

**DID YOUR FAMILY HELP TO BRING METHODISM TO ST. JOHN'S?**  
**A Project of the Bicentenary Celebrations Committee**

Methodists came to St. John's mainly from around Harbour Grace in about 1815. In 1925 Methodists of the time became part of the United Church of Canada.

Are any of the surnames of the known pioneer Methodists of St. John's below the same as yours or in some other part of your family? If so, do you know for certain, or is it possible, that one or more of your ancestors can be traced back to St. John's around 1815? If so, they may well have helped to establish its first Methodist church. We're looking for names of the St. John's Methodists of that time (200 years ago next year) and are trying to find as much about them as possible. If you can add to what we already know about any of them, we hope you will share it with us. On the other hand, we may have more than you do and more than we have printed below; if so, we'll be glad to share it with you. Either way, we would like to hear from you.

Most likely we don't have the names of all of the Methodists in St. John's in 1815. You may know that one or more of your ancestors would have been living in St. John's at the time and most likely would have been Methodists. If so, we would be very grateful if you would get in touch with us.

For anything concerning these pages, please send an email to [info@stjamesuc.org](mailto:info@stjamesuc.org) attention: Leslie Dean. Thank you.

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***Pioneer Methodists in St. John's in 1815:***

**Jane Andrews; James Bayley; Andrew Barnes; John Chancey; Mark and Mary Coxen; Thomas George William Eastaff; Mary (Jeffers) Eastaff; William Freeman; Amelia Frederica (Furneau) Freeman; James Furneau; ? Graham; James Lilly; Elizabeth (Roberts) Lilly; John and Mary Masters; Jonathan Parsons; Charlotte (Butler) Parsons; George Vey; Honour (Butler) Vey; Mary (March) Vey; Virtue Vey and Rev. John Pickavant.**

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**Jane Andrews.** She was listed as a Methodist in the records of the Congregational Church in 1810. No additional information has been found.

**James Bayley.** He was from England where he was a Methodist. At first in St. John's he was a member of the Congregational Church and later moved to the Methodist church. It appears that the family name was sometimes called **Bailey**. James Bayley was married in St. John's in 1812, but his wife's name has not been found. In 1818 he wrote and signed a letter to headquarters in England asking for financial help; the letter was signed by about eleven other members.

**Andrew Barnes.** An Andrew Barnes was active in the first years of the Methodist mission. Whether or not he was a member of one of the Barnes families of the Congregational Church in

St. John's at the time is not known. Andrew signed the 1818 letter to Methodist headquarters in England written by James Bayley.

**John Chancey.** John was a member of the Trustees of the Methodist Chapel in St. John's and was one of the three (the others being Eastaff and Wm Freeman –see below) who in 1816 signed a letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in England seeking funds to help with the building of the second chapel. Rev. Lewis took tea with John Chancey on June 2, 1819. John Chancey does not appear in subsequent known Methodist records.

**Mark and Mary Coxen.** Mary's family name before her marriage is not known. Mark was one of the five prominent lay leaders in establishing the St. John's Methodist mission in St. John's in 1814-15. He was from Birmingham, England, and had been in the army, seemingly came to St. John's with the Royal Artillery. He presumably married in St. John's. He and his wife Mary had the following children with their baptism and dates: Elizabeth 1800, Samuel 1802, Catherine 1804, David 1806, Ann 1808, and Elias 1814. He has been recorded as being a good violinist in the chapel, and their daughters sang in the choir.

**Thomas George William and Mary (Jeffers) Eastaff.** He was a member of the early St. John's Methodist mission and a significant participant. In 1795 he came from England with the Royal Fencibles Regiment in St. John's as a military surveyor and draftsman. One of his projects about 1807 was to draw a street plan at the instruction of Governor Erasmus Gower whose name is carried by the street today. He and Elizabeth Jeffers were married Oct 30, 1799. Their children were baptised in the Congregational Church in St. John's. They were: George, born 1802; Frederick, born 1804; and Lidia (Lydia?), bap 1813. It appears he had been a member of the Congregational Church until 1814. In November of that year he wrote and signed a letter from the St. John's Methodist congregation to headquarters in England. In 1817 he (and presumably his family) returned to England. Eventually he moved to Quebec where he died in 1854.

**William and Amelia Frederica (Furieux) Freeman.** William was born in Harbour Grace in about 1784. Amelia Frederica Furieux, born in 1798, was from Port de Grave.

He was a member of the Methodist Committee of St. John's that was formed in 1813. When the Governor, Sir Richard Keats, wouldn't give them for a land-grant on which to build a chapel, Freeman, a carpenter, rented to the church a piece of his land on or near what is now Prescott Street. The chapel was opened on Christmas 1815 but was totally burned in February 1816.

The second chapel was built on land some distant from that of their first chapel but also owned by Freemans, where they had their house and a garden. The overall site is now the location of the Gower Street United Church.

Amelia Frederica's death is recorded in the *Harbour Grace Standard* of January 13, 1862. "At St. John's on Monday morning the 6<sup>th</sup> inst at half-past nine o'clock, Amelia Frederica, wife of Mr. W. Freeman, aged 64 years."

William died later that year. The *Harbour Grace Standard* of May 7, 1862, carried this notice: "At St John's, on Tuesday [May 6] morning, after a brief illness borne with great meekness and patience, Mr. William FREEMAN, in the 78<sup>th</sup> year of his age."

He left a will in which he mentions his children: Charlotte, John, Jemima, William T., Caleb, George, and Robert.

P.S. There was another William Freeman at St. John's at the time, married with a family. Both had a son called "John." It appears they were not related.

**James Furneaux** was an officer in the Congregational Church and left it to join the Methodists. He may have been the one who started a boot/shoemaker business in St. John's in 1816.

? **Graham.** His first name is unknown; no firm evidence that he was a Methodist has been found, although it is a reasonable possibility as he was frequently visited by Rev. Lewis on his trips to St. John's. It was to the home of a Mr. Graham that Rev. Lewis first went when he arrived in St. John's in 1815. Rev. Lewis makes reference to "Mr. Graham's schoolroom" where he preached. In 1820 Mr. Graham's pupils presented a play at the Globe Theatre.

**James and Elizabeth (Roberts) Lilly.** In some of the earliest writings on St. John's Methodism, James was mentioned and identified as being from Harbour Grace. Two children have been found: George Samuel Lilly, baptised in 1813 and Elizabeth Roberts Lilly, baptised on Sept 4, 1815. Another son, Robert, died in 1827. James signed the letter sent to England from the church in 1818.

**John and Mary Masters.** Mary's family name before her marriage is not known. In 1810 John was attending the Congregational Church where the records noted that he was a Methodist. Rev. Lewis called on Mr. Masters in 1816. The Masters had the following recorded children's births/baptisms: John born 1801, Emilia baptized 1802, Ann born 1804, William baptized 1805, Elizabeth baptized 1807, Henry baptized 1808, Ruth baptized 1812, Kenzie baptized 1814. The *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* has an entry for a John Masters who died in 1755, perhaps this is John's father or grandfather.

**Jonathan and Charlotte (Butler) Parsons.** Jonathan was from Harbour Grace. Baptisms of at least some of their children: Louisa, baptised in 1808 and William George, baptised in 1813. His will was probated in 1831; in it Jonathan mentioned only one by name: Henry for a particular instruction. In 1818 he was among the eleven members of the Methodist chapel who signed their names to a letter to the Wesley Methodist Missionary Society in England, expressing their poor financial condition.

**George and (1) Honour (Butler) (2) Mary (March) Vey.** We know of only one George Vey in the timeframe of this project. He is widely mentioned as a devout Methodist lay reader, serving in Bay Roberts and Port de Grave. He and Honour Butler of Port de Grave were married in 1794. He was identified at the time as being a carpenter; whether or not he continued that work the rest of his working life is not known. He and Honour had at least three children: Christopher (1797-), Virtue (1799-1858) and Mary Virtue(1803-1887).

It appears the George and Honour moved to St. John's in 1803 and Honour died there about 1806.

In 1807 George married a Mary March in St. John's after which several children were born: James, baptised in 1810; Mary Ann, baptised in 1812; Elizabeth baptised in 1815.

George died in 1835 in St. John's at the age of 75 years.

Rev. John Pickavant, Methodist minister in St. John's, married Virtue Vey, the daughter of George and Honour Vey, in St. John's on October 4, 1815 in the home of William Freeman. They were married by Rev. Frederick Carrington, an Anglican minister, because at that time non-conformist clergy and Catholic priests were not allowed to perform marriages.