

CELEBRATING 200 YEARS OF MISSION SOCIETY SENDING 1812-2012



The Significance of February 1812 to North American Missions

In the midst of a snowstorm on February 6, 1812, five young men (with one wife and one fiancée) were commissioned for foreign missionary service at the Tabernacle Church in Salem MA. The town of Salem was chosen because the ship *Caravan* was sitting at dock ready to depart any moment for Calcutta, and two missionary couples had booked passage on it. The date, in the depth of a cold New England winter, was chosen because the British were threatening an immediate blockade of the harbor as the outset of “The War of 1812” loomed.

When the Judsons and Newells sailed out of Salem on February 19, and the others from Philadelphia a week later, they not only launched themselves from the shores of North America, they also launched North America into the world of foreign missions. Many others would follow – a trickle at first – and then a groundswell of individuals, agencies and churches culminating in a grand array of North American missionaries that would collectively become the largest missionary force in the world today.



Marvin J. Newell

After serving with TEAM for 21 years, Marv taught eight years at the Moody Theological Seminary before becoming Senior Vice President, Missio Nexus.

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ENDURANCE PERSONIFIED IN THE LIFE OF JUDSON



AS WE CELEBRATE THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF ADONIRAM AND ANN JUDSON'S SAILING FROM SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS TO INDIA AND LATER BURMA, WE ARE NOT MERELY CELEBRATING A CRITICAL EARLY EVENT IN THE NORTH AMERICAN MISSION MOVEMENT. WE CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF A DEVOTED FOLLOWER OF CHRIST WHOSE LIFE AND MINISTRY PERSONIFIED THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF ENDURANCE, PERSEVERANCE, AND TENACITY.

PAUL BORTHWICK

To begin, however, join me on a ministry trip to Burma (Myanmar) several years ago. Under the auspices of the World Evangelical Alliance and the Myanmar Evangelical Fellowship, my wife and I traveled to Yangon, Myanmar (Rangoon, Burma) to speak to youth and youth workers.

To connect our trip with missions history, we decided to re-read the biography of Adoniram Judson, pioneer to Burma, during our trip. Judson and his wife, Nancy (also called Ann) Hasseltine Judson, went out as one of the first North American missionaries, sailing in 1812 from Massachusetts.

The Burmese capital city, still dominated by the overwhelming Shwe Dagon Pagoda, looked much like the city Judson described to supporters at home. With the



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INDEED, THE MOST STRIKING ASPECT OF THE JUDSON-BURMA STORY IS ENDURANCE IN SPITE OF SUFFERING. FROM START TO FINISH, HIS BIOGRAPHY DESCRIBES HARDSHIP. HE, HIS FAMILY, AND HIS CO-WORKERS LIVED LIVES OF AFFLICTION ALMOST UNPARALLELED IN MODERN MISSION HISTORY.

exception of signs of technological development and the increased population, we could easily imagine the Judsons sailing up the Irrawaddy River facing unknown challenges and what we know now as unimaginable hardship.

Indeed, the most striking aspect of the Judson-Burma story is endurance in spite of suffering. From start to finish, his biography describes hardship. He, his family, and his co-workers lived lives of affliction almost unparalleled in modern mission history.

Lest we forget, however, Judson pursued his calling knowing full well that sufferings lay ahead—a significant lesson in itself to us Christians 200 years later whose first question is often, “Is it safe to go there?”

In writing to Ann Hazeltine’s father for permission to marry her, Judson wrote:

I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world. Whether you can consent to see her departure to a heathen land, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life? Whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death? Can you consent to all this, for the sake of perishing immortal souls; for the sake of Zion and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with a crown of righteousness brightened by the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Savior from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?

His anticipation of the hardships ahead almost all came true. Their tribulations began on the sail to India (his first anticipated destination) from Salem, Massachusetts.

As hard as it is to believe, these struggles pale in comparison to the amount of personal grief that surrounded the Judson mission. Reviewing the detailed account of Judson's life in *To the Golden Shore* illustrates the biblical teaching that "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself, alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

Statistics are not clear, but it seems that there were between a dozen and twenty-five enduring Burmese converts at the time of Judson's death. No matter what the statistics, the Judson-mission-deaths seem to have equaled or exceeded the number of converts.

But one mission had been completed. The Burmese had the Bible in their own language – with a Burmese-English dictionary completed as well.

Anguish and struggles in Burma included:

- Language learning - more than two years to learn Burmese, in a country where no English was spoken.
- Resistance to conversion - six years to the first Christian convert, Maung Nau in 1819.
- The torture of young Burmese Christians by the government in 1819.
- Suspicion of him being a spy during Civil War with Britain, followed by a torturous stint in the "Death Prison" (1824-25), which included being hung every night upside down in leg-irons as well as a "death march" that nearly killed him.
- A temporary loss of his accumulated translation work in 1824. (It was eventually recovered.)
- Severe depression (what we would call clinical depression, verging on insanity) in 1828 that followed Nancy's death; Judson sat for months by her grave, contemplating her decaying body and writing, "God to me is the Great Unknown; I believe in Him, but I cannot find Him."
- The falling-away of new Burmese believers.
- And a lifetime devoted to one primary task: to give the Burmese a Bible in their own language.

A devout Congregationalist, Judson had not resolved the issue of immersion baptism, so he set his sights on studying the issue on the three-month sail. On the journey, he decided that the Baptist perspective was the correct one, and he and Nancy were baptized upon arrival. He wrote to his Congregationalist supporters in Massachusetts, provoking the first crisis. They immediately cut all of their support.

Support from Baptists came, but not without some very uncomfortable weeks. But this problem was only the beginning. The Judsons encountered visa difficulties in India, and their first years took them from India to Mauritius (Isle of France) to Malaysia, while considering both Ceylon and Java. They reluctantly ended up in Burma in 1813.

Leave the Judson saga and return with my wife and me to our visit a few years ago. In a meeting with youth and youth leaders, we picked up a copy of the Burmese Bible. The Burmese script was unintelligible to us, but we noticed one English sentence on the title page: "Translated by the Reverend A. Judson."

A Bible translation that had stood the test of time - over 150 years! It stands as a testimony to Judson's scholarship and meticulous linguistic study.

I took the Bible over to our host, the head of the Evangelical Fellowship. "Matthew," I asked, pointing to the English sentence, "Do you know who this man is—Judson?"

- 1812** *The Judsons and the Newells set sail to India. Harriet Newell and her child die at sea, en route to Mauritius.*
- 1814** *A European woman employed by the Judsons in Mauritius dies. Nancy gives birth to a stillborn child at sea, en route to Burma. Potential co-worker, Felix Carey, departs Burma, sailing up the Irrawaddy River; the boat capsizes, and Felix's wife and two children die.*
- 1816** *The Judsons' first son, Roger Williams Judson, dies in his second year of life.*
- 1819** *Co-worker Edward Wheelock dies.*
- 1821** *Mr. Newell (husband of Harriet) dies in Bombay.*
- 1826** *Judson's beloved partner and true soul-mate, Nancy, dies in October. Mrs. Price, wife of medical co-worker Dr. Price, dies three days after Nancy. Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hall, Christian friends in Burma, die; Rodgers as a result of the Death Prison.*
- 1827** *Dr. Price dies. Less than six months after Nancy's death, their baby Maria dies at 2 years, 3 months on April 24.*
- 1830** *Judson Wade Boardman, son of George Boardman, who had been recruited as a church planter in the north, dies.*
- 1831** *George Boardman dies and leaves his young wife, Sarah, and the rest of their family alone, north of Rangoon.*
- 1834** *Judson marries Sarah Boardman, widow of George.*
- 1836** *Luther Rice, a friend and promoter of the work in Burma, dies.*
- 1841** *Sarah gives birth to a stillborn son, Luther Judson. Henry Judson dies at age 1 year, 7 months.*
- 1845** *Sarah Boardman Judson dies. Charlie Judson dies, age 1 year, 6 months.*
- 1848** *Judson travels to the United States, meets and marries his third wife, Emily.*
- 1850** *After completing his translation and the Burmese-English dictionary, Judson sails into the Indian Ocean in hopes of clearing his lungs from ongoing tuberculosis. He dies at sea and is buried in obscurity. Charles Judson, son of Adoniram and Emily Judson, dies at birth on April 22.*
- 1854** *Emily Judson dies of tuberculosis on June 1.*

In 1812, Adoniram and Nancy Judson, along with Samuel and Harriett Newell, sailed for India. By 1850, all were dead. Judson himself died in obscurity, leaving few surviving children and only a few Burmese believers.

“O yes!” he exclaimed. “Whenever someone mentions the name ‘Judson,’ great tears come to our eyes because we know what he and his family suffered for us.”

He went on with great emotion, “We know about the sicknesses they endured. We read about the Death March and the Death Prison. We know about the wives who died, and the children who died, and the co-workers who died.

“BUT TODAY, THERE ARE OVER 2 MILLION CHRISTIANS IN MYANMAR, AND EVERY ONE OF US TRACES OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE TO ONE MAN—THE REVEREND ADONIRAM JUDSON.”

Later in the 19th century, one of Adoniram’s only surviving sons, Edward, speaking at the dedication of the Judson Memorial Church in New York City, summarized his father’s story:

Suffering and success go together. If you are succeeding without suffering, it is because others before you have suffered; if you are suffering without succeeding, it is that others after you may succeed.

Judson probably illustrated this truth as much as any man who ever lived. Probably the greatest lesson we can learn from the life of this great man is that we have to trust in the work of God, even if our efforts seem fruitless and wasted. Judson’s life is proof that God is faithful in bringing about His work in due time, and we simply need to remain faithful and trusting in Him.

When Adoniram Judson died on April 11, 1850, he had not seen vast numbers saved directly through his ministry. He will be remembered, however, for his role in the establishment of US missions, his outstanding translation of the Bible into Burmese and his foundational work among the Burmese people.†

Article based on a transcript of the address presented at the February 6, 2012 Bicentennial Celebration, Salem, MA.

NORTH AMERICAN MISSION FROM JUDSONS TO GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

TODD M. JOHNSON

It might be tempting, on this 200th commissioning anniversary of the first ordained American foreign missionaries, to directly attribute the current status of global Christianity to their courageous obedience to the Great Commission. Even limiting the scope of their influence to Burma—their primary place of overseas service—the commendable work of these missionaries would produce a very incomplete explanation for the growth of Christianity around the world from 1812 to 2012. In fact, between the Judsons then and us today lay a vast assemblage of unsung local believers around the world who spread the gospel without fanfare or recognition. Ironically, this development would likely not surprise the Judsons.

New England in 1812

Born August 9, 1788 in Malden, Massachusetts, Adoniram Judson entered the world as the son of a pastor. Though his parents hoped he would become a minister, Judson had other plans. While attending what would later become Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, he became a practical deist, turned his back on expectations that he would join the ministry, and later went to New York City to work in theater. This proved less than practical, and while on the journey back to Massachusetts, he experienced a crisis of faith. He



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providentially spent the night in an inn where he overheard a man dying in agony and hopelessness in the next room. When he inquired in the morning, the cadaver turned out to be his deist mentor from Brown. He set himself back on the journey to ministry and was admitted to the new Andover Seminary.

Judson continued to develop his love for distant places at seminary. While ridiculed there for his new-found desire to be a foreign missionary, Judson read everything he could get his hands on related to Asia. It was on a snowy day in February of 1810 that Judson finally resolved to be a foreign missionary.

Judson would not have to face his uncertain future alone. Unknown to him, there were several other students at Andover Seminary who were privately committed to foreign missions as he was. They eventually founded a secret group called “The Brethren,” whose stated goal was that “each member shall keep himself absolutely free from every engagement which, after his prayerful attention, and after consultation with his brethren, shall be deemed incompatible with the object of this society, and shall hold himself in readiness to go on a mission when and where duty may call.”

The next step for these young enthusiasts was the formation of a mission-sending society, for which the young men needed the support of their elders. One key figure was Samuel Worcester, the pastor of Tabernacle Church in Salem. He had delivered a historic missionary sermon the previous year to the Massachusetts Missionary Society. After hearing the appeal of the students to create a missionary-sending society in 1810, Worcester and others argued among themselves as to whether the idea was feasible. In the end they decided, “We had better not

attempt to stop God.” This marked the founding of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the first foreign missionary-sending institution in the United States.

A cascade of events transpired in February 1812. The young missionaries were scheduled to leave on February 10. Adoniram Judson and Ann Haseltine were married on Wednesday, February 5 in Haverhill, Massachusetts. On Thursday, February 6, 1,500 people attended the ordination service of the missionaries at Tabernacle Church in Salem. Their sailing was delayed until Wednesday, February 19, due to bad weather. The trip to India took almost four months, and as they arrived they saw what they thought was their first Hindu, who turned out to be a Muslim. Another year would pass before the Judsons finally arrived in Burma.

The World in 2012

Events over the past two hundred years have transported us to a world radically different than that of the Judsons. When they sailed out of Salem Harbor in 1812, 20% of the world was Christian and over 90% of all Christians were Europeans. In 2012, the world is about 33% Christian and only about 25% of all Christians worldwide are Europeans. In the intervening period, Christianity grew rapidly in Africa (mainly through conversions) and Latin America (mainly because of high birth rates), while declining in Europe (mainly through defections and low birth rates).

While Christianity had taken firm root in Asia, including significant minorities in China and India, the continent remains home to large non-Christian populations. In the past one hundred years, unexpected stories of church growth have been found in the Korean peninsula (1907 to present), China (1970s), Nepal (1990s), and Mongolia and Cambodia (2000s). Burma itself saw a significant increase of Christians. In 1812 there were very few Christians in Burma, but today there are over four million Christians there (about 8% of the population).

Asians were unprepared for the wave of atheism and agnosticism that accompanied the rise of Communism in the 20th century. But 60 years on, a resurgence of religion is pushing down the number of atheists and agnostics, and traditionally Asian religions, such as Buddhism, Daoism and Chinese folk-religion, are experiencing a revival in both numbers and influence. In 1812 over 99% of the world’s population was religious, but by 2012 this had fallen to below 89%. Such a general analysis hides

the fact that the high point for the world’s nonreligious population was around 1970, when almost 20% of the world’s population was either agnostic or atheist. The collapse of Communism in the late 20th century means that the world is more religious in 2012 than in 1970. In this way, our world closely resembles that of the Judsons.

EVENTS OVER THE PAST TWO HUNDRED YEARS HAVE TRANSPORTED US TO A WORLD RADICALLY DIFFERENT THAN THAT OF THE JUDSONS. WHEN THEY SAILED OUT OF SALEM HARBOR IN 1812, 20% OF THE WORLD WAS CHRISTIAN AND OVER 90% OF ALL CHRISTIANS WERE EUROPEANS. IN 2012, THE WORLD IS ABOUT 33% CHRISTIAN AND ONLY ABOUT 25% OF ALL CHRISTIANS WORLDWIDE ARE EUROPEANS.

The question remains, how did we get from 1812 to 2012? From the Judsons to global Christianity?

Looking at the history of Christianity in Burma provides some important clues. The gospel was effectively spread by what is now termed “indigenous agency.” This method emerged in Judson’s lifetime, but was largely unrecognized at the time. The primary carriers of the gospel message were to a great extent unknown individual converts from among the indigenous people the missionaries set out to reach. In Judson’s case, it was an untrustworthy thief who was most effective in spreading the gospel beyond the narrow confines of the missionary community, who largely focused on evangelizing the majority power holders, the Burmese. Instead, it was the “wild” Karen who responded to the gospel, a jungle tribe that had to incessantly knock on the missionaries’ door to get their attention.

The missionaries did make some important strategic decisions in their approach that set the stage for later indigenization of Christianity. In Burma they took a very different approach to “primitive” tribes than their fellow missionaries did to Native Americans in America. Bible translations were slow to appear among Native Americans, but within a few decades there were already two full Bible translations in Burma, including Judson’s Burmese Bible. As Christian mission scholars Lamin Sanneh and Andrew Walls have shown, this principle of translation eventually changed the balance of power among peoples who embraced Christianity. Between the “translation principle” and “indigenous agency,” the kind of Christianity that spread in Burma quickly differentiated itself from that of the colonial missionaries. In essence, foreign missionaries in Burma provided the necessary spark while local evangelists did the work on the ground, producing a culturally relevant version of the Christian faith.

Some Things are the Same

Today we face many similar issues as the Judsons, such as decisions about how to engage the world. A central characteristic of both ages is courage. No matter where you live, deciding to live among peoples previously unreached with the gospel requires courage and faith. In fact, it is a rare individual who is willing to give up life, home and liberty for the sake of others. Surprisingly, friends and family often greet such aspirations with incredulity and ridicule.

The struggle between Christians with differing theological and social perspectives has intensified. Hundreds of Christian denominations in 1812 have split into tens of thousands in 2012. Today, more than ever, we are challenged to work together, rather than to compete. In particular, Protestants face the proliferation of independent churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as in the Western world.

WHILE MISSIONARIES WILL ALWAYS BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES, THE WHOLE CHURCH NEEDS TO PARTICIPATE IN INVITING PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS TO CONSIDER JESUS CHRIST.

Recent research reveals that as many as 86% of all Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists do not personally know a Christian. This has to be viewed negatively in light of the strong biblical theme of incarnation that is at the heart of Christian witness. Christians should know and love their neighbors! In the 21st century it is important to realize that the responsibility for reaching other religionists is too large for the missionary enterprise. While missionaries will always be at the forefront of innovative strategies, the whole church needs to participate in inviting people of other faiths to consider Jesus Christ.

Many Things are Different

The greatest difference, 200 years on, is that Christian missionaries are sent out from all over the world. Burmese today are more likely to encounter Christ from Karen, Kachin or Thai hill tribesmen, Filipinos, South Asians, Chinese, or even Brazilians or Nigerians, than they are from British or American missionaries. Nonetheless, even today there are Western Christians who are engaged in reaching the Burmese. It is ironic that the Burmese people the Judsons went to reach with the gospel 200 years ago are still unreached today. It should be noted that even if Karen Christians in Burma decide to reach out to their (ethnically) Burmese countrymen, they would be performing the work of cross-cultural missionaries, not of local

evangelists. This is important not only in who is doing the witnessing, but in what this signifies: the gospel is not Western in origins or characteristics.

In the past two hundred years Americans have experienced a rise and fall of their global influence. In 1812, the British Empire was on the rise, and many considered the twentieth century the “American Century.” But today, a changing balance of power means that Americans engaging the world find themselves on equal footing with missionaries from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Americans still have a significant role in the world, but that role is played out on a stage of many characters, each with his own valuable voice and perspective. Ironically, this assemblage is more representative of global Christianity than any single ethnic group, Western or non-Western.

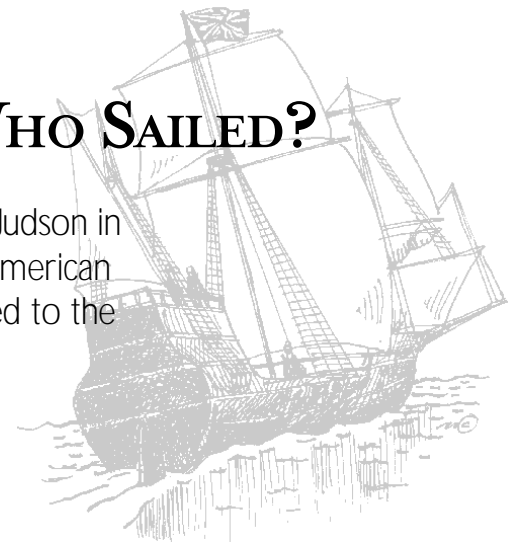
The Judsons had trouble identifying the religion of the first person they encountered in Asia. In this sense, things haven’t changed much. A recent Pew survey shows that Americans still understand very little about other religions. Evangelicals, in particular, score poorly compared to atheists and Jews. But the difference today is the likelihood that one will encounter someone of another faith, no matter where one lives. There is much greater diversity right here in New England, where a substantial Burmese community resides. This includes the Overseas Burmese Christian Fellowship, celebrating this momentous occasion with us.

Conclusion

Two hundred years ago the challenge for American missions was to channel the enthusiasm of eager students to provide a way for them to express their vocation in a colonial world dominated by Europeans. Today, American Christian students still have their vocations, but now operate in a multi-polar world where they continue to need encouragement and organizational genius. The challenge for mission agencies today is to adapt to these changing times while retaining the core values of commitment to the Scriptures, to evangelism, and to alleviating human need that have made them successful for the past two centuries. In doing so, the task of world evangelization will be more collaborative (across denominations, ethnicities, and languages), more integrated (vocationally and holistically) and more informed (religiously and culturally). Yet, in the end, it is likely true that if the Judsons were alive today, they would be the first in line to embark once again on a lifetime of service in Asia.†

Article based on a transcript for the address presented at the February 6, 2012 Bicentennial Celebration in Salem, MA.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS WHO SAILED?



Two couples and two single men left along with Adoniram and Ann Judson in February of 1812. The eight were sent out by the newly organized American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Here is what happened to the others who sailed to India (on two different ships) that month.

MARVIN J. NEWELL

Samuel & Harriet Newell

Forbidden to remain in India by the British East India Company, Samuel and Harriet (“the Belle of Bradford”) sailed for Mauritius with plans to establish a mission there and possibly to Madagascar. After a long and perilous voyage, they reached the Isle of France (French name for Mauritius), where Harriet soon died, at age 19, after childbirth ten months after departing Salem. Grief-stricken, Samuel went on to Ceylon, finding it favorable to open a mission there. In January 1814 he joined Samuel and Roxana Nott and Gordon Hall in Bombay. He ministered seven years before his life was cut short by cholera on May 30, 1821, being violently attacked while ministering to the sick. He was greatly endeared to the friends of the mission by his devotedness and amiable character.

Samuel & Roxana Nott

Forbidden along with the others to remain in Calcutta, together with Gordon Hall, the Notts went to Bombay, where the three commenced the first mission of the American Board in India. Their first son, Samuel Nott Jr., was born there, as well as their daughter, Harriet Newell Nott. Since Samuel was frequently ill, the family returned to America in 1815, never to return. Samuel pastored the rest of his life in Connecticut, writing several major books. He outlived all the men of the first missionary band, dying on July 1st 1869 in Hartford, Connecticut, at age 81, nineteen years after the last (Judson, 1850) of the original five men had died. Roxana outlived them all, dying in 1876 at age 91.

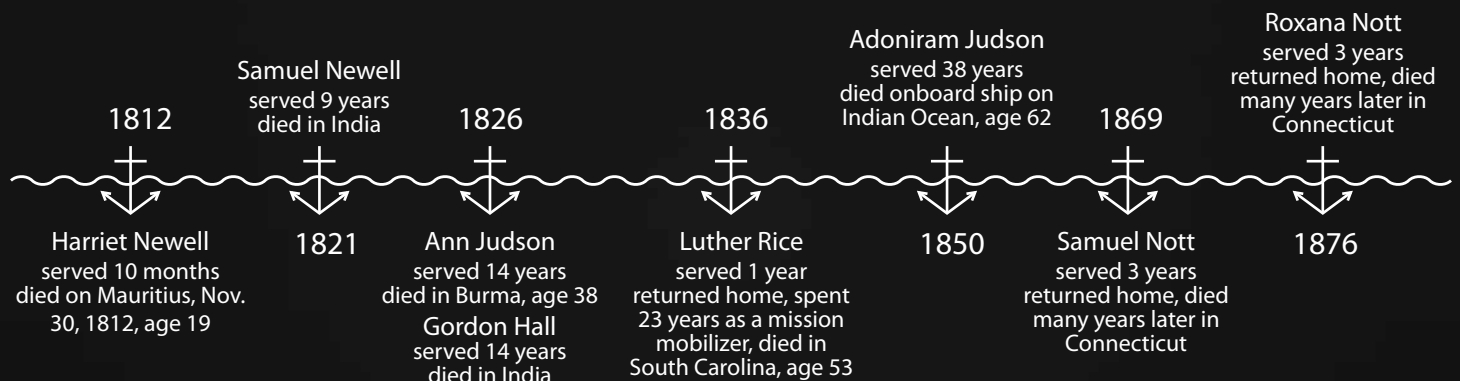
Gordon Hall

Known as the “beloved disciple among the missionaries,” and like the others, forbidden to stay in Calcutta, he obtained permission from the governor of Bombay to remain there. He labored 13 years, visiting the temples and bazaars with the gospel message and engaging in Bible translation. He completed the translation of the New Testament in the Marathi language. “No missionary in western India has ever been more respected among the Brahmans and higher classes for his discussions and pulpit discourses,” noted one Indian believer. He died in Bombay in 1826.

Luther Rice

Like Judson, Rice became a Baptist after arriving in India. When opposition against the missionaries forced them to go to the Isle of France, it was decided that Rice, the orator of the group, would proceed back to America to rally forces for the new Baptist mission. This he did admirably, being instrumental in founding the Baptist General Convention for Foreign Mission in 1814, and then spending years riding horseback throughout the colonies raising funds and awareness for Baptist missions. He also founded Columbian College of the District of Columbia in 1821, now known as George Washington University. In 1836, while on a mission promotional trip to South Carolina, he fell ill and died quietly.†

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Three Missionary Wives

the Martyr, the Heroine, the Forgotten

The motto of every missionary, whether preacher, printer, or school master, ought to be “devoted for life.” —Adoniram Judson

MARVIN J. NEWELL

Although five young men were commissioned as missionaries on February 6, 1812, considerable interest was concentrated on the three young wives who were so publicly expanding expectations of the role and capabilities of women in missions. Prevented by cold weather, distance and preparations for her imminent marriage to Samuel Nott, Roxana Peck of Franklin, Connecticut was the only one unable to attend the ordination at Salem.

Roxana was twenty-seven years old at the time she married Samuel Nott the week after the Salem commissioning service. Ann “Nancy” Hasseltine Judson of Bradford, Massachusetts was twenty-three and had married Adoniram the day before the commissioning.

The darling of the three was Harriet Atwood of Haverhill, Massachusetts – beautiful, delicate and only eighteen years old. She married Samuel Newell just days after the commissioning.

After their departure for India on two different ships, the lives of the first three missionary women, intertwined by fate and the public imagination, took surprisingly different turns. Each in her own way became a model for the practice of women in mission. United at first by circumstances, by similar spiritual experience, and by shared goals, the lives of Harriet, Ann and Roxana demonstrated how a range of hard realities could reshape mission theory and dictate practice.

Harriet Newell

The Newells and the Judsons arrived on the *Caravan* in Calcutta in June of 1812. Because of the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States, as soon as the British East India Company learned of the presence of American missionaries, it issued expulsion orders. Since Harriet was several months pregnant, the Newells were the first to leave on a ship that had only two berths. On July 29, they boarded a ship bound for the Isle of France. But a proposed voyage of six weeks stretched into a nightmare of three months after the ship sprang a leak.

Harriet contracted dysentery, and in early October went into premature labor and bore a daughter on shipboard. The baby died after exposure to a severe storm at sea. Twenty days after her arrival on the Isle of France, Harriet died of consumption made worse by the same storm that killed her baby. Her grieving husband wrote her family, describing her last sufferings and telling them that Harriet never regretted becoming a missionary for Christ. Her short life of selfless sacrifice profoundly impacted many in the homeland.



After serving with TEAM for 21 years, Marv taught eight years at the Moody Theological Seminary before becoming Senior Vice President, Missio Nexus.

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Ann Judson

Ann and Adoniram spent 1812 and most of 1813 wandering – emotionally, literally, and theologically. Seeking to evade deportation from India and searching for an alternative mission field, in late 1813 they obtained passage to Burma and settled in Rangoon. Ann’s goal for her own ministry in Burma was to open a school for children. After acquiring facility in the language, Ann assisted Adoniram in his translation work by translating several tracts, and the books of Daniel and Jonah, into Burmese. Ann’s early accomplishments as a missionary wife were phenomenal, even with the heartbreaking loss of two children. In 1822 her health broke and she returned to the States for a rest, publishing a book on their pioneering missionary work in Burma. Upon her return, in 1824 Adoniram was imprisoned and tortured. Ann followed her husband from prison to prison and preserved his and several others’ lives by bribing officials and providing food. In 1826, after two years of imprisonment, Adoniram was released. But in October of that year, while Adoniram was away, Ann died at age thirty-eight, worn out from hardships. She spoke her last words in Burmese.



Roxana Nott

The least known of the three was Roxana Nott. Since she was not present at the commissioning in Salem, she longed to meet Harriet and Ann for the first time. Upon her arrival in Calcutta on the *Harmony*, she discovered that Harriet had already departed for the Isle of France, so the two women would never meet. Roxana met Ann Judson, but as the Judsons were in process of becoming Baptist, there was no possibility of continuing in fellowship with them. Thus Roxana suffered one disappointment after another. She and Samuel were finally granted permission to open the work of the American Board in Bombay in 1813. Within two years, Samuel’s health deteriorated and the couple was forced to return to the United States, arriving in August of 1816. Roxana encouraged other women who aspired to serve as missionaries, but the Notts themselves never returned to the field. Roxana lived a “humble and holy life” as a minister’s wife, finally dying in Hartford at age ninety-one. Despite her role as the first woman connected with the American Board, Roxana Nott was virtually forgotten.

Roxana Nott, the forgotten “failure,” Harriet Newell, the self-sacrificing martyr, and Ann Judson, the activist heroine – were the models of mission provided by the first American missionary wives. The three started out together, but almost immediately the different circumstances of their lives and their individual reactions to their contexts meant that they provided very different images of missionary life to women back in North America.^f

Compressed and adopted from Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice*. Mercer University Press, 1997.

NORTH AMERICAN PIONEER MISSIONARIES BEFORE 1812

THIS YEAR'S MISSION BICENTENNIAL DRAWS ATTENTION TO THE FIRST NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONARIES WHO WERE SENT OUT BY AN ORGANIZED MISSION SOCIETY. THAT SENDING PRECIPITATED THE SENDING OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONARIES WHO FOLLOWED AFTER THEM RIGHT UP UNTIL TODAY. HOWEVER, IT NEEDS TO BE REMEMBERED THAT THERE WERE THOSE WHO HAD ENGAGED IN CROSS-CULTURAL AND EVEN CROSS-COUNTRY MISSIONARY WORK BEFORE 1812. HERE IS A LOOK AT SOME OF THE BETTER KNOWN.

MARVIN J. NEWELL

John Eliot

John Eliot (1604 - 1690) was a Puritan missionary to Native Americans. His efforts earned him the designation "the Indian apostle." Eliot was born in England but emigrated to Boston in 1631 where he became minister and teaching elder at the First Church in Roxbury, founding the Roxbury Latin School in 1645.

Eliot was instrumental in the conversion of the Massachusetts Native Americans, whose territory comprised most of what is today the state of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. To help achieve this, Eliot translated the Bible into the native language and published it in 1663. In 1666, his grammar of Massachusetts, called "The Indian Grammar Begun," was published. As a cross-cultural missionary Eliot was best known



for putting Native Americans in planned towns in hopes of encouraging them to recreate a Christian society. At one point in time, there were 14 of those so-called "Praying Towns."

Eliot married Hanna Mumford, and they had six children, five girls and one boy, with only the son surviving. John Eliot died in 1690, aged 85, his last words being "welcome joy!" A monument to him is on the grounds of the Bacon Free Library in Natick, Massachusetts.

David Brainerd

David Brainerd (1718 - 1747) was a missionary to the Native Americans with a particularly fruitful ministry among the Delaware Indians of New Jersey.

Brainerd was born on April 20, 1718 in Haddam, Connecticut, and was orphaned at the age of fourteen. At age 21 he enrolled at Yale but in his second year was sent home because he was suffering from tuberculosis, the disease that would eventually take his life.

In April 1743, Brainerd began work as a missionary at Kaunameek, a Housatonic Indian settlement near present-day Nassau, New York. He remained there for one year, opened a school for Native American children and began to translate the Psalms.



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Subsequently, he was reassigned to work among the Delaware Indians along the Delaware River northeast of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where he remained for another year. After this, he moved to Crossweeksung, New Jersey, where he had his most fruitful ministry. During these years, he refused several offers to leave missions to become a church minister.

In November 1746, becoming too ill to continue his mission work, he traveled to Northampton, Massachusetts, where he stayed at the house of Jonathan Edwards. He remained with Edwards until his death the following year. He died from tuberculosis on October 9, 1747, at the age of 29.

John Marrant¹

John Marrant (1755 – 1791) was one of the first African-American preachers and missionaries. He was born in New York City in 1755. Following the death of his father, he moved with his mother to Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina. At the age of 13 he heard Methodist preacher George Whitefield and was converted. After disagreements with his family about this, he wandered in the wilderness, relying on God to feed and protect him. He was found by a Cherokee hunter and taken to a Cherokee town, where he was sentenced to death. However, his life was spared, allegedly due to the miraculous conversion of the executioner.

Marrant lived with the Cherokees for two years before returning to Charleston, where his own family didn't

recognize him. He continued his missionary work with slaves, despite the objection of their owners, until the start of the American Revolution. By 1775 he had carried the gospel to the Cherokee, Creek, Catawaw and Housaw Indians. He was ordained in 1785 and sent to Nova Scotia to minister to several thousand African-Americans who had fled north during the fighting. He then traveled to London in 1790, where he died the following year.

George Liele²

George Liele (1750–1820) was an emancipated African-American slave who became the first missionary to serve outside the borders of the United States and the first Baptist missionary to Jamaica.

Liele was born into slavery in Virginia in 1752, but was taken to Georgia. As an adult he was converted around 1774. Liele was freed by his master, a Baptist and Loyalist, before the American Revolution began. Once freed, Liele went to Savannah, Georgia, where he helped organize an early Baptist congregation.

At the close of the Revolutionary War, Liele chose to depart with the British to ensure his freedom rather than risk re-enslavement in the American South. In 1783 he was transported to Jamaica with his wife Hannah and their four children. He preached at the racecourse in Kingston, where the novelty of a black itinerant ex-slave preacher attracted considerable attention. News of his itinerant-style preaching quickly spread. Lisle (as his name was spelled in Jamaica) was soon able to gather a congregation and purchase a piece of land about a mile from Kingston, where he gradually built a chapel. He formed the First African Baptist Church of Kingston. Over the next 10 years the church grew to over 500. He died in Kingston in 1820.

Prince Williams³

Rev. Prince Williams was the first African-American Baptist missionary to the Bahama Islands. He left Saint Augustine, FL, around 1790 and organized a Baptist church in Nassau. In 1801 he secured land and built a small house of worship, calling it the Bethel Baptist Mission. At age 70 Williams erected St. John's Baptist Church and ministered there until his death at age 104. Subsequently, 164 Baptist churches were planted in the Bahamas.^f

1. Vaughn J. Walston, and Robert J. Stevens, editors, "African-American Experiences in World Missions: A Call Beyond Community," pages 49 and 83. Also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Marrant
2. Walston and Stevens, *ibid.* Also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Liele_%28Baptist%29
3. Walston and Stevens, *ibid.*