

WILLIAM LOSEE

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William Losee was the first Methodist circuit rider preacher in New York State and in what was to become Upper Canada. Born June 30, 1757 at Dutchess County, N.Y., Losee came from Dutch stock, his parents being John Losee and Nellie Golden. The family had lived in the Oyster Bay area before some of them moved further north including John and Nellie. In his will John Losee mentions that he gave his son William a black colt.

The family were known as quite outspoken in their views and were supporters of the British forces. William Losee at one point joined DeLancey's Brigade, also known as the Westchester Refugees, whose job it was to man some of the guard posts around New York City in the years when New York was held by the British forces. This force was the second largest of the Loyalist forces, the New Jersey volunteers being the largest. The orderly books of the time relate the day-to-day activities of these forces which included foraging for food and guarding American prisoners.

Following the settlement of the war, the members of Delancey's Brigade were given a block of land in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia near what is now Truro. William Losee received 250 acres near Amherst, Nova Scotia in an area settled by a group of former Yorkshire Methodists.

In 1788, Losee may not have yet linked up with the Methodists and was probably still a member of the Dutch Reformed church. However, shortly thereafter, he offered himself as a travelling speaker and he was approached to cover the Lake Champlain circuit. He was ordained by Bishop Asbury in a private ceremony (noted in Bishop Asbury's journal) in 1789. His ordination as a deacon was a necessity to prevent his detention when on the American side of the border. In 1790 he was asked to come to the Kingston area and his circuit was between Kingston and Adolphustown. He was at this time also given a piece of land in the inner town of the young settlement. He travelled assiduously and extensively in pursuit of his preaching duties and held many meetings in settlers' homes in the district, church buildings as such not being available.

In his personal life, Losee fell in love with Katherine Detlor, the daughter of a Loyalist family at Fredericksburg and asked her to marry him. Katherine, however, chose Darius Dunham, the second Methodist circuit rider in the Bay of Quinte circuit. Badly wounded emotionally, Losee shortly thereafter returned to the Hempstead area, Long Island. Losee was only in Canada for approximately three years although he continued to preach for many years following his return to New York State but not as a circuit rider. He made his living on a day to day basis by other means including at one time as a fisherman. He later married Mary Rushmore, widow of William Rushmore, and the couple continued to live in the Hempstead area. They were both buried in the burying ground of Hempstead United Methodist Church, New York. Their gravestones were removed during the widening of the street many years later but were preserved and were recently brought back to Canada. They are now erected in the cemetery of Hay Bay Church, Adolphustown.

Losee is known for being responsible for the implantation of Methodism in this area. Methodists had an itinerant system of preachers who were called to "holiness of life". It became an official denomination in the United States in 1784 which was before it was recognized as such in England. In the late 1800s up to 30% of the population in this area belonged to the Methodist church and in Ernestown Township the numbers approached 70% of the population. In the twentieth century most Methodist churches joined with the Presbyterian church to form the United Church of Canada.