

Rev. E. Payson Hammond & Woodbine Cottage

Rev. Edward Payson Hammond (1831-1910) was a famous evangelist from Vernon who traveled the world successfully preaching and organizing. He wrote many tracts and books that were translated into many languages.

He often returned summers to his 'Woodbine Cottage' in Vernon to rest and write. A visitor described the cottage in some detail, but I had trouble determining just where the cottage was and if it still existed. Thanks to Carol Nelson and the Vernon Historical Society for showing me what was in plain sight.

What follows is a short biography and the visitor's description of Woodbine Cottage. Cole's 1888 "History of Tolland County, Connecticut" devotes four pages to Hammond including the description of Woodbine Cottage. Cole borrowed heavily from other contemporary sources.

Biography



Rev. Edward Payson Hammond was an evangelist, born in Ellington on September 1, 1831, a descendant of Elder John Strong of Northampton so related to many area families. At the age of seven he came to Vernon Center with his father Elijah, where he has since made it his home. He graduated from Williams College in 1858, studied two years in the Union theological seminary in New York city, and in 1860-1 completed his studies in the theological seminary of the Free Church, Edinburgh, Scotland.

He was ordained as an evangelist by the presbytery of New York in 1863 and in the spring of 1864 began laboring in Chicago with Dwight L. Moody. He and Eliza were married in 1865.

In 1866-8 Hammond made an extended tour through Great Britain, France, Italy, Egypt, and Palestine, and in 1867 held services for six weeks in London, where he

was instrumental in establishing the 'Children's Special Service Mission.'

“The Harvest Work of the Holy Spirit” by Rev. P. C. Headley in 1873 is largely a record of Hammond’s work in Scotland and England, including letters to and from him.

His labors in St. Louis in 1874 resulted in the addition of over 5,000 members to the different churches and in the organization of the ‘Evangelical Alliance of St. Louis,’ comprising clergymen of all denominations, who united to prosecute evangelistic work.

In 1874 he also made a missionary tour as far north as Alaska, reaching that territory before any other missionary. Mr. Hammond preached with great success in all parts of the United States and in Canada, and spent in all six and a half years in work in the Old World.

He is the author of about one hundred books and tracts, besides many hymns.

In the 1880 Census at age 48 he and Eliza are living in Vernon. They have a servant Johanna Sullivan, 30, from Ireland. Brother George and his large family are nearby on Dart Road. Randall Beach, a painter is a neighbor and Nathan Strong is also up the street.

Woodbine Cottage

Hammond’s Woodbine Cottage is located at 754 Hartford Road, just 3 houses up from the Vernon Historical Society. From old maps it appears there were no neighbors to the west and likely few trees. His front porch faced west with an unobstructed view of the valley.

At about this time Hammond hosted for two weeks a C. A. Jones who wrote a detailed description of Woodbine Cottage that was published in the *Montreal Witness*. It’s an interesting view of late 1800's Vernon Center when it was a complete village with church, school, post office, blacksmith and store surrounded by farmland.



Woodbine Cottage at 754 Hartford Road

Jones wrote: "As Mr. Hammond, who has been laboring in Montreal for the last nine weeks , has just left the city, it will interest many to know something of the quiet country retreat to which he will retire during the summer months after his arduous work of carrying on meetings morning, noon and night. May we hope that he will there find the rest and refreshment he so much needs, and that he will find fresh vigor and energy in order that he may begin again the work for the Master in some new field of labor .

"The evangelist's home is located twelve miles from Hartford, the capital of Connecticut. Woodbine Cottage is a neat frame structure, painted a delicate drab. From the lawn and croquet ground on the western side of the house, on a clear day, a glimpse of Hartford and the new Capitol is obtainable.



The cottage in 1981. Porch is to the right. The house has been updated since this photo.

"The eye can catch a fine panoramic view of the beauties of the CT valley from any side of the cottage. The rolling hills and the white cottages peeping out from the deep green surrounding s of trees and grass, form many a pretty picture upon which the tired city resident can gaze for the hour with profit and relief. The grass plot on the northern view, which lies on the Rockville road, has a miniature pyramid of rocks and shells over which a fountain throws its spray.

"These stones and shells could, if they had tongues, tell a history of their own, for they have come to this quiet resting place with the evangelist and his wife from the cold mountains of Alaska, the bright waters of the Adriatic, the historic shores of Galilee and many other places of note in Holy Land history.

"The 'Curiosity Shop' of this cottage contains a number of relics, the result of travel in foreign parts. Rosaries of olive wood from Bethlehem, and of pear from the Red Sea, representing the faith of the Mohammedan and the Roman Catholics, can here be seen by the curious. One Bible, which Mr. Hammond values greatly, is the volume out of which the evangelist Whitefield once preached.

"Perhaps one of the greatest curiosities Mr. Hammond has in his house, at any rate the one he places the greatest value upon, is his collection of Bibles.

Hard to imagine today the croquet court and pyramid of stones and shells facing the highway.

Later Life

In the 1880's and 1890's Hammond is very active in state church activities and union meetings. Although he had no children of his own he was known for bringing his message to young people.

In the 1900 Census at age 68 they were living at 25 Atwood Street in Hartford, now adjacent to Saint Francis Hospital and had likely sold the Vernon house to a relative. He was able to continue working for another few years until his health began failing.



Cedar Hill Monument

In the 1910 Census at age 78 he lists himself as an errand boy for a store, but owns his Hartford house. This is a curious listing for work. Was it to keep busy? As an evangelist he may not have accumulated much money, but certainly Hartford churches would have honored him for his work.

He died in Hartford in 1910. His will, written in 1901 leaves everything to his wife. His obituary noted he had an eventful career, including his conversion of General Booth, the father of the Salvation Army.

Although his parents and family are buried in Elmwood Cemetery E. Payson and Eliza Hammond are buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford.

Sources

Cole, J. R. (1888). "History of Tolland County, Connecticut," pages 804-809.

Vernon Historical Society's Historic Resources Inventory of Vernon Center

The Hartford Courant articles on newspapers.com

1869 OW Gray map



1869 Vernon Center map