

First Missions – Canada, Napan, New Brunswick

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Canada, Napan, New Brunswick

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Revised September 22, 2025

The following is an excerpt taken from the *The High School Times*, which was published February 29, 1912, by a student of the high school who was present at the time.

TTT Editors Note of information given by a Reader: Napan is pronounced like “happen.” It does not rhyme with “Japan.” This is a small community bordering the Southeast limits of the city of Miramichi in New Brunswick, Canada. Miramichi is an amalgamation of several towns which still appear on some maps, including Chatham, Newcastle, Douglastown, Nelson-Miramichi, and Loggieville. Napan is situated beside the former Chatham and Loggieville, but was not taken in as part of the city. The present Napan convention grounds is the second one to be located in Napan, and convention has been held in Napan continuously since about 1920 if I am not mistaken.

The Go-Preachers in Napan

Tuesday evening of last week was marked by a happening, that the people of Napan and all those present will not forget very soon. Mr. Wood of St. Andrew's church summoned the Go-preachers, Mr. Cook and Mr. Buzby to answer certain charges that he was to make against them.

It was in the opinion of many that they would not show up, but sure enough they were there, ready to accept anything Mr. Wood might say. I was late getting there; Mr. Wood had been talking for some time. The place was crowded to the door-steps.

The St. Andrews church minister produced documents and pamphlets and letters from localities in which these men, or their associates were or had been working, to back up his arguments, together with the bible and what he had heard from people in the locality of Napan.

Mr. Wood claimed that they (the Go-Preachers) had told a certain person in Napan that they had not preached on the Chaplin Island Road, in Protectionville, that they did not get the school by fair means, that they received registered letters, that they lured away girls, and broke up neighbor and family ties. He said it looked very suspicious for two strangers to come into a place and not give any satisfaction as to who they were, where they came from, where they got their salary, if any, and to what class of religious people they belonged. Mr. Wood concluded his able speech by saying that he would leave it to the people to decide whether they considered it safe or right to have people in the neighborhood disturbing the peace of the community.

Mr. Cook then took the floor, unmoved by Mr. Wood's strong arguments. He started in by asking Mr. Wood if he was aware of the pamphlets and documents origin. Wood replied by saying he was prepared to swear to them, in so far as he knew them to be true. Mr. Wood's documents were not signed by a magistrate, but by a Notary Public. Mr. Cook claimed that such documents were illegal, and if those whose names were signed to the papers were enemies of theirs, then they (the undersigned) would swear to anything that would do them an injury.

Mr. Cook said Mr. Wood accused them of raising disorder. Mr. Cook said no such thing ever happened, that when disorder arose it was due to the ignorance of the people, or the interference of ministers who, he claimed, were to blame for a great deal of strife. Cook said they did not go try much in Catholic communities since their religious teachers had such an influence over them they would seldom attend. He related an unpleasant experience he and his associate had with rotten eggs on P.E.I., but said everyone that was near him was hit but himself. He said this was caused by a pack of ruffians.

Mr. Cook said Mr. Buzby told him that he had obtained the school by the consent of the trustees. Mr. Cook told us his companion would answer for himself. He told about the girl going out west from P.E.I., and why she went, through no fault of their own. He said after being in the west for a month or so, she became a Go-Preacher. That's as far as he went. He did not tell us where she is. Mr. Cook also used passages from the Bible to show that his arguments were right, and also quoted freely from the New Testament to show that their mode of preaching was right.

Mr. Cook, wandered away from his subject a great deal, and Mr. Wood was forced to rise to a point of order very often. The Go-Preacher said that when they were in want of money, they worked for it with their hands, and also worked in cases for their board,

where their money was not accepted. He denied receiving registered letters and called upon Miss Stothart, postmistress at Ferryville, who said that neither Mr. Cook nor Mr. Buzby received registered letters there, as was claimed by Mr. Wood.

After a time, Mr. Wood questioned Mr. Cook on a subject, what it was I just forget, but at this point Mr. Buzby thinking Mr. Cook was out of breath, desired to speak, and was given the permission. Mr. Wood asked how long it would take him to say all he had to say. Mr. Buzby replied, "About two weeks." He then said half an hour would do for this time to say all he wanted to.

"All you know? All right," said Mr. Wood.

"Aho, no!" returned Mr. B. "Not all I know nor all you know either."

Mr. Wood then told Mr. B. not to drift away from the subject. He asked him what other way was there to get to Protectionville.

"Well," said B., "for my part I often went through the woods, its eight miles shorter, but there is no other road, and anyway Protectionville is three miles off the road." Mr. Buzby also said he received the consent of the trustees to preach in the school. Mr. McDermaid said he gave him no consent. "You did," retorted B. A gray haired woman sitting about the middle of the audience, and who seemed to be on springs, one time shook her fist at Mr. Buzby as much as to say. "If I only had my rolling pin here old chap." Mr. Buzby answered many arguments brought against him but not all.

Mr. Wood again took the floor, when Mr. Buzby's time expired, and endeavored to back up his previous statements, which he did to a certain extent. Mr. Buzby claimed that some of the people had not told the truth about them in Napan. The minister claimed that he did not think anyone should call another a liar, because the Bible does not teach that. "Show me the passage you refer to," interrupted Buzby. Mr. Wood quoted it, but Buzby said that it did not contain the word liar. "Anyway," said the Go-Preacher, "Christ called a man a liar himself." "Show me the passage," said Mr. Wood. He did so, but the minister said that did not refer to man, but the devil.

"Did you ever see the devil?" asked Buzby, and needless to say Mr. Wood answered in the negative.

The meeting broke up about one o'clock, after nearly five hours debating and worst of all after spending five hours in a room with no ventilation except the doors, and they were so crowded that a mosquito would have had trouble in entering.

Although the Go-Preachers defended themselves very ably, yet I don't think they allayed people's suspicions, and if their aim is to carry off young girls, I do not think they will be successful in Napan, if Mr. Wood can help it.

By: J. B. 1912

The following are articles from Chatham Newspapers of 1912, shortly after John Cook and Cecil Buzby first brought the Gospel to Napan.

March, 1912 – A Napan correspondent of The World says:

The gospel mission which has been held in Centre Napan for the past two months closed Monday evening, and all who attended enjoyed the mission very much. It is hoped that the next mission Mr. Cook and Mr. Buzby work there won't be as many falsehoods told about them as there was while they were in Centre Napan. And probably the people who are doing so much talking about these two preachers will spend their time in something that will be more profitable to them in the coming days. And, further I would like to say that there are houses open to Mr. Cook and Mr. Buzby anytime they wish to come to Napan, or any of the rest of their fellow workers. They will be just as welcome.

March, 21 , 1912

The Go-Preachers have gone from Napan. Mr. Buzby went to Newcastle on Wednesday and from there to Protectionville to rest. Mr. Cook has gone to Burnt Church and Tabusintac.

April 10, 1912 – Unseemly Conduct of Prayer Meeting Attendants To the Editor of the World

Dear Sir: I would like to call the attention of the ratepayers of the Central Napan School District to the misconduct of young people who attend the weekly prayer meetings in the school house. Such conduct would not be tolerated in any other place one day. From persons going and coming from these so-called prayer meetings, respectable residents of Napan are insulted by vile language, whooping, and shouting, such as is in vogue by a boisterous crowd coming from a dance.

The so called Go-Preachers who conducted a revival here some weeks ago were denounced by the adherents of the churches as immoral characters to be avoided, but I wish to put it on record, that the conduct of those who attended was all that could be desired in sincere Christian people—no shouting, no vile language; they had something of greater moment to think about. Yours Truly, Ratepayer

April 12, 1912 – Napan

Complaints like the above would have more weight if signed by the writers. Such unseemly conduct as 'Ratepayer' (who has sent us his name) complains of should be stopped. Nothing will be gained by subjecting the supporters of the Go-Preachers to petty annoyances. They are entitled to their opinions, and to the exercise of their preferences.

April 27, 1912 – That Napan Controversy – To the Editor of The World

Dear Sir: I notice in your last issue that a Napan subscriber denounces Ratepayer's letter as a pack of lies. I don't know who Ratepayer is, or what part of the district he resides in, but I can substantiate every word he says in his letter, and I can further back it up with the evidence of seven or eight residents of the South side of Napan, who live below the school house. And if Subscriber heard some of the young men going home from prayer meetings shouting and swearing and using other vile language, as I have heard them, he would not denounce Ratepayer's letter as a pack of lies. I agree with Ratepayer, that the school should be closed against all meetings, concerts, and socials, and let those people who locked the school doors last winter to prevent us hearing the word of God, find some other place to hold their amusements in.

I am yours truly,
John W. Dickson

May 7 or 8, 1912 – Napan Notes – Napan

The weather has been fine this last few days and a number of the families are preparing their land for seed. Miss Eleanor Godfrey is attending school in Loggieville. Miss Lizzie Fitzpatrick is attending school in Chatham. Mr. and Mrs. Horace Dickson and family, of Athol, Mass., are expected to arrive this week to settle on their farm in Napan. It is very quiet around Napan just at present, as a number of the young men are away stream driving.

Some of the clergy that seemed to be so interested about the girls of Napan some weeks ago, could not have been so interested after all, or they would have been around Napan after the gospel preachers departed to see if any girls or money had been taken.

Slanderous Napan – March. 21, 1912 Slanderous Charges Against Evangelists Refuted by Evidence from England

Some persons are born to preach and others to be preached to. It was so in biblical days and it is so now. Men experience a call to preach, and go forth and call upon sinners to repent. Besides the regular ministry we have the Salvation Army, lay preachers and evangelists connected with churches, and what are called the Go-Preachers.

And why shouldn't everybody preach who feels the desire to do so? Why should there be any let or hindrance in his path, so long as his preaching is not immoral or seditious? Any man, in this free country has the right to preach, and the law will protect him in the exercising of his right.

The man in the streets listens a moment, smiles, and goes his way, and the hoodlum, who would throw bricks is looked after by the law. But wonderful to relate, it is not the man of the world, not the tough friend of the slums, but ministers and elders of the church who are throwing brickbats at the Go-Preachers. And they are not at all particular about the weapons they employ. Any old slander or perjury is good enough for their purpose.

Note the case of the two young men who spent the last few weeks in Napan, preaching to all who cared to hear them. They were quiet young fellows, with no bad habits, and apparently sincere in thinking that they were serving the Lord. Those with whom they lived considered them without reproach.

But some clergymen became alarmed for fear these men would capture some of their church members, or collection plate contributions, and they proceeded to persecute them. Saul of Tarsus merely kept the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, but one of our parsons himself threw stones at the Napan evangelists. **Rev. George Wood charged them with belonging to a sect or circle or conspiracy of rascals in England who had been found guilty of taking girls away from their parents for improper**

purposes, and his authority for these criminal accusations was a leaflet received from England, giving the deposition of one, William Dennis Wilson of Ipswich, Suffolk. Mr. Wood had this circulated throughout the community with echoes of it that had appeared in two or three newspapers, and he did so without having taken any steps to ascertain whether it was trustworthy or not.

Mrs. Harry Wilson, of Napan, after hearing the denial of Messrs. Cook and Busby, wrote to England for information, and has received the following letter from a son of the Mr. Wilson who made the affidavit referred to.

c/o John Wilson
Sparks Farm
Cretingham, near Framingham, Suffolk, England

March 5, 1912

Dear Madam; I was glad to hear from you that two Preachers who I know are in your village, but sorry that there is such a bad report about them, and that that report is caused by my father's pamphlets. For the past few years he has been circulating this vile literature. He did the same around here for some time, besides doing other damage, for which he has been brought before the magistrates several times and fined. He has also been made to give public apologies, so he is not believed on this side.

You ask about my sisters. At present, they are all (four) living in this village. One was out preaching in the same scriptural way as the two who are in your village, but returned to try to stop her father from spreading such evil reports. Another was away for health reasons. Those two are now living with my brother, as does another who has not been away. The other is also at home.

It is great folly for him to go on pouring out his hatred and malice in this way, and spending money having this literature printed and sending it to your side. Only recently, he was made to apologize through the High Court of Justice to Mr. John West, of Cocknacrieve, Ballinamallard, County Fermanagh, Ireland, and his brother William West, having to pay 100 pounds damages and costs.

Yours truly,

W. F. Wilson

With the letter came a clipping from the ****East Anglia Daily Times of Oct. 18, 1910**, containing the apology of William Dennis Wilson for having slandered Charles T. Partridge, who is referred to in Mr. Wood's broadside as one of the gang—an honest dupe, to entrap girls" "I hereby acknowledge and admit," he says, "that I have for several months been printing, publishing, writing, and circulating letters and documents of a libelous nature, reflecting upon the moral character and integrity of Mr. Partridge. I further admit the charges against him contained therein are absolutely untrue and without foundation in fact. I also undertake to pay his legal charges, and also the costs of publishing this apology in such local newspapers as he may select".

Who wouldn't sit in the seat of the scorner, when ordained ministers claiming to have been called of God to preach the Gospel, show themselves to be so devoid of common, not to say Christian, charity? The amen corner cannot be comfortable when the pulpit is linked with perjurers and slanderers in attempts to take away the good name of men whose only fault is that they are trespassing on church preserves.

Mr. Wood owes it to himself, to the community, to his profession, to his congregation, and to his God, to make a humble confession of his sin and ask the slandered men to forgive him. Let him do this and resolve to mind his own business in the future, and people may forget.

****TTT Editors Notes:**

***should read "Framingham" (not Framhngham)**

**** Typographical error – should be East Anglia Daily Times for Suffolk and Essex England where W. D. Wilson resided.**