

Common Ground, Common Good: The Story of Maine's Uncommon Council of Churches

compiled by
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Maine Council of Churches
www.maineCouncilofchurches.org

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DENOMINATIONS IN MAINE TAKE ROOT

The Maine Council of Churches was organized in 1938 in Lewiston, Maine. However, the Council story does not begin there, and its story cannot be fairly told without some consideration of what came before - even long before.

First, let it be said that the 19th Century roots of the Maine Council of Churches were decidedly Protestant. No words seem to have survived from those early days that would indicate that either the Maine Sunday School Association or the Interdenominational Commission of Maine had any thought of including Maine's significant Roman Catholic population in its ranks. Nor is there any indication that in those days the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland would have been interested in formal association with the non-Catholic church world. That breakthrough would have to wait for generations.

Let it also be said that the Maine Council of Churches, as it exists today, is nearly unique among state councils. With the exception of the state council in New Hampshire, the Maine Council of Churches may be the only statewide council of churches in the United States whose membership includes both the Roman Catholic Diocese and the region's Unitarian Universalist Association.



The First Landing

The first Christian clergy to venture into Maine - one a Catholic priest, the other a Protestant minister - arrived on the same day in the summer of 1604. The location was Saint Croix Island. Both were part of an expedition authorized by French king Henri IV and financed by Huguenots to colonize the Americas. By the following spring, more than half of the company had died, including both the priest and the minister. It is said that the two were buried in a common grave hoping that they would get along better in heaven than they did on earth.

More than 400 years have now passed since the first landing on Maine soil. The religious diversity represented by the first attempted settlement in Maine has characterized has the Christian presence in the state ever since.

In 1819, when New Hampshire's Toleration Act virtually ensured that New Hampshire would be a Protestant commonwealth, Maine's Constitution, adopted a year later, contained no religious test of any kind.

Jonathan Greenleaf's Sketches

In 1821, Jonathan Greenleaf of Wells, Maine, published *Sketches of the Ecclesiastical History of the State of Maine from the earliest settlement to the present time*. His informally written notes provide us with a snapshot of the state of Christian churches in Maine within a year after Maine was admitted to the Union as the 23rd State.

Catholics

The French were the first Europeans to live year-round in the land of the Wabanaki. The failed 1604 expedition that ultimately resulted in the founding of Quebec brought Catholic missionaries who established chapels and schools among the native tribes in an effort to bring Christianity to the Maine's native population. Their presence with and influence among the Wabanaki was a source of early conflict with the Puritan English. After all, the missionaries were both French and Catholic.

Two centuries after the first Catholic missionaries visited the Wabanaki, the result of their labor was plainly evident. Jonathan Greenleaf wrote: "Four meetings of this denomination [Catholic] are held in Maine: two among the remains of the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot Indians, one at New-Castle, and one at Whitefield, in Lincoln County." (Let it be noted that in 1821 Catholic readers of Greenleaf's *Sketches* would hardly have characterized the Roman Catholic Church as a "denomination.")

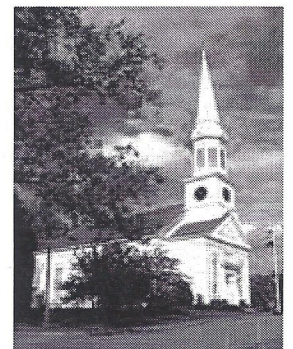
Congregationalists

From the Bay Colony came the Puritans. Though there were preachers among the remote settlements of Maine much earlier, the first Congregationalist church in Maine was planted at York in 1673. The second was founded at Wells. As the Established Church, Congregationalism spread quickly as the towns of Maine were settled. In 1821, Jonathan Greenleaf saw need to devote twenty-two of his thirty-one chapters to the Congregationalist churches.



Father Sebastian Rasle

Father Rasle, the Jesuit missionary priest killed at Norridgewock in 1724, is memorialized in a glass window of the Church of Notre Dame de Lourdes, in Skowhegan, Maine.



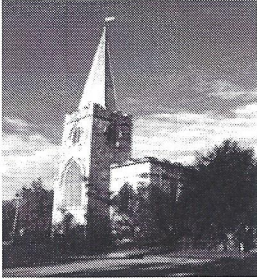
First Parish Church

York
1747

The Bronze statue pictured left stands at Saint Croix Island International Historic Site, Maine, and portrays a man praying.

SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

THE DENOMINATIONS TAKE ROOT IN MAINE



**Christ Episcopal Church
Gardiner
1820**

Episcopalians

Although there were Episcopalians among the early colonists, the first Episcopal Society was organized at Falmouth in 1763. Reorganized in 1783 at the end of the Revolution, it became St. Paul's Church (now Olde St. Paul's Parish). In his *Sketches*, Greenleaf noted that there had been a few other Episcopal Societies organized in Maine, although most scattered at the time of the Revolution. He notes, in concluding his brief chapter on Episcopalians, "another Episcopal church is found at Gardiner," whose church was built with funds left for the purpose by the town's benefactor, Dr. Sylvester Gardiner.

Lutherans

Of the "German Lutherans," Greenleaf noted: "The only church of this denomination is at Waldoborough, a community settled in 1741," consisting of about 80 families.

Baptists

Greenleaf's *Sketches* devoted two chapters to the Baptists, the earliest of whom founded a Society in Kittery in 1681 (only to be driven out the next year by the authorities in Boston). Calvinistic Baptists found a foothold in Sanford and Berwick as early as 1767 and the Freewill Baptists organized Societies beginning in 1780. (In 1915, the two Baptist denominations merged to form the United Baptist Convention.)

Presbyterians

In 1821, it was difficult for Greenleaf to distinguish the roots of Presbyterians in Maine from those of the Congregationalists with whom they shared a reformed tradition. Noting that the Presbyterian form of worship was practiced in several towns, he concluded that "there is not now a Presbyterian church in the State." Greenleaf neglected to note the shortlived Presbytery at the Eastward, organized by a deposed Presbyterian clergyman from another colony. It is remembered today by the Mission at the Eastward, a Maine mission of the Presbytery of Northern New England.

Friends

The appearance of Friends (Quakers) in New England was a cause of great consternation by the Puritan authorities in Boston, and severe penalties were imposed on those who professed to be Quaker or "harboured" Quakers. Nevertheless, as early as the 1650's Kittery harbored a considerable community of Friends, some of

whom were the town's political leaders. The first "meeting for worship" by Friends was held at Kittery in 1732; in 1780 a meeting for worship was held at Vassalborough.

Methodists

The first Methodist Society in America was organized in 1769, but the movement's growth was stunted for some years by the Revolution (most of the traveling preachers being loyal to the Crown). In 1793, Elder Jesse Lee of Virginia was appointed to form a circuit in Maine. His ride took him from Saco to Castine, up the Penobscot to Bangor, and on to Hallowell. By 1795, three Methodist classes were gathered, and so well was the Methodist message received that by 1821 there were 38 traveling preachers in Maine (exclusive of three presiding Elders).

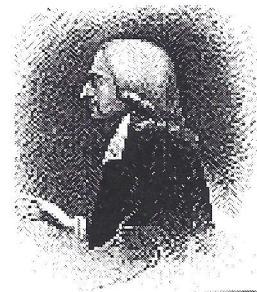
Christian Societies

An outgrowth of the Freewill Baptists, more than 20 Christian Societies were said to be active in rural portions of the state in 1821. The Christians and the Congregationalists would one day unite to create the Congregational-Christian Conference (part of today's United Church of Christ.)

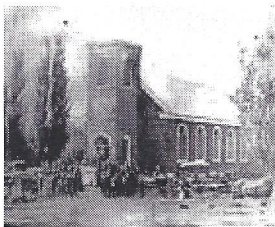
Unitarians and Universalists

Greenleaf's *Sketches* made no mention of Unitarians or Universalists. By 1809, First Parish Church in Portland had officially declared itself Unitarian, but the internal struggle within Congregationalist churches (whether to declare themselves Trinitarian or Unitarian) had yet to result in the establishment of a new denomination. Although the Universalist Church in America was founded in 1793 and there was a presence in Maine soon after, the Universalist movement in Maine evidently took root somewhat later. The First Universalist Church of Norway traces its lineage to "The First Religious Society" in Norway, founded in 1799.

Other Christian traditions also took root in Maine. The Shakers were to be found at Sabbathday Lake in 1783. Some traditions, including the Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Covenant and the Church of the New Jerusalem, grew from European roots. Others, like the Sabbatarian movement (now the Seventh Day Adventist Church) founded by Ellen White of Portland, Maine, the Christian Science Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Pentecostal movement, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, and Portland's Abyssinian Religious Society, were purely American in origin.



**Jesse Lee
1758-1816
Methodist Circuit Rider**



**St. Patrick's Church
Damariscotta Falls
1808**



**Old German Lutheran
Meetinghouse
Waldoboro
1772**

SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

THE BEGINNINGS OF INTER-CHURCH COOPERATION

The Beginnings of Inter-Church Cooperation

In the 19th century, Interdenominational cooperation in Maine took at least three paths: 1) more effective Protestant evangelistic efforts as a result of shared resources; 2) less competition among the state's Protestant churches; 3) institutions to promote the common good by addressing social evils. The Maine Sunday School Association (created in 1869 and the direct ancestor of the Maine Council of Churches) was an example of the first; the Interdenominational Commission of Maine (founded in 1891) was an example of the second; the temperance movement and the anti-slavery movement are examples of the third.

The Maine Sabbath-school Union

The earliest attempt at interdenominational cooperation in Maine appears to be the short-lived Maine Sabbath-school Union. Not to be confused with the Maine Sunday School Association, the Union was organized in 1826 by "members of the various evangelical denominations in Maine." By 1834 it had run its course.

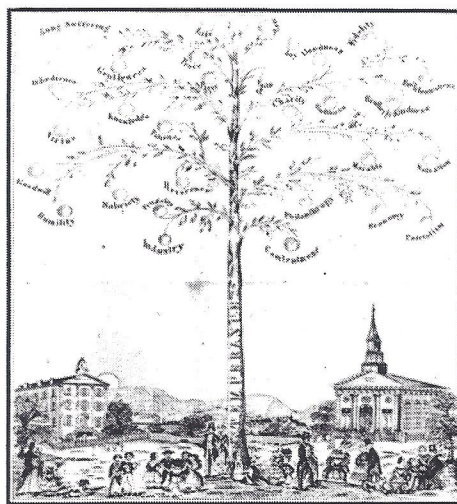
The Sunday-school movement actually began in England. By the 1820's it had spread to the United States and was considered to be among the progressive efforts to evangelize youth and adults. In 1831, the Maine Sabbath-school Union's corresponding secretary Rev. Asa Bullard reported that there were 500 Sabbath Schools in Maine containing 20,000 teachers and scholars. When the Maine Sabbath-school Union dissolved (in favor of each denomination establishing its own union), Rev. Bullard, a Congregationalist, moved on to the Massachusetts Sabbath-school Society, where he continued for the next 50 years.

The Temperance Movement and the Anti-Slavery Movement

The temperance movement was probably the first national crusade of the 19th century, and the evangelical churches of Maine played an important role. By the early decades of the century public drunkenness was a national concern. More than a public nuisance, the easy availability of hard cider was seen as responsible for increased absenteeism in the workplace and even a threat to sobriety in the common schools. Temperance societies organized as voluntary associations of reformed drinkers, a "cause" quickly embraced by the Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Quakers. Rev. John Chaney,

pastor of the South Berwick Freewill Baptist Church is said to have organized one of Maine's first temperance societies.

General Neal Dow, a Quaker, was instrumental in taking the temperance movement a further step - toward prohibition. From his residence on Congress Street in Portland, he led a campaign to prohibit the production, sale, and consumption of liquor in Maine. In 1850, with the strong support of evangelical Protestants, he succeeded in getting the Maine State Legislature to outlaw the sale of alcohol. "The Maine Law" had a significant impact on the other states. Maine's growing immigrant population, however, saw the issue differently; laws against brewing, drinking and selling liquor were seen as racist attacks on their culture. Among those working to keep Maine "dry" in 1911 were the Christian Civic League, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Young Campaigners for Prohibition, and the Maine Sunday School Association. (*The New York Times*, September 7, 1911)

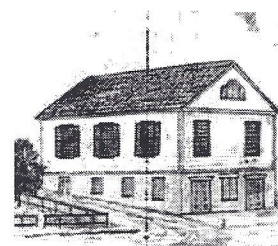


Maine's Religious Demographic in 1850

In 1850, according to the Seventh Federal Census of the United States, there were 943 Christian "meetings" in Maine, more than a third of them Baptist. There were 199 Methodist churches, 180 Congregational churches, 60 Universalist churches, and 26 Friends meetings. There were 15 Unitarian societies, 12 Catholic parishes, 9 Episcopal parishes, 7 Presbyterian churches, and 2 Swedenborgian churches. In addition, there were evidently 95 "union" or "free" churches.

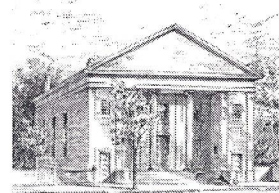


Neal Dow



Abyssinian Church
Portland
1828

From 1829 through 1857, it was a schoolhouse for African American children. It was an important "safe haven" on the Underground Railroad, and helped many slaves escape to the North.

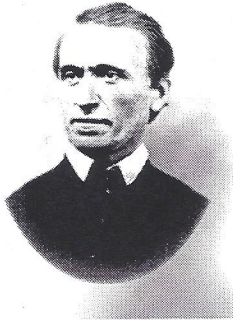


Free Street Baptist Church
Portland
1836

Formerly the Portland Theatre, now the Children's Museum of Maine

SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

THE DARKER SIDE OF MAINE'S SOCIAL HISTORY



Rev. John Bapst, S.J.
1815-1887



Oliver Moses
of Bath

A businessman and a founder of the First National Bank of Bath, Oliver Moses was a member of the Universalist church. He was one of the founders of the Bath Savings Institution. The Catholics, in order to acknowledge his generosity and graciousness to them in 1854, presented him with a handsome silver service that has been handed down to his descendants. (From the website of St. Mary's Parish, Bath)

Anti-Catholicism: The Darker Side of Maine's Social History

By 1850, with Maine's population approaching 600,000, Mainers were becoming aware of a growing population of "foreign-born." French-speaking and Irish immigrants were flooding into Maine, brought here largely by the economic opportunities offered by Maine's flourishing mills. The newcomers were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic; the seeds of anti-Catholicism were being sown.

Anti-Catholic sentiment was driven by fear, and in June 1854 fear was running high in Bath, Maine, when a mob, incited by a street preacher by the name of "Angel Gabriel" Orr, ransacked and burned South Church in Bath, a vacant building that was being rented by Catholics as a place of worship. The short-lived Know-Nothing party was ultimately held responsible.

Even in the midst of anti-Catholic furor, however, there was a glimmer of light. Oliver Moses, a banker and member of the Universalist Church, offered his home at 1024 Washington Street to the Catholics for Mass until another location could be found.



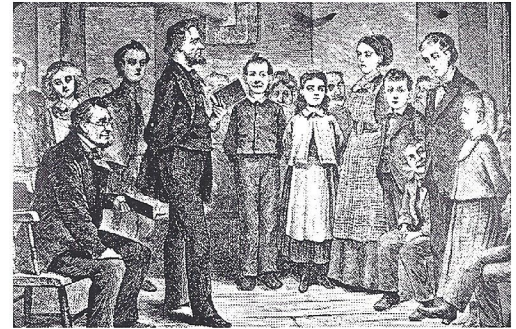
The Burning of South Church, 1854

In the same year, Fr. John Bapst, a Jesuit priest assigned to Ellsworth, was tarred and feathered and run out of town on a rail for admonishing the children of his parish not to participate in reading from the "Protestant Bible" in the Ellsworth common school. The Authorized King James Version of the Holy Bible was commonly used for both edification and for the teaching of reading.

The Ellsworth incident drew national attention. When Bridget Donahue was expelled from the Ellsworth school because she would not read from the King James Version of the Bible, she brought suit to stop the com-

mon schools from demanding that she read from it or be expelled. The case (known as *Donahue v Richards*) was ultimately decided by the Maine Supreme Judicial Court in the town's favor and established precedent across the nation. It was not until the *Edgerton Bible* case in the state of Wisconsin in 1890 that the notion was challenged that one could be expelled from a public school for refusing to read from the Bible.

Maine's first Roman Catholic bishop Rev. David Bacon was faced with a serious challenge. He had been sent to Maine and New Hampshire in 1855 to oversee ten priests. Through his pioneering efforts, and those of his successor Bishop James A. Healy, Catholic parishes and schools were established throughout Maine as an alternative to the "common" schools, the perception being that the common schools were, in fact, Protestant schools.



Readings from the King James Version of the Holy Bible continued in some Maine public schools, upheld by Maine law, well into the 20th century.

"Americanism" Fuels Religious Bigotry

In the 1880's Joseph Story's bestseller *Our Country* freely mixed religious and social issues. In his book, Story defended Americanism and Protestantism, naming seven perils to the nation, in order: immigration, Catholicism, Mormonism, intemperance, socialism, wealth, and the city. Maine was a perfect fit for Story's fears put to paper: conservative to the core, suspicious of the movements to organize workers, largely white and Protestant but with a growing Catholic population, on center-stage over temperance, and distrusting of the "sin" cities of Bangor, Lewiston, Waterville, and Portland.

Our Country fueled the fires of religious extremists, and after World War I fears among some grew even larger.

SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

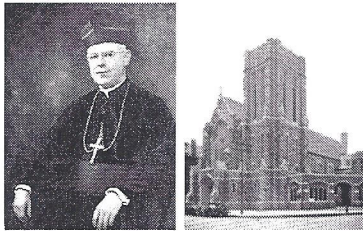
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY DAWNS

The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan

In 1920, the Ku Klux Klan had as many as 20,000 members in Maine. The so-called defenders of "Americanism" targeted Maine primarily because of its Irish and Franco-American Catholic population. When gubernatorial candidate William Robinson Pattangall, Maine's Attorney General, was defeated in 1924, he confessed, "I did not even know it [hatred from the 'long dead days of the religious wars'] existed and did not realize how deep hatred could be when there was nothing to excite it" except "the Klan's brilliant incantation." He had campaigned against the Klan and had even introduced a plank into the national Democratic Platform condemning the Klan. The plank split the Democratic Party and ensured the election of Calvin Coolidge.

In 1924, the newly elected mayor of Portland, Maine, was a Klan member.

The Klan's influence in Maine was shortlived and its membership fell as quickly as it had arisen. A weakened Klan limped into Maine in 1987, this time confronted by a fierce opposition largely initiated by the Maine Council of Churches who organized rallies across the state in solid rejection of the Klan's presence. Another Maine Attorney General, James E. Tierney, was heard to remark, "I don't know why the Ku Klux Klan has come to Maine. I know they have come twisted by some hatred I don't understand." (*The New York Times*, September 27, 1987)



Bishop Daniel J. Feeney
(1894-1969)

Daniel J. Feeney, Maine's first "native son" Catholic bishop (he grew up in St. Dominic's Parish, Portland), attended Vatican II and was active in implementing the Council's reforms. On February 20, 1966, he preached at Immanuel Baptist Church, Portland, the first time a Catholic Bishop had preached at other than a Catholic church in Maine.

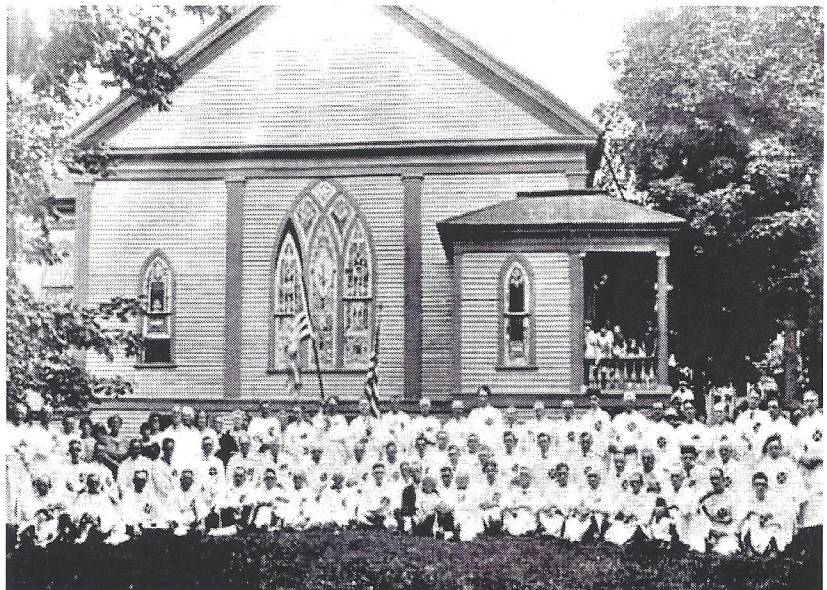
An Interdenominational Movement: The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor

Often overlooked among achievements in Maine's growing sense of ecumenical possibilities in the late 19th century is Christian Endeavor. Christian Endeavor, the interdenominational youth movement, was founded on February 2, 1881, by Dr. Frank E. Clark, pastor of Williston Congregational Church in Portland, Maine. Dr. Clark's concern was for youth who had accepted Christ but who were not involved in church activities. On the evening of its organization, Dr. Clark wrote in his diary: "The boys and girls take tea with us, about 35 of them, and we form a young people's society." What began as the Williston Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor grew rapidly within Protestant churches into a worldwide movement. By 1910, there were said to be as many as 71,000 Christian Endeavor Societies worldwide with a membership of 4 million. In 1925, *Time* reported that "in nearly every Protestant church today, the bulletin board announces 'Christian Endeavor Meeting Wednesday (or it may be Sunday) at 7 (or it may be 8).'"



Rev. Francis E. Clark
1851-1927
Minister of Williston
Congregational Church,
Portland

Founder of the
Young People's Society
of Christian Endeavor
1881



KKK Rally outside the Methodist Episcopal Church, Lincoln, Maine

During the 1920's the Ku Klux Klan was a potent political force in Maine, reaching into the State House in Augusta. Lincoln, like many towns in Maine had, for a few years, a vibrant Klan organization. The photo above shows Klan members posing on the lawn of the Methodist Church. (Source: <http://lincolnmaine.us/history>)

SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL COMMISSION OF MAINE



William DeWitt Hyde
1858-1917
Bowdoin College Professor

First President
Interdenominational
Commission of Maine



Rev. Hilda Libby Ives

In 1926, Rev. Hilda Ives was ordained at Williston Congregational Church in Portland. She created the Larger Parish model in which small congregations would join together in parish councils. Appointed to the faculties of Andover Newton Theological School and Bangor Theological Seminary, she also served on the staff of the Rockefeller Foundation Inter-Seminary Commission. It was Rev. Ives who secured funding in Maine to make the Every Community Survey possible.

"During the latter years of the 19th century, the churches of the country were struggling with the problem of an extreme denominational conscience which at times amounted to competition, especially in small communities which were overchurched."

Rodney W. Roundy

The Interdenominational Commission of Maine

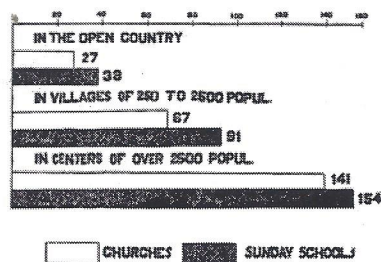
The Interdenominational Commission of Maine was organized in 1891 at Waterville by five Protestant denominations: Congregational, Christian, Baptist, Free Baptist, and Methodist. As its first president, William DeWitt Hyde of Bowdoin College remarked in 1894, the Commission was "suggested by a Methodist, initiated by a Congregationalist, formulated by a Free Baptist and put into operation by the united efforts of representatives of the Baptist, Free Baptist, Christian, Congregational and Methodist churches of Maine." (*Cooperation: A Record of Christian Service. The Interdenominational Commission of Maine*, by Rev. Rodney W. Roundy, D.D., President, 1950)

The Commission was all about comity. Its first principle stated: "No community, in which any denomination has any legitimate claim, should be entered by any other denomination, having said claims." Its second principle was similar: "A feeble church should be revived, if possible, rather than a new one established to become its rival."

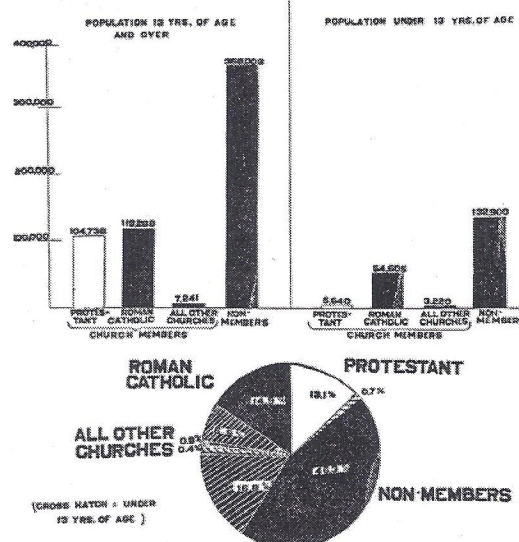
In 1935, the Commission entered into talks with the Council of Religious Education (the re-named and reformulated Maine Sunday School Association) about a possible merger. There would be none - at least not then. The Ecumenical Commission of Maine voted not to become the "committee on comity" of the newly-forming Maine Council of Churches.

MAINE EVERY COMMUNITY SURVEY

AVERAGE SIZE OF CHURCHES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS



MAINE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AS TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP BY AGE GROUPS 1926



TOTAL POPULATION Every Community Survey (1930)



Rev. Albert Teele Dunn, DD

An early secretary of the Interdenominational Commission of Maine, he was also president of the Maine Bible Society, a member of the executive committee of the Maine Sunday School Association, and pastor of Free Street Baptist Church, Portland. Dr. Dunn died in 1903.

SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL COMMISSION OF MAINE

The Every Community Survey of Maine (1930)

In 1930, upon recommendation of the National Church Comity Conference (held in Cleveland in 1928), there was conducted in Maine an "Every Community Survey" to document religious activity and to make recommendations for moving forward. Prime movers on the project were Rev. Herman N. Morse, secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, and Rev. Basil C. Gleason of Brewer, pastor of the Congregational church in Brewer and general secretary of the Maine Council of Religious Education.

Among the recommended principles of the Survey:

Fulllest co-operation among organized bodies of Christians in over-churched areas.

Definite responsibility of Christian people for the Christian welfare of people living in rural areas.

Fresh reliance on organized missionary agencies to limit funds in competing church areas.

New grappling with the needs of adequate Christian ministry to all isolated, overlooked and neglected communities, so that there are no communities where there is rivalry in the things of Christ.

Consolidation of present agencies which represent various denominations in inter-church work.

Cooperation in the use of radio for extending the principles of Christianity and for reaching isolated people.

The Mission at the Eastward

Growing out of the Every Community Survey that identified more than 100 under-churched Maine towns, the Interdenominational Commission of Maine invited the Presbyterians to begin a work in the rural towns of Starks, Leeds, Wales, Hartford, New Portland, and West Mills. The result was The Mission at the Eastward. Today M.A.T.E. is "a cooperative parish of eight churches and five ministries that rely on programming that otherwise [they] could never do alone."

Based upon the recommendations of the Every Community Survey of 1930, the Interdenominational Commission entered into the first talks with the Maine Council of Religious Education to merge the two organizations.

In 1938, when the Maine Council of Churches was formed, the Interdenominational Commission of Maine voted to "accept any and all requests from the Maine Council of Churches to act for it in any matters of comity affecting the constituent churches of the Commission." In 1942, it was decided that the Council's executive secretary should be a Corresponding Member of the Interdenominational Commission.

Interdenominational Commission of Maine

50th Anniversary Hymn

November 4, 1941

words by Rev. Ralph F. Lowe
Madison, Maine
(Tune: Azmon)

What arid fields around us lie,
Deprived of Gospel care;
The name of Christ is seldom heard,
Or Christian praise and prayer.

Unnumbered youth are never taught
The faith our fathers knew,
The blessed truths our Master gave
Are heeded but a few.

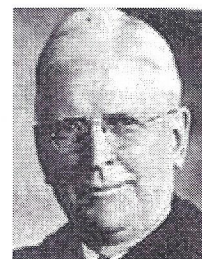
United let the church arise
To meet this awesome need,
For only when we work as one
Shall we at last succeed.

O Lord, for such a time as this
A holy zeal impart,
And to our efforts do Thou grant
An understanding heart.



Gov. Carl Milliken
President
Interdenominational
Commission of Maine
1922-1924

Governor Carl Milliken was Maine's first full-time chief executive and was at one time national president of the Free Baptists. His summer home was at Ocean Park, Maine.



Rev. Rodney W. Roundy
President
Interdenominational
Commission of Maine
1940' and 1950's

Superintendent Emeritus
Congregational Christian
Conference of Maine

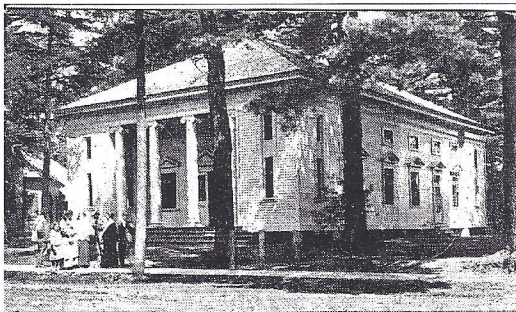
SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

THE MAINE SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

The Maine Sunday School Association

The Maine Sunday School Association, predecessor of the Maine Council of Churches, was organized at Lewiston, Maine, during a three-day Sunday School Convention in September 1869, by the Baptist, Free Baptist, Christian, Congregational, and Methodist denominations. According to the *American Christian Record* the Association's first general secretary was the Rev. J.W. Ford. Edward Eggleston (the noted American novelist, historian, Methodist circuit rider and editor of *The National Sunday School*) and Methodist Bishop John Heyl Vincent (who established *The National Sunday-School Quarterly* and *The Sunday School Teacher* and went on to found the Chautauqua movement) were speakers on that occasion. Both were prominent in the development of the International Uniform Lessons System.

B.C. Jordan and the Rev. Dr. Smith Baker were among the Maine Sunday School Association organizers and were still members of the executive committee as late as 1905. Dr. Baker, a native of Bowdoin, Maine, and a graduate of Bangor Theological Seminary, was a nationally prominent Congregational minister. He was a strong supporter of the Sunday school movement and at different times president of the state Sunday School associations of Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Maine. (From 1898 to 1907 he was pastor of Williston Congregational Church, Portland.) Benjamin Clark Jordan was a prominent Alfred lumberman and a member of the Alfred Parish Church where he served as Sunday school superintendent. During his lifetime Jordan was one of the wealthiest men in York County. When he died in 1912, he bequeathed more than 100,000 acres in the Massabesic Forest to Bates College.



The B. C. Jordan Memorial, Ocean Park, Me.

B.C. Jordan Memorial,
Ocean Park, Maine

Lumberman Benjamin Clark Jordan, Sunday-school teacher and a member of First Parish Church, Alfred, was prominently associated with the Maine Sunday School Association for more than 30 years.

STATE OF MAINE.

Certificate of organization of a Corporation under Chapter 57 of the Revised Statutes of Maine.

The undersigned officers of a corporation organized at Portland, Maine, at a meeting of the applicants therefor, held pursuant to a warrant issued under the provisions of said Chapter 57, hereby certify as follows:

The name of said corporation is *Maine State Sunday School Association*
The said corporation is organized for *the purpose of educational and religious society*

Said corporation is located at Portland in the County of Cumberland, and State of Maine.

There being no Directors
The number of Members is seven, and their names are *B. C. Jordan, L. M. Binford, L. M. Webb, J. R. Little, W. A. Sampson, M. J. Grogan*
The name of the Clerk is *L. M. Binford* and his residence is *Saco, Maine*
The undersigned, *Norace Purinton* is President; the undersigned, *L. M. Binford* is Treasurer; and the undersigned, *Norace Purinton, Leona R. Cook, L. M. Binford, B. C. Jordan and S. J. Bassford* are a majority of the Members of said corporation.

Witness our hands this sixth day of March, A. D. 1911.

Norace Purinton President.
L. M. Binford Treasurer.

Incorporation Papers of the Maine Sunday School Association

In 1911, the Maine Sunday School Association was formally incorporated under the laws of Maine as an educational and religious society. The Maine Council of Churches operates today under the same incorporation papers.



Maine Sunday School Convention, 1918

SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

THE MAINE SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

"The Men of America for the Man of Galilee"

The Maine Sunday School Association promoted Adult Bible Classes, especially for men, as a counterweight to the growing notion that Christianity was being feminized.

In 1877, Alvah S. Baker, only son of the Rev. Dr. Smith Baker, was employed to do systemic field work for six months, but the Association was apparently unable to place "a man in the field" again until 1891, when Harry E. Lufkin of Yarmouth, Maine, was hired as general secretary.

It is clear from the records that the Maine Sunday School Association worked in close partnership with the Maine Bible Society (incorporated in March 1810, with the Rev. Dr. Samuel Deane, pastor of the First Parish Church in Portland, as its first president) and, after it was established in 1891, the Interdenominational Commission of Maine.

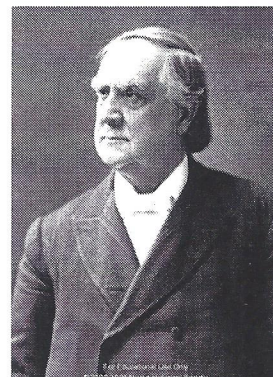
The Maine association was also an active partner with other Sunday school associations both nationally and internationally. In 1908, Maine Sunday School Association general secretary Harry E. Lufkin read the scripture lesson for one of the evening sessions of the Twelfth International Sunday School Convention, held that year in the First Regiment Armory in Louisville, Kentucky. The convention minutes described the scene: "The armory was

tastefully decorated with various flags, prominent among which were the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack. Behind the platform the motto of the convention, 'We would see Jesus,' was set in an electric sign. The body of the armory was filled with delegates with at least a thousand visitors in the galleries, and all seemed eager to be about their Father's business.'" (*Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1905-1908, a triennial survey of Sunday-school work*, The International Sunday School Association, 1908)

The Maine Sunday School Association appears to have paid particular attention to supporting Sunday-school teachers through inspirational annual conventions, help with curriculum development, and the organizing of Sunday-schools in rural parts of the state. In its 1905 report to the International Association, secretary Lufkin reported that the Maine Association consisted of county, district, and township associations, every county in Maine being "partially organized. Organization and teacher-training is [sic] being pushed."



Harry E. Lufkin
General Secretary
Maine Sunday School
Association
1891-1912



Rev. Dr. Smith Baker
Pastor of Williston
Congregational Church,
Portland
1898-1907
President
Maine Sunday School
Association



Maine State Sunday School Convention, Augusta. 1922



SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

THE COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (continuing the Maine Sunday School Association)



Rev. Leland A. Edwards
President
Maine Council of
Religious Education
1931

Pastor
West Parish Congregational
Church, Bethel

James Fyfe Laughton

**Interdenominational
Minister**

James F. Laughton was general secretary of the Maine Council of Religious Education in 1929-1930. The son of Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, he attended the Quaker Mission School for missionary children in Chunking, China, was an ordained Baptist minister, serving both Baptist and Presbyterian churches. His particular interest was interracial and intercreedal groups. He died in Brooklyn, NY, in 1962.

The Council of Religious Education continued the work of the Maine Sunday School Association through the 1920's and until the organization of the Maine Council of Churches in 1938.

As early as 1920, the Maine Sunday School Association was undergoing a change of name and, gradually, a change of direction. Continuing to operate under the charter of 1911, the 1920 *Portland Directory* listed "The (interdenominational) Maine Council of Religious Education," at 119 Exchange Street, Room 502, noting that the organization was founded September 14, 1869. George H. Hinckley was Council president, Fred W. French was secretary, and Philip R. Milliken was treasurer. George Hinckley was still president in 1925. It appears as if the Rev. Edward H. Brewster was employed as general secretary during those years. A graduate of Bates College, in 1918 Rev. Brewster was minister of the High Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Auburn. During this same period the "Sunday School Association for Religious Education," another name for the same organization, listed its address as 184½ Middle Street, and later 178 Middle Street. The Council located permanently to Middle Street by 1930.

In 1928, the Council is said to have represented 1,200 Sunday schools, with 12,000 officers and teachers and a total membership of 100,000 scholars. (Harrie B. Coe, *Maine: A History*, 1928) The Rev. Milo Eber Pearson, a pastor of High Street Congregational Church, Auburn, was president that year. (By 1930, Rev. Pearson had returned to his native Salem, Mass., where he was affiliated with the Tabernacle Congregational Church in that city.)

From the inception of the Maine Council of Religious Education, the Baptists began to withdraw support, and by 1936, they withdrew altogether. By vote of their Convention Board, the Baptists were "withholding cooperation and refusing to assume responsibility either for the program (of the Maine Council of Religious Education) or its financial support." By that time the Council had expanded its membership to include both the Unitarians and the Quakers. Earlier, in 1930, there was talk of merging the Maine Council of Religious Education and the Maine Interdenominational Commission, but the talks evidently went nowhere. By 1936, those talks had resumed.

In 1938, under the leadership of the Council's executive secretary, the Rev. Harry E. Titus, a joint committee from the Council of Religious Education and the Interdenominational Commission of Maine was formed to prepare

a constitution for what was to become the Maine Council of Churches. Under the new constitution, the organization would include both denominations and individual congregations. Four denominations would be required to constitute the Maine Council of Churches.

In the Spring of 1938, the Congregational-Christian Conference, the Maine Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, and the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends ratified the new constitution. In October 1938, the Unitarians became the fourth denomination to ratify, bringing the Maine Council of Churches into existence.

Two years later, at its annual convention at Ocean Park, Maine, the United Baptist Convention, the state's largest Protestant denomination, voted not to join the Council, citing "the absence of a theological position and the unequal yoking with Unitarians" as blocks to membership. (*Maine Baptists, A Quarter Century of Change, 1954-1979*, p. 72)

(In 1940, the Interdenominational Commission of Maine threw the Baptists a lifeline by voting not to merge with the Maine Council of Churches. It allowed the United Baptist Convention, a longtime Commission member denomination, to maintain that they had not walked away entirely from the ecumenical table.)

Rev. Harry E. Titus

General Secretary
Maine Council of Religious Education
1935-1938
Executive Secretary
Maine Council of Churches
1938-1939

Harry Elwood Titus, a Pennsylvania native, was a member of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1917, and Director of Religious Education for the Troy [NY] M.E. Conference before coming to Maine.

SEEKING COMMON GROUND. WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD.