of the letter located now at the Cheshunt College Archives, Westminster College, Cambridge.

37. "Documents of the Congregational Church at Maugerville, p.146. Williams, "Sketch of the Congregational Church in Sheffield, p.3.

38. Bradley, *Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, pp.146, 158, 160.

39. Bradley, *Narrative of the Life...Mary Bradley*, p.358.

40. Edwin Welch, "Erskine, Lady Anne Agnes" *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, 1,361.

41. Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim*, pp.181, 204, 206,-210.

Outside: The Right Honourable Lady Anne Agnes Erskine
 &
 Received: Dec. 27-1792
 From Rev. Mr. John James, New Brunswick

Inside the letter:
 Rev. James (N.B.)
 To
 Lady Erskine

18 Oct. 1792
Sheffield, New Brunswick

Dear Honored Lady!

A letter from Mr. Best dated 23rd Feb. 1792 reached me in August last, in which he informed me of your Ladyship's intention to write to me by an early opportunity on the subject of my return to my native land, but hitherto my expectations in that respect have been disappointed etc but however I am not willing to let slip the present opportunity of writing to your Ladyship by the bearer, Mr. Sayres, who is a son of the Mr. Sayres late rector of Maugerville in this Province. Our Mr. Sayres has been a resident in Maugerville, a Merchant since the arrival of the Loyalists in to this country: he is of the Church of England profession, a person of probity and good moral character whose friendship and hospitality I have often experienced: In this view and as a stranger in London I would beg leave to recommend him your Ladyship's condescensions.

This poor wicked place will afford little worth transmitting: but that last spring Mr. Wesley's preachers have made an incursion into this Parish, and the country has ever since been overrun with them, disputes, quarrels, and divisions have been the unhappy consequences, preachers by the meer impulse of a heated imagination have been bawling as loud as they could at the same instant of time, consisting of male and female, old and young and many of them persons of infamous character. O that that Kingdom would come which consists in righteous and peace – I long for the communion I once had with the saints at Spa fields [Chapel, London]. I mean by your Ladyship's advice to stay here until next spring in expectancy of hearing from your Ladyship to be removed from this dismal place. Mr. Milton is gone to New England. I thank Mr. Best for his very comprehensive letter with warm entreaties to heaven for your Ladyship's welfare and that of the Connection of the late and very dear and venerable Lady the Countess of Huntingdon, who has taken her flight from the Church Militant to that which is Triumphant. I am – honoured Lady
And with the profoundest respect
 your Ladyship's most obedient and
 obliged humble servant,

John James,

P. S. My kindest regards to all my former Friends
both Clergy and Laity as also those unknown
who love our Lord Jesus Christ
in sincerity. Amen⁴²

Rev. James did return to England and continued his correspondence with Lady Anne Erskine, writing her from Hereford, and from Cheshunt College.⁴³ Further particulars concerning Rev. James' labours in England remain yet to be more fully explored and are beyond the parameters of this paper.

Conclusion

Since the Countess of Huntingdon, Connexion never gave rise to a lasting church structure in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia they have been ignored, coupled with the fact that the four Huntingdonian missionaries did not put down roots in holding long pastorates. Yet in saying this they warrant our study as part of the intricate web of colonial church life in the 1780's and 90's. Our focus on Rev. James, one of the missionaries, opens the door in a unique way also to the world of a female patron, the theological parties of Sheffield/Maugerville, and perhaps most interesting one female member Mary Coy and her part in colonial church disputes. Schlenther terms the Huntingdonian missions to Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick as abject failures and that when James "went away" – "all breathed easier."⁴⁴ I believe Schlenther has overstated the situation. Four or five years of ministry in a highly intense field must not be simply dismissed. Yes, he shows frustration and wants out. Yet has Rev. James received the name of the villain in this story with a fair accounting of the full situation by writers of local history? I believe the story is more complicated and it is simplistic to say "all breathed easier" upon his departure. There remains much work yet to be done through Anglican, Methodist, Congregational, and Huntingdonian archives, etc... in order to bring the full story of the Huntingdonian Missionaries to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (and Newfoundland) into a fuller orb'd perspective.

42. Rev. John James to Lady Anne Erskine, 18 October, 1792, *Cheshunt College Archives, Cheshunt Foundation, Westminster College, Cambridge*, F1/2230.

43. Rev. John James to Lady Anne Erskine, 25 June, 1796, Hereford; Rev. John James to Lady Anne Erskine, 3 August, 1796, Hereford; Rev. John James to Lady Anne Erskine, 9 August, 1798, Cheshunt College. These three letters are also in the Cheshunt College, Archives. I am indebted to Dr. Geoffrey F. Nuttall for bringing these three letters to my attention in private correspondence 20, February, 1999.

44. Schlenther, "To Convert the Poor People in America", p.251; Betts, *Congregational Churches*, p.43.