

THE GEORGEVILLE ENTERPRISE

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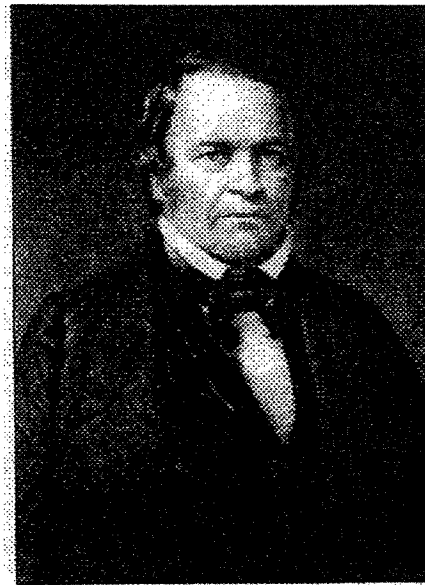
WHEN WORD WENT OUT FROM GEORGEVILLE TO PREPARE FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

The Georgeville Historical Society's 7th annual meeting on Saturday, July 11, will present fresh insights into an electrifying figure in Georgeville's past, "The Man Who Turned the World Upside Down."

Guest speaker Denis Fortin will profile William Miller, the Low Hampton, N.Y. preacher who prophesied the end of the world "about the year 1843," a fiery apocalypse when the Second Coming of Christ would usher in a thousand year reign of peace and enlightenment and backsliders would be condemned to eternal damnation.

Over eight days, between June 28 and July 5, 1840, Miller gave a series of 15 lectures in Georgeville that drew large audiences from around Lake Memphremagog and the surrounding countryside. Preaching from a large window in the village's two-storey brick school house (on the site of the red school house, the brick structure itself burned in 1849), he addressed -- in one recollection -- "a multitude that filled the capacious interior and the common outside."

From the sparks that Miller struck in his Georgeville lectures, "Millerism" spread like wildfire through the Townships in the early 40s. His preaching was endorsed by, among others caught up in the fervour, the Rev. Edward Mitchell, the Baptist preacher who settled near the Ives cemetery on the Georgeville-Magog road in 1838 and maintained his ministry here for three decades, and the Rev. Levi Adams, who would



Evangelist William Miller

later serve as a Congregational minister in Georgeville and Fitch Bay.

Another impressed observer of the growth of the Millerite phenomenon was Ralph Merry 4th, a son of the first settler at the Outlet (Magog). When Miller laid the groundwork for his mission five years earlier in a preaching tour that took him to the Outlet, Georgeville and Stanstead Plain, Ralph Merry noted in his diary: "Wm. Miller began on Sunday and delivered lectures relative to the Millennium and the near approach of the Judgment which he holds... will last 1,000 years and that the new earth will be this globe after it is consumed by fire."

Besides the opportunity to spread his message, Miller was drawn to Georgeville and the lake for personal reasons -- the presence here of family and friends. His sister, Anna, and her husband, Joseph Atwood, were among the earliest settlers at the Outlet. Visiting the Atwoods, he became close to

SHG/GHS SUMMER PROGRAM

At the Murray Memorial Centre, our 7th annual meeting, Saturday, July 11 at 2:30 p.m.

At the Gallery, 'A Very Good Year': Photos and Memorabilia of the Bicentennial

the Abbotts, Rexfords and Ives among families on the lakeshore.

On his 1840 visit to Georgeville, he stayed with the Ives, writing to his son at home in June 22: "I arrived here Saturday night on the stage, being obliged to leave Anna ten miles back, on account of her being stage-sick. Today Mr. Bullock has gone after her." He later added: "I have just heard Anna has gotten as far as Georgeville and expect she will be here tonight."

Denis Fortin, an assistant professor of theology at Andrews University in Michigan, is well placed to trace the stern doctrine of William Miller and the reasons for its dramatic impact in the Townships. A native of Quebec City, he says that "for more than a decade the subject has fascinated

me. I began to be interested in William Miller and early Adventism in the Townships while I served as a Seventh-Day Adventist pastor in the Townships in 1982-83.

"My interest grew even more while I did my doctoral studies at Laval in Quebec City. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on Millerism and Adventism in the Eastern Townships in the 19th century and completed my doctorate in 1995."

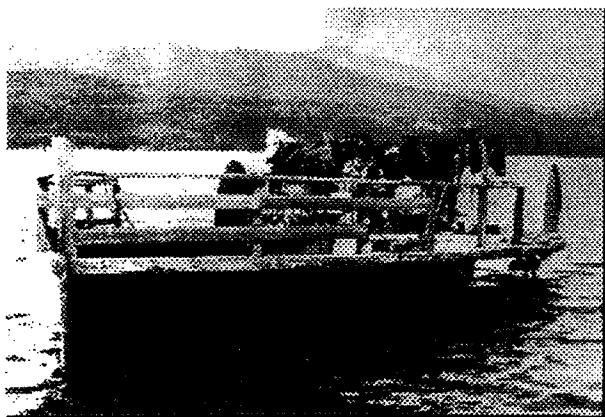
Since 1994 he has taught at Andrews University, which has a large collection of Millerite and early Adventist documents.

Everyone is invited to hear Dr. Fortin at the historical society's annual meeting, at 2:30 p.m. on July 11 at the Murray Memorial Centre.

THE SILVER TRAIL OF THE HAY-EATER

In last summer's historical society exhibition, we showed a photo of the *Hay-eater*, a horse-powered ferry of the late 1880s that offered moonlight excursions from Georgeville when not occupied with its workaday chores.

Since then we have tracked down a rare first-hand account by a traveller who crossed the lake



The Hay-eater and its patient horses (1889)

from Knowlton's Landing to Georgeville on the *Hay-eater* in August, 1889. The traveller was Miss Frances S. Howe, an intrepid Bostonian and early female journalist who, with a companion, Miss Fannie Allen, spent her summers exploring New England by horse and buggy. She recorded her adventures in columns in the *Boston Evening Transcript* and *Leominster (Ma.) Daily Enterprise*; they were later collected in a book,

14,000 Miles: A Carriage and Two Women, published in 1906.

"As we slowly picked our way down the last steep pitch [to Knowlton's Landing]," Miss Howe wrote, "we saw something coming towards the landing. It moved so slowly we could only tell which way it was going by the silver trail which we traced back to Georgeville."

The silver trail was the wake of the *Hay-eater*. The women caught the horse-boat just in time "to go back on its last regular trip for the night and we were greatly interested in this new, but not rapid transit." Their own horse, she reported, would have enjoyed the trip except for "the constant snapping of a whip as a sort of mental incentive to the two horses... which revolved very slowly around a pole, thereby turning a wheel which occasioned the silent trail which indicated we moved.

"A man, a boy and a girl alternated in using [the whip] which was absolutely essential to progress."

On their arrival in the village, the visitors discovered that the old Camperdown Hotel, which they knew from an earlier visit in 1881, had been replaced by the larger New Camperdown. "The +Camperdown, that charming old inn at Georgeville, had been supplanted by a hotel so large that no one wants it, and its doors were closed.

"We were directed to a new boarding house standing very high [today the Auberge], where we

were soon settled in an upper front room with two French windows, one opening on a piazza and the other on a charming little balcony with the lake before us in all its beauty. This was to be our home for several days; of course our friends wanted to know how we got there, and when we told them how we crossed the lake, they exclaimed: 'Oh! You came in the *Hay-eater*.'

"Well named, surely. Late in the evening, as we were watching the lake bathed in moonlight, we saw again that silver trail, and knew the *Hayeater* must have been signalled. Morning, noon and

night, those horses walked their weary round, and the *Hay-eater* performed its work of helpfulness."

As it turned out, the horses were soon back on dry land. As our photo shows, the *Hay-eater* could be powered by as many as three horses. But it proved no match for the steamers *Mountain Maid* and *Lady of the Lake* and lasted for just that summer. Gladys Norton, whose family camped at Birchbay, remembered "many moonlight excursions on her, with the patient horses walking round and round."

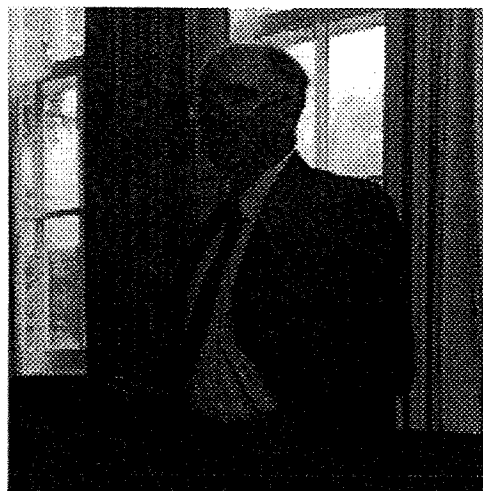
1797 AND ALL THAT: INTRIGUING TO VISIT BUT YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO LIVE THERE

As guest speaker for village's bicentennial, Prof. Desmond Morton, the director of McGill's Institute for the Study of Canada and a part-time Georgevillan, took last year's annual meeting of the historical society on a time-travelling journey back to 1797 and world of Moses Copp - a fascinating place to visit, he suggested, though few would want to live there. Excerpts from his talk:

These are conservative times and the one safe definition of a conservative is someone who thinks that the past is better than the present and, given the people who seem to be running the world, the future will be even worse. Some people dream of "the good old days", when children did what they were told, governments minded their own business, not ours, and the elderly were respected for their wisdom, experience and majestic uselessness. Historians, of course, can earn some income and more praise by confirming that the past was, indeed, a better place.

Here is a role I find hard to perform. I am immensely grateful to the founders of Georgeville and even more grateful that they started the job 200 years ago. Frankly, I would rather visit the past than live there.

Sanitation is reason enough. Remember that if this many people had met in a room in July 1797, you would have been powerfully aware that none of us would have had a bath. When I take people time-travelling, as is my intent this afternoon,



McGill's Desmond Morton

I make sure that the re-entry systems are in excellent working order.

That's why I normally travel no more than a century at a time. I was all set to land you in 1897. It was a good year for most Canadians. It was a Jubilee Year for Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria. In Ottawa, the Liberals had been in power for a year under the spell-binding Wilfrid Laurier. Indeed, after a quarter-century of economic misery, Canada was beginning to boom.

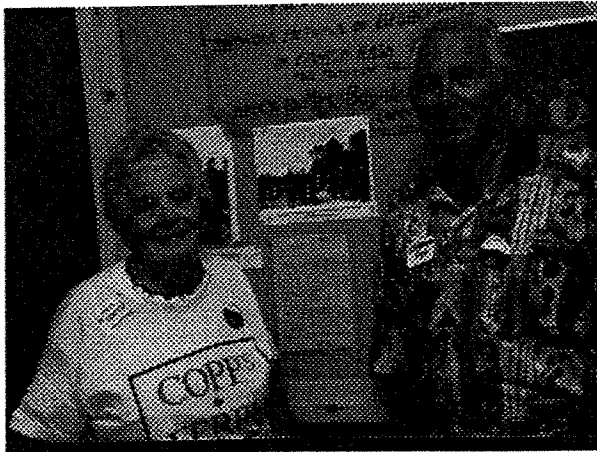
Gold had been discovered in the Klondike and prospectors were pouring up from Skagway. Settlers were flooding westward, too, to the enormous delight of Montreal's favourite corporation, the C.P.R. Truth to tell, Canada's business metropolis was on the verge of its greatest

boom ever, and the wealth would easily flow as far as Lake Memphremag and beyond.

Georgeville voters, a dwindling band, were contrarian. No sooner had Sir John A. Macdonald brought their M.P., Charles Colby, into the cabinet *than his Stanstead constituents kicked him out for a Liberal. Georgeville agreed, by 56 votes to 55. Then, when Canada voted for Laurier and the Liberals in 1896, Stanstead elected the mayor of Magog, a Tory. Georgeville was a double loser, sticking with the Liberals, 55 to 41 (67 eligible voters stayed home).

But no. Your executive was uncompromising. The time-traveller had to be cranked past his safety zone. It was 1797 or bust. But what if nothing much happened 200 years ago, except for the momentous decision by Moses Copp to run a ferry across the lake between Nicholas Austin's place and the little cove on the eastern shore?

Imagine a summer as hot as now, with Moses and some men, in a fair cloud of mosquitoes, felling trees near the lake and hauling them to the



*Aulie Valanzola and Stillman Vance Copp
at Homecoming*

clearing where Mrs. C. made dinner over a fire, kept an eye on the younger kids, and tried to keep the cow out of the new garden patch. We would marvel at the amazing axmanship that was the pride of frontiersmen, but some of us could have done as well with a chain saw. As for the wife, I can't see any of us taking her place without a guarantee of electricity, a dishwasher, a freezer and at least Larry and Marie's General Store in the offing.

Apart from the birth of Copp's Ferry, the number of memorable events in 1797 is distinctly

limited. This was no golden age of literature, music or art. The times inspired few memorable inventions or advances in thought and knowledge. The simple fact was that Europe was in the fourth year of a bloody war that would last, despite brief intervals, for another 18 years.

Word was certainly spreading of a gaunt young military genius commonly known at the time as Napoleon Buonaparte. In 1797, still a mere general in the French revolutionary army, he had led his ragged soldiers to Rivoli on the river Adige and smashed an Austrian army by splitting the Hapsburg infantry from their artillery... What Napoleon did to the map of Europe would never matter because he could not quell England's fleet. In 1797, he came close.

In the spring, a British fleet under Sir John Jervis and Horatio Nelson shattered the Spanish fleet at St. Vincent. Then came incredible news. After years of appalling living conditions and merciless flogging, Britain's conscript sailors revolted. The world's great fleet, and Britain's only real defence, was neutered. Jervis, "Old Jarvey", put it right, with a mixture of bluff, bargaining and brutality. By the end of June, the officers had returned to their quarterdecks, the ringleaders were hanging from their own yardarms, and the worst mutiny in British history was over — but not forgotten. All too little changed, but sailors were the least radical of men. And remember that the conditions of most working men and their families were not dramatically better than those on the warships of Jarvis and Nelson.

Closer to home, Moses Copp was probably more aware of U.S. politics. This was the year when a weekly postal service was arranged between Canada and the States. In 1797, Americans admitted Tennessee as a state and finally learned the outcome of the second election under their new Constitution. Refusing to seek re-election, George Washington delivered his *Farewell Address*, warning Americans against foreign adventures and "entangling alliances". The electoral college, very much alive and powerful, met and after a ton of chicanery, favoured Washington's preferred successor, John Adams, over Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson became Vice-president, placing Adams' most remorseless political critic only a heartbeat from the Oval

Office – or, to be more historical, the Philadelphia hotel room where the president still camped.

Canada was an eternity from Europe – a dangerous voyage that ranged from a couple of weeks to months. Few returned. Since 1791, the Canadas had been split at the far side of the Seigneurie of Longueuil. In both Canadas, government was in the hands of a British governor, an appointed executive and a legislative council. No one quite knew what role was played by the Legislative Assembly but surely, respectable people agreed, it was too democratic to have much influence.

Voters needed as little as two pounds income a year if they lived in the country – say \$2,000 today – or five pounds if they lived in Montreal, Quebec or Three Rivers. By pure oversight, no one noted that the law did not limit the vote to men, and a few brave women may have cast ballots, though the routine riots around the polls were intended to scare them, and most sensible men, into staying home.

The issue of slavery in Lower Canada, an open question 200 years ago, was settled by Chief Justice James Monk. An abolitionist when he was appointed in 1794, Monk finally had a chance to rule on the question when an escaped slave was found by his master who wanted the man lodged in prison. No, said Monk, there was no slavery in the province, and there could be no prison.

How did our ancestors live? John Neilson, printer for the government and *The Gazette*, was an affluent man who, unlike many Montrealers, did not go hungry in the winter. His household consumed eight kilograms of meat a week, plus a kilogram of butter and 18 eggs. He ate fruit, vegetables and herbs, but only in season, and drank tea, milk and water. If Neilson and his more comfortably-off friends wanted further sustenance, Montreal was fortunate that year in acquiring its own Tea Garden, the contribution of a Mr. T. Powis, who promised his clientele punch, tea, pastries and dinner on a par with the Ranelagh Gardens in Chelsea.

All this wanders back to the city from Copp's Ferry in 1797, but somehow the attraction was irresistible. We are the descendants and beneficiaries of men and women who endured what few of us could not contemplate, save as a short-term adventure in the bush. They lived hard,

lonely, painful lives. They battled the elements. For the most part, they hated the trees that crowded them to the very edge of rivers and streams and which they could tackle only with primitive tools. Apart from a few teams of horses and oxen, they could bring only their own physical strength to the task.

They and their women died young, of illnesses and injuries that might cost us a few days in the hospital or a prescription. They lived on coarse, monotonous food and, sometimes, there was no food at all. Their clothing, soaked with rain, snow and their own sweat, lasted until it turned to rags.

Yet, in their own minds, they lived as good a life as they could, conscious of their duty to family, community and King, and to the God whose works were so manifest in the land and in their own alternation of great and terrible fortune. They built homes and businesses and places of learning and worship: they cleared, planted and harvested their fields; they lived, as we do, with hope and love and anger and despair. We know them as well as we do our own ancestors, harder in their judgements than we are, perhaps, more limited in their knowledge of the wider world, but people whose handiwork has given us Canada, Quebec and especially this small community.

Few of us could live happily in their world, but we live very well in the world they have given us.

The Georgeville Enterprise

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Articles are published in English or French, in the language in of the writer. Your comments and submissions are welcome.

Desktop publishing for this issue of *The Enterprise* by Larry Bernais.



From the Bicentennial Mailbag

HOME COMING '97: 'A MAGICAL WEEKEND'

Dear Georgeville Bicentennial Committee,

The Homecoming Weekend was a grand celebration. I don't think my children realized how much it would mean to them to be present at the festivities on Saturday: the chance meetings with friends, now grown and with young of their own; the super dinner dance in the evening, with all ages enjoying the excitement.

I personally wept all through the Sunday service. It was so thoughtfully organized and filled with meaning. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be part of this remarkable village.

Mary Cowan
Georgeville

I saw many of my cousins not seen in over 40 years. I met new ones from other branches of the Copp family. The celebration was a big thing for a small village to undertake and it seemed to go off without a visible hitch.

Thanks again for Georgeville hospitality.

Kathryn Honey
Cornwallis, Oregon

I am sure all the members of the Copp family and the past residents appreciate the effort. Of course the highlight for me was meeting my half aunt, Mrs. Aulie Valanzola, for the first time. Members of my family enjoyed everything – when this can be said of twin teen granddaughters, you know it had to be right!

Stillman Vance Copp,
Burlington, Vermont

I really enjoyed giving a recital at the opening of the Murray Memorial Centre. It was a wonderful audience. I believe I mentioned that somehow I wanted to play there for quite some time. Being able to perform in the newly renovated centre on the rededication day made that dream especially fulfilling.

Christine Prince,
Victoria, B.C.

Looking back I simply cannot think of anything which was lacking or which could have been improved upon. Anyone I have spoken to

agrees. What an achievement to have had such a large gathering of all sorts of people enjoying each other's company, relaxed and happy – and the children! Little tiny ones toddling about looking loved and secure.

Kay Leslie
Georgeville

A wonderful historical exhibit. The 1860s photographs are outstanding, some of the best we have ever seen. I was particularly happy to find the view towards what was once the farm of my Kemp ancestors.

Dick and Ruth Blodgett
Wilton, Connecticut

An absolutely magical weekend for Georgeville's 200th birthday. From Friday's gathering at the hall surrounded by Mary Landry's capture of the spirit of some Georgeville folk on film to the fiddlers accompanying our BBQ lunch on Sunday, it was a wonderful time.

The historical society's exhibition was a great hit, especially with distant visitors. Some actually took photos of the photos! The society's influence and participation in the Bicentennial helped the event be one to remember.

When the rain came near the end of the BBQ, even that felt like a good omen – the heavens showering Georgeville with blessings for the next 200 years.

The Lamberts,
Georgeville

THE HILLS WERE AGAIN FULL OF ECHOES – WITH THE HELP OF A STORIED MELODEON

At the Homecoming Weekend's "Service of Song and Praise", Jeanne Taylor evoked a lakeshore tradition, playing an old pump organ with an interesting history of its own. The Historical Society's President John Scott introduced the service with this account of the Birchbay "melodeon":

"The hills are full of echoes," the Rev. Samuel June Barrows wrote. "We have tried them with voice and trumpet: they do not fail us. But we know also that they are full of echoes for the mind and heart. They respond to the reverence, trust and praise which the soul sings to them."

Samuel June Barrows wrote those words 120 years ago. He first came to Georgeville and the lake with his family in 1874. And he expressed a sentiment I expect we have all felt on this Homecoming Weekend. Coming home to Georgeville is -- as it always has been -- full of memories and echoes. Echoes of our own first sight of the lake and mountains, memories of the parents who raised us here -- or who brought us here -- memories of growing up and raising our



Jeanne Taylor and the Birchbay melodeon

own children here, fond memories of family and friends and neighbours. The joy and peace do not fail us.

So we come together to remember and give thanks – to remember those who have given life and meaning to the community -- and to give thanks for the beauty and blessings of this place. Our Homecoming Service is intended to evoke a tradition that Samuel June Barrows brought to the

lake in the 1870s. This was a tradition of open air services that endured for more than half a century at the Barrows camps at Birchbay and Cedar Lodge, and at the camp, a little further down the lake, of his friend and colleague, the Rev. Christopher Rhodes Eliot.

Let me take you back to a Sunday at Birchbay 91 years ago. It was described by a visitor from Boston in the weekly Unitarian *Christian Register*. The visitor wrote: "Perhaps the first delight you notice, next to all the surrounding beauty, is the blessed stillness. No automobiles penetrate these solitary forest depths. There are no dogs, no motorcycles. No ice carts rattling over stony streets. If the wind is not blowing, the absolute silence is awe-inspiring."

On Rocks or Tree-roots

The campers gathered in what was called "the Chapel", a point of land running out into the lake, walled on every side by tall pines and cedars. The visitor's account continued: "From the neighbouring farms and camps come others to swell the little congregation, which scatters about sitting on rustic bench or rock or tree-root. Mrs. Barrows presides at a small organ brought out from the cabin."

Generations of Georgeville families have been led in songs of praise by this small pump organ, and we are continuing that tradition this morning. You may be interested to know that the bill of sale for the organ survives, underscoring the history it has seen. It is described as a "five octave melodeon, black walnut case" and purchased by Samuel June Barrows - for \$90 down and installments spread over three years -- in Washington, D.C., in 1870.

At the time, he was working as private secretary to the U.S. Secretary of State, William Henry Seward. Washington, his wife Isabel Barrows recalled, was still a country village where cows and geese and pigs had the run of the streets. "I have seen a cow turn innocently into the White House grounds," she wrote, "and snatch a mouthful by the sacred steps where Lincoln's feet had but just walked, though now, alas, the feet of Andrew Johnson went in and out."

From Washington, the organ went with the Barrows to Boston, where he studied for the ministry at the Harvard Divinity School and was

ordained as minister of the historic First Church in the Boston suburb of Dorchester. And from Dorchester the organ came on to Memphremagog and Birchbay when the Barrows built their first log cabin there in 1890.

For decades thereafter, the organ was brought out to the rustic "Chapel" on Sundays, for morning, afternoon or evening services. I am told that on occasion it was even put on a raft and towed out on to the lake for hymn-sings in the still of the evening, surrounded by choristers who would gather around it in their canoes. The hills are indeed full of echoes.

Such occasions tended to impress themselves in memory. This was certainly so for a young man named Morris Wilcox. He was a son of Willis Charles Wilcox, the farmer who built and looked after so many of the log cabins that spread along the lakeshore from the Barrows first camp.

Late in his life Morris Wilcox wrote: "Among the memories I most cherish are Sunday evenings at Birchbay around 1903. Religious services were held under jack o'lanterns hung from tree branches. A Bible passage was read, followed by a short sermon from some man-of-God. Music was provided by a small portable reed organ played by a pig-tailed girl and we stood to sing.

Over the Night Water

"In the years that have followed I have heard famous organists and world renowned choirs but none have moved me as did that organ and the young untrained voices ringing through the trees and out over the night water."

Thanks to the kindness of Elizabeth Ensink-Hill, whose parents Ben and Faith Hill took over the Birchbay property in 1940, we are privileged to join the company of all of those who, with the help of the organ, have raised their voices to the hills. The organ is played this morning by Jeanne Taylor, whose husband Charlie Scott first came to Birchbay with his parents more than 60 years ago.

"I will lift mine eyes unto the hills," the Psalmist wrote, "whence cometh my help."

And the Rev. Samuel June Barrows wrote: "The hills are full of echoes. We have tried them with voice and trumpet: they do not fail us. But we know also that they are full of echoes for the mind and heart. They respond to the reverence, trust and praise which the soul sings to them."