

## INTRODUCTION

# Samuel Mills' Struggle, a New England Haystack and America's Foreign Missions Movement: The Second Great Awakening, 1790–1840, Revivals, Bibles and the Counterpoint to Rationalism

by Margery Boyden, Scudder Association Foundation, Historian

© Scudder Association Foundation, 2025. All rights reserved.



1

### THE ORDINATION OF THE FIRST AMERICAN FOREIGN MISSIONARIES

“To write is to fight forgetting.”  
—Annie Ernaux

For a more global and appreciative understanding of the role of Samuel<sup>5</sup> J. Mills, Jr. and a 1806 Haystack Prayer, on the beginning of America's Foreign Missions Movement than some accounts offer, it is necessary to investigate forces in play, both positive and negative, that led to American missionaries being sent to foreign lands beginning in 1812. Paramount favorable influences were the spiritual climate in America that allowed for religious diversity due to the right to religious liberty in the U. S. Bill of Rights and effects of the religious Second Great Awakening. For context, the Second Great Awakening began near the end of the eighteenth century, while George Washington was serving as president of the new United States of America.

This spiritual awakening led to a substantial increase in revival meetings which further fueled this awakening and this in turn fueled greater interest in missionary work in America. This missionary spirit grew among some students in the northeastern United States and a few missionary societies organized on campuses to support missionary work in the states.

In 1906, in the *North American Review*, oldest literary magazine in the U.S., the Rev. James L. Barton published, “One Hundred Years of American Foreign Missions: An Interpretation,” that discloses positive global effects, now taken for granted, and their roots forgotten. Barton begins:

---

<sup>1</sup> F. T. Clayton, “The Ordination of the First American Foreign Missionaries,” in *The One Hundredth Anniversary of the Haystack Prayer Meeting*, October 1906, (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1907), 214.

At Williamstown, Massachusetts, has just been celebrated the centennial of a mission prayer-meeting held during a severe shower of rain under the lee of a haystack near that town. To this remarkable meeting, at which there were present only five college students, is attributed the beginning of movements which eventuated in the organization of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions four years later. These young men have become well-known historical personages, and the noted meeting-place is marked by a marble monument suitably inscribed and bearing the name of the five participants.<sup>2</sup>



3

THE HAYSTACK MONUMENT, WILLIAMS COLLEGE

At the Haystack Centennial Celebration at Williamstown and North Adams, Massachusetts, in October of 1906, Dr. Samuel M. Worcester was quoted as saying:

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions...[began] in the revivals at the end of the eighteenth, and the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was but an embodiment and expression of the missionary spirit, which was then witnessing itself in public and private supplications, and in other modes, as seldom or never before, since the days of the Fathers of New England.<sup>4</sup>

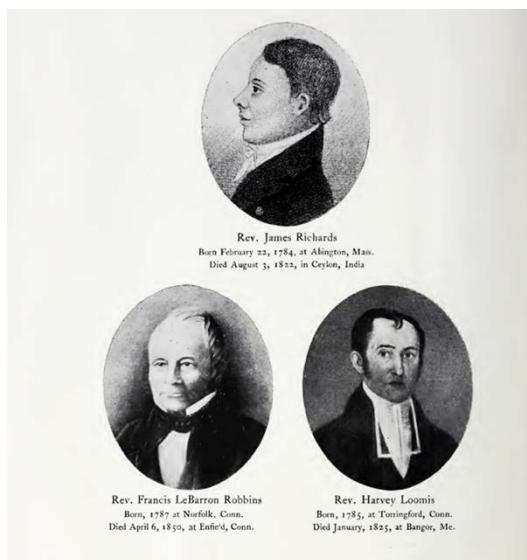
<sup>2</sup> James L. Barton, "One Hundred Years of American Foreign Missions: An Interpretation," *The North American Review*, volume 183, no. 601 (October 19, 1906), 745, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25105668?seq=3>.

<sup>3</sup> *The Haystack Prayer Meeting, An Account of its Origin and Spirit*, The Haystack Centennial Celebration at Williamstown and North Adams, Massachusetts, October, MCMVI (1906), front matter. Hereafter referred to as *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet.

<sup>4</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 7–8.

The author of the centennial pamphlet, F. T. Clayton, goes on to say, “The names of Eliot and Mayhew, Brainerd and Sergeant, Kirkland and Wheelock, were familiar in New England homes, and represented the militant spirit of missions when the parents of the Haystack men were children.” A few small regional missionary societies had been organized but, the pamphlet author continues, “In looking back over those pioneer days in organized missionary effort, it is instructive to observe that the unity of missions was ever borne in mind. It was largely a question of administration and not a new kind of missionary spirit that drew the sharp distinction between home and foreign missions which in those early days...” The author named a few such societies were already at work and states that the American churches had raised six thousand dollars to send to the missionary work that the British Dr. William Carey of England was already doing in India. Carey made his case that Christians had an obligation to take the Christian gospel to parts of the world who had not yet heard it.<sup>5</sup>

However, in 1806, no missionaries from America had themselves yet ventured into foreign fields of labor. That was about to change because of five young men who had been regularly meeting as a group for prayer meetings at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. They were Samuel J. Mills, Jr., James Richards, Francis L. Robbins, Harvey Loomis and Byram Green.



THREE OF THE FIVE HAYSTACK MEN AFTER THEY WERE ORDAINED MINISTERS AND MISSIONARIES<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. By definition, in their day, heathen was anyone who did not believe in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Old and New Testaments.

<sup>6</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 18.

## **Samuel's spiritual and emotional struggles were his preparation for the Haystack Meeting**

This story begins with Samuel J. Mills, Jr., who has the reputation by all accounts as being the sparkplug to ignite the American Foreign Missions movement. To understand what gave Mills spiritual power for such a mighty work, one must know the difficulties that transpired with him before he went to Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Born on 21 April 1783 at Torringford, Torrington, Litchfield, Connecticut, Samuel<sup>5</sup> J. Mills, Jr. had received a religious upbringing in the home of his pastor father, the Rev. Samuel<sup>4</sup> John Mills, Sr. (*John<sup>3</sup>, Peter<sup>2-1</sup>*),<sup>7</sup> the first pastor of Torringford Church, at Torrington, Connecticut, and by his saintly mother, Esther (Robbins) Mills, of Canaan, Connecticut. Some of the religious activities of his father, likely prepared Samuel, Jr. for a most defining moment in his life in 1806 and for his role in the American Foreign Missions movement.

Rev. Samuel<sup>5</sup> J. Mills, Sr. was sent in “the 1790s on an 800-mile missionary tour through New York, Vermont and New Hampshire” and is considered a pioneer of missionary work in Vermont. He was editor of the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* that relates an account about a revival in August of 1798,<sup>8</sup> around Torrington, that had a great effect upon the young people. It seems to have affected his own son to also wish for a spiritual refreshing. But that objective did not come easily and led Samuel to feelings of hopelessness for salvation and estrangement from God for a time.

Samuel<sup>5</sup> J. Mills, Jr.’s biographer and his former teacher, the Rev. Gardiner Spring, writes:

The childhood and youth of Mr. Mills were chiefly spent under his father’s roof, in the possession of the most faithful instructions, and of the best kind. When quite a child, his mind exhibited no common sensibility to the concerns of religion, and was easily and sometimes deeply affected with his neglect of religious opportunities, and his ruined condition as a sinner. These impressions gradually wore away, until the year 1798, when they were revived, and his attention powerfully arrested, during a season of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon his native town. This revival of religion took place about the time of a very general

---

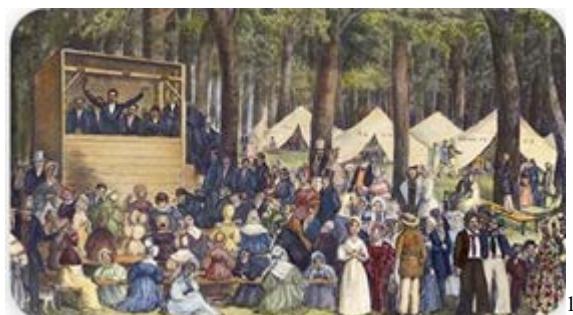
<sup>7</sup> Helen Schatvet Ullmann, *Peter Mills of Windsor, Connecticut, formerly known as Pieter Wouterse vander Meulen*, (Camden, Maine: Penobscot Press, 1998), on Family History Library microfilm 1,440,696, item 3 and online via the FHL catalog, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/memories/L4NY-ZPC>.

<sup>8</sup> Ullmann, unnumbered pages, Samuel John Mills, Sr. is person # 56 and Samuel John Mills, Jr. is person #183.

‘outpouring’ upon the churches of New-England; when about one hundred and fifty congregations were visited with seasons of refreshing from the divine presence.

Young Mills was then fifteen years of age. Naturally very retired and incommunicative, he was least of all disposed to say much of the exercises of his own mind. But such were his views of his own sinfulness, so severe his distress, and so bitter his opposition to God, that he would sometimes ‘break out in expressions of unyielding rebellion.’ With nothing was his dissatisfaction more painful, than the discriminations of the divine favor in showing mercy to those who were around him, while he himself was apparently left to obduracy and ruin.<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Spring goes on to relate young Mills’ suffering during this time while he observed the “rejoicing in hope “of relatives and friends “as they “united to the visible Church.” It was Samuel<sup>5</sup>, Jr.’s father’s own church for many of them. For many months, he found no such relief through any experience with the Spirit of God or with divine favor before this “revival began its decline.”<sup>10</sup>



11

TYPICAL CAMP MEETING

Spring describes:

Two full years he remained in this dismal frame of mind, still refusing to bow at the footstool of mercy; and to adopt his own sentiment, ‘at heart still cursing the day in which he was born.’ But he had seen too much of his own vileness to relapse into a state of unconcern. With some apparent mitigation of his distress he left his father’s house for a neighboring town, to take charge of a farm that had been

---

<sup>9</sup> Gardiner Spring, *Memoir of Samuel John Mills*, 2d ed., (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1829), 3–5. The Rev. Gardiner Spring taught at Andover Theological Seminary for one year and then was called as Pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City in 1810. During his year at Andover, he overlapped with Mills and was a great influence.

<sup>10</sup> Spring, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Typical Camp Meeting, “1790 The Second Awakening in US, The Revival Library, <https://revival-library.org/history/1790-second-great-awakening-us/>.

bequeathed him by his maternal grandmother. His letters during this period convince us that there was much in this absence from the bosom and prayers of his endeared family, to increase his apprehensions that he should at last be an exile from God's presence, and an outcast from the community of his people.<sup>12</sup>

Young Samuel<sup>5</sup> went through a serious season of spiritual and emotional distress. The story of Samuel<sup>5</sup>'s trial provides opportunity to consider possible reasons for Samuel<sup>5</sup>'s depressed and dejected state. One wonders if Mills' expectation for ease in obtaining God's favor was because his father was a pastor, and in particular the pastor who was holding the revivals that brought so many converts. Did he understand the role of one's own spiritual work necessary for conversion? No account was found that showed what Samuel<sup>5</sup>'s level of doctrinal understanding then was or what he knew about the character of God or whether he was applying effort to make himself more prepared and receptive. Was he placing too much responsibility on God, rather than enough on himself? Was Samuel<sup>5</sup> approaching God with humility as the New Testament teaches, or was he troubled with doubt or pride or fear or jealousy or unwillingness to fully align his heart with God each of these capable of blocking the Spirit? Did Samuel<sup>5</sup> understand Christ's doctrine of repentance and how exercising that gift invites peace and reconciliation with God? What did he understand about the nature and character of God? Did Samuel<sup>5</sup> see God as punitive or loving? Was Samuel<sup>5</sup> then applying himself as a student of the scriptures? These are questions relevant to one who seeks to receive spiritual manifestations from God to know that he is accepted and to taste God's love, issues with which Samuel must have wrestled. He kept his struggles to himself although he had two parents to whom he might have turned as mentors.

Or, is the lesson to be taken from Samuel's spiritual ordeal a case of how God puts his future servants through a refiner's fire in preparation for the kind of spiritual stamina needed for a future work they cannot yet envision? The New Testament apostle Peter says:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy?<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Spring, 5.

<sup>13</sup> KJV, 1 Peter 4:12–13, New Testament, Holy Bible.

Did Samuel<sup>5</sup> J. Mills' trial produce the strength of his later commitment and worldwide impact?

Mills returned home in November of 1801 to attend school at Litchfield, near his home, but still "with no repose to his depressed and troubled mind." Mr. Spring relates the turning point:

On the morning of his departure for Litchfield, ever anxious for her son, and never more than now, his mother took an opportunity of inquiring into the state of his mind, and begged him to make an ingenuous disclosure of his feelings. For a moment he was silent, and wept; but his heart was too full, long to suppress the emotions produced by so affecting a request. He raised his head, and with eyes streaming with tears, exclaimed, 'O that I had never been born! ...For two years I have been sorry God ever made me.' What reply could such a mother make to such a disclosure! It was given her in that same hour what she should speak:—'My son,' said she, 'you are born, and you can never throw off your existence, nor your everlasting accountability for all your conduct.' This heavy thought was like a dagger to his soul. His mother expressed her fears that he had never thoroughly seen the evil of his own heart, and that he had much to learn before he was acquainted with himself; —to which he ventured to say, 'I have seen to the very bottom of hell!'

Spring then describes how the scene shifts to "...a scene in which...a devout and humble woman, wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant, and as a prince obtaining power to prevail."<sup>14</sup> As Samuel left, his mother had dropped to her knees in prayer "to plead for her poor son...."

She did not leave her closet, till she found the full relief she sought, and till her mind was confidently assured that God would remember mercy for her child!

...that very morning, it pleased the Holy Ghost...to knock off the chains from this unhappy prisoner, and introduce him into the liberty of the sons of God. He had not gone far, before he had such a view of the perfections of God, that he wondered he had never seen their beauty and glory before. There was nothing in God now which distressed him.... There was a wonderful change either in God or in him.... His mind was so constantly occupied in viewing the perfections of God, and in meditating on his word and works, and so continued for several weeks, that

---

<sup>14</sup> Spring, 6–7.

he did not think of himself with any degree of concern.' Such is the nature of genuine religion.<sup>15</sup>

Samuel<sup>5</sup> was a changed man. When Samuel<sup>5</sup> Mills returned from Litchfield, he told his father that "he could not conceive of any course in life in which to pass the rest of his days, that would prove so pleasant, as to go and communicate the gospel salvation" to those who did not have it.

Mr. Spring tells us of another kind of preparation. "[Samuel's] attention was directed to this subject by remarks, which in his childhood he had often heard from the lips of his mother. She was a *Missionary woman*, and frequently spoke of Brainerd, and Eliot, and other Missionaries: and as she dwelt upon the glorious cause in which they were engaged, he once heard her say respecting himself— 'I have consecrated this child to the service of God as a Missionary.'"<sup>16</sup>

### **At Williams College in Spring of 1806, Samuel J. Mills, Jr. meets a contest of ideas**

An earlier student at Williams College, located at Williamstown, Massachusetts, Albert Hopkins, described conditions he encountered at the school:

'I entered Williams College the year it was incorporated [1793] ....

Respecting the religious state of things in the college, during my residence in it, I have no very favorable account to give. It was the time of the French Revolution, which was, at that time, very popular with almost all the members of College, and with almost all people in that part of the country. French liberty and French philosophy poured in upon us like a deluge, and seemed to sweep almost everything serious before it. The spirit of ridicule and abuse ran so high, that no one dared manifest seriousness, only those whom God had truly made serious.'<sup>17</sup>

But the "serious" believers, like Albert Hopkins and Mills and others, had difficulty taking some French philosophies seriously while they were reading about what was happening in France and comparing the violence there to the fruits of the Spirit described in Galatians that they had personally tasted were enjoying from their spiritual life such as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith meekness, temperance."<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Spring, 7–8.

<sup>16</sup> Spring, 10.

<sup>17</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Galatians 5:22–23, New Testament, Holy Bible.

Some French revolutionaries' ideas were eliminating God from the new government and exiling clergymen from the country or killing them. For some of these Williams College students, this French model was difficult to take seriously. This was not the model upon which the American Revolution and its new government and laws and Bill of Rights were built. In his magazine, American author Nathaniel Hawthorne describes the failure of the First French Revolution:

*There is an unbridled licentious freedom, such as no man can safely be entrusted with, which will suffer no deductions from its claims on the score of superior wisdom, or learning, or intelligence... That you may incite us, you answer, to virtue in this world, for virtue's sake! Go, then, *overturn your altars, destroy your temples dedicated to the living God, and erect others*, as did revolutionary France, *to the goddess of reason*; but be careful to place a guillotine by her side; let us worship her, for if she can not teach us what is best to do, how shall we ask it of that Being, whose justice we have confounded...and whose love of virtue we have in effect denied.<sup>19</sup> (Italics added.)*



EXÉCUTION DE MARIE ANTOINETTE LE 16 OCTOBRE 1793

At first, the beginnings had shown promise for the liberation of France in August 1789, when the Declaration of Rights as a model for the government was submitted by Maj. General Lafayette, America's friend of American Revolutionary fame. Lafayette's Declaration was based on America's self-governing principles, but it was rejected by warring factions that were challenging all authorities, including France's State Church. French Enlightenment principles

<sup>19</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne, *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, volume 1, no. 6, (February, 1835): 272.

<sup>20</sup> Unknown artist, "Exécution de Marie Antoinette le 16 octobre 1793,"

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Exécution\\_de\\_Marie\\_Antoinette\\_le\\_16\\_octobre\\_1793.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Exécution_de_Marie_Antoinette_le_16_octobre_1793.jpg).

preferred rationalism and the scientific method. A vicious and untempered assault on the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and respect for religious beliefs and practices soon followed.

During France's Reign of Terror, estimates are between 17,000–40,000 people died at the guillotine during the French Revolution. Some 30,000 Catholic priests were exiled, and others were killed by the revolutionaries. Rather than offering the populace freedom for religious expression and diversity as the Americans had, the Jacobins tried to de-Christianize France.

According to the disappointed General Lafayette, he lamented that France did not have quite the same history of preparation or the same fertile “soil” within its people as that of the Americans in which ideas of liberty could grow that included liberty of conscience to worship God according to the dictates of one's conscience. Lafayette's biographer said that in America, “Lafayette found here a soil congenial to his principles. The fruits of his services are here enjoyed, and may be known and appreciated by all mankind.”<sup>21</sup> France had not allowed for a diversity of religions prior to their revolution. France's history had defined itself by centuries of religious persecution and had driven out many of its capable citizens of the country for generations, depriving France of its religious diversity and much of its skilled artisan class that escaped to England and The Netherlands and other parts of Europe, with some removing to colonial America.

Lafayette corresponded with his friend George Washington during the early stages of the French Revolution before he escaped from France to save his life, but he was imprisoned from 1792–1797 in Austria. Lafayette later visited America in 1824 where Lafayette was treated throughout the country to a hero's welcome. Through his persistence, in July 1830, Lafayette's principles began to spread “silently through political and social institutions, of the French nation.”<sup>22</sup>

American ideals had been planted in a soil conducive to allowing for religious diversity, and especially in the northeastern U.S., which had by 1806 produced a spiritual awakening, a culture of revivals, and a missionary spirit developing among many congregations.

The early American definition of liberty had, in addition to some of its own Enlightenment ideas, also managed to preserve religious undertones and principles in its Declaration of Independence and religious freedom in its Bill of Rights. Perhaps with what was happening in

---

<sup>21</sup> Ebenezer Mack, *The Life of Gilbert Motier de Lafayette*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Mack, Andrus & Woodruff, 1841), 370.

<sup>22</sup> Mack, 23.

France on his mind, and his friend Lafayette in prison in Austria, these values were again espoused by President George Washington in his 1796 Farewell Address to his fellow Americans. While warning Americans of the dangers of extreme party spirit that can in time lead to loss of personal liberties and to authoritarianism, Washington reminded of the vital importance of freedom of religion and concern for morality in good governance:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, *religion and morality are indispensable supports*. In vain would that man claim the tribute of true patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politicians, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them.

...Virtue and morality is a necessary spring of popular government ...to...free government. Who is a sincere friend to [liberty] can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?<sup>23</sup>

Samuel<sup>5</sup> J. Mills professor, the Rev. Gardiner Spring agrees, “Liberty without godliness, is but another name for anarchy or despotism. Let philosophers and statesmen argue as they please—the religion of the gospel is the rock on which civil liberty rests. You have never known a people free without the Bible; with it, they cannot long be slaves.”<sup>24</sup> Mills seems to have shared this opinion, for he was later instrumental in the foundation of the American Bible Society in 1816.

All of this Old-World drama and contest of ideas was taking place when Mills entered Williams College in 1806. But the liberties Americans were enjoying fertile ground for a spiritual awakening and gathering of new converts to various Christian denominations.

The Haystack Meeting celebration pamphlet further informs:

...there were deep currents moving in the lives of the ‘serious,’ stirrings which had already assumed, as we have observed, many effective forms in missionary enterprise and in religious endeavor.... During the spring and summer of 1805 many accessions were made to the village church. The awakening was first

---

<sup>23</sup> George Washington, “Washington’s Farewell Address 1796,” Avalon Project, Yale Law School, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp).

<sup>24</sup> Gardiner Spring, Memoir of Samuel John Mills, 2d ed., (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1829), 102.

felt, therefore, in the religious life of the town and extended gradually to the college.<sup>25</sup>

Student Algernon Sydney Bailey, of the class of 1806, with a very few other students, and at the invitation of Mrs. Mehitable Bardwell began a private prayer meeting group at her home. These meetings began more than six months before Samuel<sup>15</sup> J. Mills became a student at Williams College in the spring of 1806 when the town and college “were under the influence of a great revival” and prayer meetings were being held twice a week.<sup>26</sup> Students had begun these prayer meetings as a means to counteract the influence of the secular environment at their school influenced by French Enlightenment philosophies, ideas that, while calling for liberty, in practice emphasized reason and eradicating religious authority. Samuel naturally gravitated to the prayer meeting group. The account from the centennial celebration says:



27

EDGE OF THE ORIGINAL MAPLE GROVE. THE HAYSTACK MONUMENT BEYOND

It was on a sultry afternoon in August, 1806, that five men met for prayer beneath the trees in Sloan’s meadow. The atmosphere was laden with moisture, and the threatening clouds had doubtless detained many who on a fair day would have been present. The five who attended were Samuel J. Mills, James Richards, Francis L. Robbins, Harvey Looms, and Byram Green. The meeting was interrupted by the approaching storm. It began to rain; the thunder rolled with deafening sound

---

<sup>25</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 15.

<sup>26</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 15–16.

<sup>27</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 10.

familiar to those who dwell among the hills; the sharp quick flashes of lightning seemed like snapping whips driving the men to shelter.

The crouched beside a large haystack which stood on the spot now marked by the Missionary Monument. Here, partially protected at least from the storm, they conversed on large themes. The topic that engaged their interest was Asia. They work of the East India Company, with which they were all somewhat acquainted, naturally turned their thoughts to the people with which this company sought trade. Mills especially waxed eloquent on the moral and religious needs of these people, and afire with a great enthusiasm he proposed that the gospel of light be sent to those dwelling in such benighted lands. All but Loomis responded to this inspiration of Mills. Loomis contended that the East must first be civilized before the work of the missionary could begin. The others contended that God would cooperate with all who did their part, for He would that all men should be partakers of the salvation of Christ. Finally at Mills' word, 'Come, let us make it a subject of prayer under the haystack, while the dark clouds are going and the clear sky is coming,' they all knelt in prayer. Loomis only withheld his voice. When Mills prayed he remembered certain objections raised by Loomis in their heated discussion, and with all the intensity of his being prayed, 'O God, strike down the arm, with the red artillery of heaven, that shall be raised against a herald of the cross.'

Their prayers were ended. They rose to sing a hymn and then while the skies were clearing went from the Haystack to their rooms.<sup>28</sup>

The Haystack men kept their discussion to themselves for a time and two years later were instrumental in organizing the first foreign missionary organization in America which they called "Brethren." Richards states "the signatures were all written in cipher, and the whole matter kept a profound secret. The reasons for secrecy, as stated by Ezra Fisk twenty years afterward, were the possibility of failure; public opinion, which could see in foreign missionary projects only overheated zeal and fanaticism; and the modesty required of them lest they be thought rashly imprudent."<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 16–17.

<sup>29</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 23, 25.

## Andover Theological Seminary

After graduation on September 5, 1809, from Williams College, Mills was a resident graduate for a few months at Yale College. Mills then went to Andover Theological Seminary in 1810 where Francis L. Robbins and James Richards from the Haystack group already were. The December after he was enrolled, “he was visited with a very bitter bereavement,” that of the death of his mother.<sup>30</sup> The constitution and records of the “Brethren” had been carried by Mills to Andover where others were added to their group: Ansel Nash, Cyrus W. Gray, Luther Rice, Samuel Nott, Jr., Adoniram Judson, and later Samuel Newell.

With the encouragement of two Andover professors, Drs. Worcester and Spring, the “Brethren” prepared and took their proposal before the General Congregational Association of Massachusetts that was favorable to their appeal, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was formed at Bradford, Massachusetts in 1810.<sup>31</sup>

Two years later, the first five missionaries of the ABCFM, Samuel Nott, Jr., Adoniram Judson, Hall, Samuel Newell and Luther Rice were ordained at the Tabernacle Church in Salem, Massachusetts.<sup>32</sup>



James Langdon Hill, writes the details of this sacred ordination event, often overlooked as a defining moment in the history of America and of the world:

---

<sup>30</sup> Spring, 27.

<sup>31</sup> *The Haystack Meeting*, Centennial pamphlet, 25.

<sup>32</sup> “Mission Park: America’s First Protestant Missionaries,” Williams College, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170503203021/http://archives.williams.edu/buildinghistories/missionpark/missionaries.html>.

At the ordination Judson had said of his associates who were to go with him to India: ‘We are seven, like the five loaves and two fishes blessed by our Lord wherewith to feed the multitude.’ .... Ministers and people flocked to the scene from all the surrounding towns.... Within the walls were not less than fifteen hundred people....

At the moment when the five conspicuous ministers of New England—admirable represented by real likenesses in the picture, from left to right, Morse, father of the brilliant inventor of the telegraph, Griffin, Spring, Wood, Worcester—place their consecrating hands upon the bowed heads of the five young men, the first to be sent from this country abroad....

#### *The First Bride of a Foreign Missionary*

It is at the height of the solemn rites which awaken in us the emotion of sublimity, and during the ordaining prayer that Ann Hasseltine Judson, the bride of a day, is pictured kneeling in the aisle near her gifted husband, who is to be styled the Apostle to the Burmese. Harriet, the star-eyed beauty, sometimes called the Belle of Bradford, is also present, and is three days later to be married, at eighteen, to Samuel Newell, making up the number familiarly called the Sacred Seven.<sup>33</sup>



34

The scene pictured attempts to preserve the likenesses of Morse, Griffin, Spring, Worcester and Wood who did the ordaining. Note Ann Hasseltine Judson is also pictured being blessed as she is kneeling in the aisle.

---

<sup>33</sup> James Langdon Hill, *The Immortal Seven*, (Boston: by the American Baptist Publication Society, Published in Connection with the Centennial of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 1913), 6–8.

<sup>34</sup> See fn 1.

How much faith and courage were involved is evident as Hill informs that the night before ABCFM had only “\$500 in the treasury, and only \$1200 in sight. But the atmosphere had become so electric, so intense was the public feeling, so marked was the promised of the five young missionaries, who obviously possessed talents and attainments of the highest order, and such was the appreciation people had of their spirit, heroisms, and sacrifices, that money flowed spontaneously toward them. Gifts for them were laid on the communion table, and the table became an altar of offerings, so that before they sailed the American Board had received \$6000, and the missionaries were given the money for their outfit...and besides had received their full stipend in advance for a year and a quarter.” And more was given to individual missionaries.<sup>35</sup> This public support was valuable because this was an entirely new enterprise that was starting from scratch in three foreign lands.

Another obstacle presented due to ports in the U.S. that were under an embargo due to the War of 1812 with Britain. But there was an unexpected permission granted from the government for the *Caravan* to sail from Salem and the *Harmony* from Philadelphia to Calcutta.<sup>36</sup>

It is tempting to note that Salem, Massachusetts, “this cradle of American foreign missionary work,” had an early significant religious reformer briefly in its pastorate and congregation’s history, Roger<sup>1</sup> Williams, who was banished from Massachusetts in 1836 and who then founded Providence and Rhode Island colonies and was also the founder of the first Baptist church in America.<sup>37</sup> This connection may have been of interest to Mr. Judson who converted to the Baptist faith while enroute to Calcutta. Hill reports:

It will be noticed that Mr. and Mrs. Judson, and Mr. and Mrs. Newell, sailed from New England, the heart of Congregationalism; that Hall, Nott, and Rice sailed in the “Harmony” from Philadelphia, the heart of Presbyterianism, thus turning two great denominations toward Salem, the cradle-place of foreign missions in this country.

---

<sup>35</sup> Hill, 9–10.

<sup>36</sup> Hill, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Margery Boyden, “Mr. Winthrop and Mr. Williams: Dreams for an American Zion Meet Diversity; Both Men Had Notable Influence upon English Families that Settled Long Island,” *From Conscience to Liberty: Diverse Long Island Families in a Crucible that Gave Rise to Religious Freedom*, Part A, 124–134.

But a greater denomination has even a larger interest in the event, for by their Bible studies aboard ship, one man in each vessel—Judson in the brig ‘Caravan’ and Rice in the ship ‘Harmony’—the separateness of the men in study is a feature of it—began the investigations which resulted in their becoming Baptists...<sup>38</sup>

Hill refers to a letter written to Dr. Lucius Bolles, the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Salem, appealing “for sympathy and support” [for their missionary work] and that act, by “a wonder-working Providence caused a third denomination—each of the three with almost exactly equal reasons—to trace the beginnings” of their foreign missionary efforts to Salem.<sup>39</sup>

The Rev. Spring provides the names of other missionaries from America to foreign lands who followed within in the next seven years: “the Rev. Messrs. *Bardwell, Meigs, Poor, Richards, and Warren*, who sailed for Ceylon in October 1815; these, by the Rev. Messrs. *Graves and Nichols*, who embarked for Bombay in October, 1817; and these by the Rev. Messrs. Winslow, *Spaulding, and Woodward*, together with *Dr. John Scudder*, a physician of good professional reputation and practice, who embarked for Ceylon on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 1819.” On 3 November 1819, “the Rev. Messrs. *Parsons and Fisk*, embarked for western Asia. The receipts of the Board for the year 1819, are stated to have been thirty-seven thousand dollars, and their expenditures to have surpassed forty thousand...”<sup>40</sup> (Italics added.)

It is noteworthy that when Dr. Scudder and his wife sailed in 1819 with the Winslows, Woodwards and Spauldings, three of the eight missionaries aboard were Scudders who were descended of the Puritan immigrants, Thomas<sup>1</sup> Scudder (T) or his niece, Elizabeth<sup>2</sup> Scudder (E) Lathrop. The Scudder Association considers the spouses of Scudders as members of the family, so on that basis, six of the eight in that group on its way to serve in Ceylon, are considered Scudder family missionaries to the Indian subcontinent. Dr. Scudder’s sister, Theodosia<sup>7</sup> Scudder, about twenty years his junior, and her husband, the Rev. William John Pohlman, later served in the Amoy Mission in China. They left in 1838, visiting Java, Singapore and Borneo, before reaching Amoy.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Hill, 16.

<sup>39</sup> Hill, 14–15.

<sup>40</sup> Spring, 40.

<sup>41</sup> Sue Brown & Dr. Bill, “The Amoy Mission 1841–1951,” (2009), from Philip Wilson Pitcher, *Fifty Years in Amoy, a History of the Amoy Mission*, (N.Y. Reformed Church of America Board of Publication, 1893), [https://amoymagic.com/AM\\_Pohlman.htm](https://amoymagic.com/AM_Pohlman.htm). Pitcher’s sister, Mildred, was first wife of Ezekiel<sup>9</sup> Carman Scudder, Jr.

During 2019, the bicentennial year celebration of Dr. John<sup>7</sup> Scudder's departure, the *Scudder Family Historical and Biographical Journal* printed several articles that included history of the New England background of the Winslows and Woodwards, as well as of the Scudders, and includes how the northeastern culture of Second Awakening revivals played a role in Mr. Woodward's and Mrs. Winslow's desire to participate in foreign missionary work.<sup>42</sup> The history of Levi Spaulding of New Hampshire has similar roots back to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This New England heritage was shared by many early American missionaries to serve in foreign lands.

The Rev. Spring confirms this, calling them “the army of the redeemed in New England”:

Here let us pause. Who will not admire the condescension of the adorable Head of the Church, in permitting so much to be accomplished by the designs of a single individual! Could Mr. Mills have lived to witness the rapid advancement of this glorious design; should he have seen *the whole army of the redeemed in New England in motion*; could he have seen ten thousand hearts leaping in joyful eagerness, and ten thousand hands opened in liberal charities toward this hallowed cause; could he have seen the daily accession of talent and youthful vigour, as they have been consecrated to the work; could he have beheld so many Missionary stations blessing the dark regions of Asia, and have been told of the conversions amid the desolations and cruelties of our own wilderness... Never has he been more endeared, than when on one or two occasions he has been seen to be drowned in tears, and abased with self-confusion, in attempting to give utterance to his own views of what God had condescended to accomplish through the instrumentalities of one so worthless as he.<sup>43</sup> (Italics added.)

Many of these early missionaries described by the Rev. Spring as “the whole army of the redeemed in New England, had Puritan immigrant ancestor heritage that David Hackett Fisher describes:

---

<sup>42</sup> “A Story 200 Years in the Making. In Appreciation for a Unique Life of Service: Love and Strength of Character Motivated Dr. John Scudder to Labor in India,” *Scudder Family Historical & Biographical Journal*, Scudder Association Foundation, volume 1, no. 1, (April 2019), <https://scudder.org/200-years-in-the-making/>.

In volume 1, no. 2, (June 2019), “Did Dr. John Scudder Know He Had Two Scudder Missionary Cousins with Him Aboard the *Indus*, 1819?” <https://scudder.org/did-dr-john-know/> and “Harriet Wadsworth (Lathrop) Winslow: The Third ‘Scudder’ Cousin on the *Indus*,” <https://scudder.org/harriet-wadsworth/>.

In volume 1, no. 3, (December 2019), “Who Was Joanna (Leffingwell) Lathrop, ‘Missionary Mother’ of the Other ‘Scudder’ Missionary Family to Ceylon? Who was Deacon Charles Lathrop? <https://scudder.org/who-was-joanna-leffingwell-lathrop/>.

<sup>43</sup> Spring, 42–43.

For these English Puritans, the new colony of Massachusetts had a meaning that is not easily translated into the secular terms of our materialist world....

The great migration developed in this spirit—above all as a religious movement of English Christians who meant to build a new Zion in America. When most of these emigrants explained their motives for coming to the New World, religion was mentioned not merely as their leading purpose. It was their only purpose.<sup>44</sup>

While some younger generations, like the Rev. Henry Woodward and Mrs. Harriet<sup>7</sup> W. (Lathrop) Winslow, had become distracted, their faith was reignited by the Second Great Awakening, and their ancestral spiritual roots were not lost. Winslow and Spaulding graduated from Andover Theological Seminary where Mills had been only a few years before and were likely influenced by the foreign missionary society there that Mills had started. Mills' Andover associate Samuel Newell co-authored with Gordon Hall, the 94-page book that was published by ABCFM in 1818, *The Conversion of the World, or the Claims of the 600,000,000 and the Ability and Duty of the Churches Respecting Them*, that had caught the attention of Dr. John<sup>7</sup> Scudder and led him to leave his medical practice to answer the call to be the first medical foreign missionary from America.<sup>45</sup>

### **Why Was Samuel Mills not among the first foreign missionaries?**

#### **Because he had unfinished work to do first in America. Mills' comprehensive work at home**

What about Mills? Why was his name not among the first few groups to serve foreign missions? Instead, he had other projects in mind to finish first, to strengthen American missionary work at home and to broaden American support for the foreign missionary effort before he would embark on his own foreign mission in 1818.

The Rev. Spring relates that “Mr. Mills completed his theological studies at Andover in the autumn of 1812, and about the same time the immortal seven were preparing to sail for Calcutta. Mills instead began to prepare for a missionary tour through “the western and southern sections of

---

<sup>44</sup> David Hackett Fisher, *Albion's Seed, Four British Folkways in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 18.

<sup>45</sup> Gordon Hall, Samuel Newell, *Conversion of the World...*, (ABCFM, 1818; reprinted 1819), <https://books.google.td/books?id=9i1cAAAAQAAJ>.

Dorothy Jealous Scudder, *A Thousand Years in Thy Sight, The Story of the Scudder Missionaries of India*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1984), 5.

“A Story Two Hundred Years in the Making,” 40, <https://scudder.org/200-years-in-the-making/>.

the United States.” One can see from his journal that he was first intent on organizing further missionary work in the U.S. before serving abroad. Questions he would ask in his assessment tours are written on page one of his private journal: “Are the people supplied with Bibles and Tracts?” “How many Bibles are wanted in a county or a town?” “Have supplies of Bibles and Tracts been received in part?” “From what Societies may supplies be expected?” “The number of regular Clergy in each county.” “The number of towns able and willing to support Ministers.” “Ascertain, as far as may be, the most hopeful fields for Missionary labor.” “Whence did the people originate?” “An institution for the benefit of the Africans.” This was an organizing tour. Mills also brought attention to his fellow countrymen who did not have the gospel message, such as native Americans to the west. This was followed by a similar tour two years later.<sup>46</sup>

On his southern tour in 1813, he found the people of New Orleans were “destitute of schools, Bibles, and religious instruction. In attempting to learn the religious state of these people, we were frequently told, that they had no Bibles, and that the priests did not allow of their distribution among them.... ‘Soon after our arrival,’ Mills said, ‘we introduced the subject of a Bible Society. It directly met the wishes of the religious people with whom we had become acquainted.’ He received permission to begin a local Bible Society. Mills returned in the Spring and began to apply for assistance from missionary societies and Bible societies in the northeast to help supply him with Bible and tracts to take back to where he had been. Mills and his companion formed Bible societies in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri. He raised awareness in the northeast that he had seen “thousands ready to perish, their eyelids fast closed in spiritual slumber, and none to awake them.” Of Louisiana, “There are American families in this part of our country, who never saw a Bible, nor heard of Jesus Christ. It is a fact that ought not be forgotten, that so lately as March 1815, a Bible in any language could not be found, for sale, or to be given away, in New Orleans.” He visited hospitals during these years of the War of 1812 where many soldiers and British prisoners were sick and wounded but found few Bibles among them, but those who would thankfully receive one.<sup>47</sup> After these tours, he estimated that “half a million Bibles are necessary for the supply of the destitute in the United States.”<sup>48</sup> Samuel J. Mills had been inspired to begin work on the formation of a national American Bible Society after his mission to New Orleans

---

<sup>46</sup> Spring 60–63.

<sup>47</sup> Spring, 60–73.

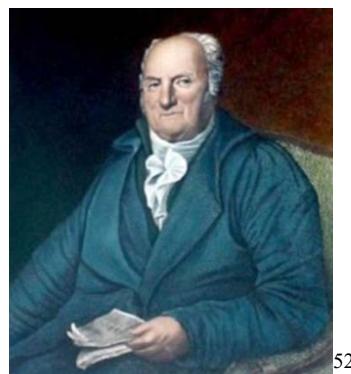
<sup>48</sup> Spring, 86.

where he could not find a Bible to buy.<sup>49</sup> He was not the first to think of this but previous attempts were unsuccessful.—1815 Few have accomplished so much as Mills in three years, 1812–1815.

The Rev. Spring informs that after Mills return to Massachusetts, on June 1, 1815, Mills received ordination at Newburyport, Massachusetts with a few other missionary brethren. He then left for “the middle states, and within the bounds of the Presbyterian church”:

Here he spent two of the most profitable years of his life, unobserved, and almost unknown, yet silently exercising an influence, and setting in motion several illustrious plans of mercy to mankind. He resided alternately in Albany, New York Newark, Philadelphia, and Washington; and his attention was here principally occupied in consulting with men of influence among the clergy and laity, as to the wisdom and practicability of his unaccomplished purposes.<sup>50</sup>

Among Mills’ unaccomplished purposes dear to his heart that needed finishing was the American Bible Society that he helped form by some of these exertions. But it was cemented by his fortuitous meeting with Elias<sup>4</sup> Boudinot<sup>51</sup> who was no ordinary man, and who had an extensive network of valuable contacts with whom he had influence.



PORTRAIT OF ELIAS BOUDINOT IV

Elias Boudinot IV was a founding father by many measures. Boudinot founded the American Bible Society in 1816, as a result of the 1815 report from Samuel<sup>5</sup> J. Mills, Jr. and his mission companion John Schermerhorn that they had compiled on their recent tour of the western

---

<sup>49</sup> Spring, 64-66.

<sup>50</sup> Spring, 88.

<sup>51</sup> Spring, 88, 90–91.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Sully, “Elias Boudinot,” [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/84/Elias\\_Boudinot.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/84/Elias_Boudinot.jpg). Public domain.

and southern U.S. Their report found that in most states, Americans lacked access to the Bible.<sup>53</sup> That situation may seem odd until one recalls that America was then in its fourth year for the second time at war with Britain. Trade had been adversely curtailed by the wars from 1774-1784, and again 1812–1816. Early immigrants to America in the 1600s and early 1700s had brought Bibles with them and more per capita seemed to be available in certain colonies in early colonial days but the country's population had grown significantly by the late 1700s when Bibles were still printed abroad. Catholic strongholds like New Orleans "were destitute of schools, Bibles and religious instruction.<sup>54</sup> People on the western frontier had little access and the poor in many places had no access. Independent Bible societies were not equipped to meet the scope of the need. Thanks to Mills' ground laying efforts and his report, and Boudinot's reaction to it, this was about to change. The American Bible Society states that Boudinot "seized upon the moment and earnestly began his push for a society that would oversee the distribution of Bibles throughout the entire nation."<sup>55</sup>

Boudinot was a founding father in other ways. He was a friend or relative of signers of the Declaration of Independence and members of the Continental Congress and was himself in the Continental Congress and the U.S. Congress. The American Bible Society newsletter reports he was born in Philadelphia in 1740, a "descendant of French Huguenot refugees who fled persecution in France." Boudinot, originally thinking he would become a minister, instead later became a lawyer, but he never lost his keen interest in Bible ministry:

Boudinot grew up with Benjamin Franklin as a neighbor and befriended people like John Jay, Alexander Hamilton and George Washington. During the American Revolution, he served as an intelligence officer for Washington and financed supplies for American troops. He was elected president of the Second Continental Congress in 1782 and served in various roles during the administrations of Washington and John Adams, including as director of the United States Mint.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> "Working Together for the Cause of the Gospel," *American Bible Society*, May 2, 2021, <https://www.americanbible.org/news/articles/working-together-for-the-cause-of-the-gospel/>.

<sup>54</sup> Spring, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Founding American Bible Society in "Working Together for the Cause."

<sup>56</sup> Prepared for a Purpose in "Working Together for the Cause."

Elias Boudinot IV was a member of the U.S. Congress from 1795–1805. He was married to Hannah<sup>4</sup> Stockton, the sister of Richard<sup>4</sup> Stockton who signed the Declaration of Independence for New Jersey and was thus also an uncle-in-law to Benjamin Rush, another Declaration signer, who had married Richard<sup>4</sup> Stockton's daughter Julia<sup>5</sup>.<sup>57</sup> Elias Boudinot IV later became the American Bible Society's first president. He also worked during the American Revolutionary War under George Washington. "Boudinot had served in New Jersey's Provincial Congress, as a soldier of the revolution who had suffered 'the rigors of Valley Forge' and who Gen. Washington chose as Commissary-general of Prisoners. In that capacity, Elias IV, with compassion founded in Christian principles, endeavored 'to fill up gaps in the public purse by drafts upon his own pocket, to feed, clothe, and shelter his needy prisoners.' In 1795, Washington appointed him as the Director of the United States Mint, a position he would serve in under the first three presidents of the United States, Washington, Adams and Jefferson."<sup>58</sup>

Boudinot was highly respected and committed to the American Bible Society and its purposes. Although, not a clergyman, Boudinot was known for his whole-hearted Christian commitment and behavior and his strong support of missionary work. Boudinot was also known for his authoring *The Age of Revelation* as a scholarly response to Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* in which he brilliantly picked apart Paine's faithless, and then unpopular, arguments, that were born out of the time Paine was in France during the French Revolution. Boudinot argued that part of the reason for the failure of the French Revolution to produce the liberties enjoyed by Americans, was that the French took a more secular approach to their Revolution and government, complete with their guillotine and the execution of many priests and leadership power struggles.

---

<sup>57</sup> See section about Elias Boudinot IV that documents his family relationship to the Stocktons and his various ties with several Scudders at Princeton University, and his great uncle-law- relationship to William Scudder Stryker, Civil War soldier, prolific historian and general of the New Jersey National Guard, and of his American Bible Society and Princeton ties to the Rev. Eli F. Cooley, who married a Scudder, in "The Reverend Eli F. Cooley, First Author of American, Generational Scudder Family History...Well-Connected to New Jerseyan Statesmen and Pastors Who Left Their Mark on History," *Scudder Family Historical and Biographical Journal*, volume 6, no. 2, (Summer 2024): 160–161, 164–165, <https://scudder.org/the-reverend-eli-f-cooley-first-author-of-american-generational-scudder-family-history/> and "General William Scudder Stryker Made History and Wrote History," 152–155, <https://scudder.org/general-william-scudder-stryker-made-history-and-wrote-history/>.

<sup>58</sup> "The Reverend Eli F. Cooley, First Author of American, Generational Scudder Family History...Well-Connected to New Jerseyan Statesmen and Pastors Who Left Their Mark on History," 164–165.

Reports were that Bibles in France were then difficult to find in bookstores and libraries.”<sup>59</sup>

Boudinot, committed to providing a way to distribute the scriptures at scale by organizing the Christian community of various denominations, in January 1816, wrote an appeal to the local Bible societies around the country, “calling on them to unify their efforts around the common cause of reaching all American’s with God’s Word” and announcing a Convention to be held on 8 May 1816 for the purpose of organizing the American Bible Society as a national organization. Although, Boudinot was too ill to attend in person, by the many distinguished delegates in attendance, he was elected president. He accepted, saying, “I am not ashamed to confess that I accept of the appointment as the greatest honor that could have been conferred on me this side of the grave.”<sup>60</sup> Mills had the satisfaction of being in attendance.<sup>61</sup> Boudinot served in that capacity until his death in 1821. B

The society would print its own Bibles in America, without the reference to the king of England on the title page as in the King James Version, and it would be Protestant and denominationally neutral. No longer would it be essential to import Bibles from England or be prevented by embargos in war. Within six months after the society’s founding, the society “became one of the earliest American publishers to use stereotype plates and steam-powered presses to print its first Bible in the English language. In 1819, the society published the three Epistles of John in the language of the Delaware Indians. “[Boudinot] helped institute the Thanksgiving holiday, which was first celebrated in 1789, and used God’s Word to advocate for the rights of Native Americans and enslaved Africans.”<sup>62</sup> Boudinot’s American Bible Society became another of his numerous efforts to unite all sectors of the American people and to improve their lives.

**“Where there is no vision, the people perish,” Proverbs 29:18.**

Meanwhile, with the American Bible Society organized, Samuel<sup>5</sup> J. Mills turned his attention to attending “the General Assembly at Philadelphia” with the hope of inspiring them to

---

<sup>59</sup> “The Reverend Eli F. Cooley, First Author of American, Generational Scudder Family History...Well-Connected to New Jerseyan Statesmen and Pastors Who Left Their Mark on History,” Scudder Historical & Biographical Journal, 164–165. Cooley’s first wife was Hannah<sup>6</sup> Scudder (William<sup>5</sup>, Jacob<sup>4</sup>, Benjamin<sup>3</sup>, Thomas<sup>2</sup>, Thomas<sup>1</sup>). And Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation: or the age of reason shewn to be an age of infidelity*. (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801), <https://archive.org/details/ageofrevelation00boud/mode/2up>.

<sup>60</sup> Founding American Bible Society in “Working Together for the Cause.”

<sup>61</sup> Spring, 92.

<sup>62</sup> Prepared for a Purpose, in “Working Together for the Cause.”

organize a Foreign Missionary Society in the Presbyterian connexion [sic]" and to encourage the Presbyterians to become more involved in missionary work in America. The Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed and Scotch Church met and did form the "United Foreign Missionary Society."<sup>63</sup> This Presbyterian and [Dutch] Reformed Church of America society later amalgamated with the ABCFM in 1826. Mills' correspondence shows his interest in missionary work in South America and the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii], but he personally was ministering to the poor of New York for a season, purposefully putting the Bible into their hands.<sup>64</sup> He was also preparing for missionary work in Africa.<sup>65</sup>

Believing it was time "when the galling chains of African bondage should be broken," Mills' wished to establish "a school, to qualify young men of color for preachers and teachers to the African race."<sup>66</sup> Another goal was to plant the Christian gospel in Africa. The modern mind may find some of his ideas to be offensive because one objective for his mission would be a fact-finding trip among tribal leaders to assess the feasibility of starting a Christian colony in Africa, peopled by free people of color from America who Mills felt were being marginalized and mistreated in the United States. Trying to solve the problem he saw in the 1800s, he wondered if it would be means of giving them a better life and to also help repopulate Africa that had been significantly drained by the slave trade for many years. Rather than dwelling on the controversial nature of Mills' proposal by twenty-first century standards, one might consider his motivations to act on behalf of others of all races to elevate the conditions of all disadvantaged by options he had available. He proposed educational and new opportunity off-ramps for the mistreated he observed. A letter he wrote suggests the idea was exploratory and that he did not have divine confirmation this plan was God's will.

Finally, with all of his unfinished business in America that he had envisioned earlier now completed, Mills prepared for his own mission to Africa. Leaving from Philadelphia, he wrote a letter to his father on 15 November 1817 stating he would be leaving on the *Electra* next day, hoping to arrive in England in about a month. He writes, "Our prospects are at present fair, but we know not what a day may bring forth. God moves in a mysterious way, in bringing about his great

---

<sup>63</sup> Spring, 95–98.

<sup>64</sup> Spring, 103–115.

<sup>65</sup> Spring, 116.

<sup>66</sup> Spring, 118.

and glorious designs. He sometimes puts our faith to a severe test. When his church are about to make some great effort for the promotion of his glory and the salvation of men, he not unfrequently removes some of the most prominent and apparently most important aids, lest vain man should glory in himself, and not in the Lord. I hope we shall always be prepared to say, the will of the Lord be done.... If the colonization plan be of God, sooner or later it will prosper: if not approved of Him, let it fail.”<sup>67</sup>

After a harrowing journey to England and a short stay there, Mills left England for Africa on 3 February 1818. His journal detailing his experiences and plans for this mission are published in the biography by Dr. Spring.

While at sea, enroute home to America, Mills became ill on June 5, 1818, with a heavy cold and irregular fever. His illness worsened and on 16 June 1818, “He gently closed his hands on his breast, as if to engage in some act of devotion’ and, while a celestial smile settled upon his countenance, and every feature expressed the serenity and meekness of his soul, he ceased to breathe.”<sup>68</sup> He died at the age of 35.

It had only been twelve years since Mills had entered Williams College and had his epiphany under the haystack but he had accomplished a great deal in that short time: including igniting the American Foreign Missions Movement leading to the formation of the American Board of Foreign Missions, taking the gospel to many in outlying and disadvantaged areas in America, including Native Americans, and was instrumental in the establishment of the American Bible Society in 1816 by a influential men who could guarantee its longevity. During his ministry, he had placed the Bible in the hands of many who had not previously had a copy or arranged for them to receive it. Mills encouraged the establishment of educational opportunities where did not exist, and this would be a hallmark of the work of the missionaries for ABCFM for generations to come around the globe.

His former teacher and mentor, the Rev. Gardiner Spring, who had closely watched his student’s visionary career, concludes: “If there is one sentiment which a view of this devoted man’s exertions is calculated to impress more deeply than another, it is the practicability of accomplishing a great amount of good in one short life.”<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Spring, 142–143.

<sup>68</sup> Spring, 237–238.

<sup>69</sup> Spring, 252.



70

MONUMENT TO REV. SAMUEL J. MILLS, ESTER ROBBINS MILLS AND REV. SAMUEL J. MILLS, JR.

### **Ways the American Foreign Missions Movement benefitted Americans and America: From a 1906 perspective, 100 years after the Haystack Meeting**

#### EDUCATIONAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS AWARENESS BENEFITS AT HOME:

On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Haystack prayer meeting, Barton states, “...the most marked effect was upon the people of New England.” Listing the “hard time, physically and politically” of the colonists and demands to “meet these conditions and maintain educational institutions for their children and support the church,” that [t]hey entertained little thought of foreign countries, except the dread of foreign oppression and the endeavor to avoid entangling foreign alliances.” This had created the possibility that “America might become so exclusive that Americans would repudiate any responsibility for all except America, and decline to seek knowledge regarding any other country or people. It required a purely religious impulse to arrest attention, turn it from local and personal affairs and fix it upon remote and hitherto unknown lands. From religious magazines they read reports from missionaries about religious customs and characteristics of the people and countries where they were located. The entire country was set to studying Eastern geography.” Barton considers this was “one of the most far-reaching educational movements for the English-speaking world that have ever been set in motion.<sup>71</sup> It broadened horizons and concern for others.

#### EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS ABROAD:

“The introduction of modern education into the East and the Far East must be credited to the foreign missionaries.” In the *Sandwich Islands* [Hawaii] in 1820, missionaries “set up there the first printing presses, opened the first schools and inaugurated and conducted general educational

<sup>70</sup> Plaque at Torrington, at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/memories/L4NY-ZPC>.

<sup>71</sup> Barton, “One Hundred Years of American Foreign Missions: An Interpretation,” 747–750.

institutions for two generations.” “*China* knew no learning except that which centres in the classics of Confucius, and all Western education was considered beneath their contempt. For a...century the missionaries gave time, strength and talent to the preparation and production of modern textbooks and in conducting schools for the training of Chinese young men and women. Missionary educators were repeatedly called by the Government to take charge of national institutions. The popularity of modern learning rapidly increased, until, in October, 1905, by imperial decree, Western learning was made the basis of the civil-service examination throughout the [Chinese] Empire.” In *India*, Barton writes, “there was hardly a trace of anything in education that could be called modern.... Schools were established by the missionaries and the principles of modern education were taught.” The British presence in India began to subsidize “educational institutions, recognized to be of high grade and under the control of missionaries.” Barton says in 1806, “Remove from India to-day the institutions established by missionaries, and the five Indian universities would be forced to reduce greatly their operations or go out of existence.” They brought modern education to Turkey and “every Asiatic country” and to Africa. Foreign missionaries pioneered modern medicine in these countries and built hospitals and trained native medical personnel. American and European missionaries brought social improvements: Challenging the caste system, the position of women in society, and the home has been strengthened, men and women working together for the common good. Their purpose is not to import into the East a European or American society, but to invite natives to better conditions.<sup>72</sup>

TRADE AND COMMERCIAL BENEFITS: Not intended purposes, but “as rapidly as the conditions prevailing in the East were known to the merchant classes in the West, trade opportunities were eagerly noted and seized...American products in a variety of forms and in astonishing quantities found their way into the East through doors opened directly by the modern missionary movement: supplies for school, hospital and printing-houses, machinery, agricultural implements and tools... musical instruments, kerosene oil, watches and clocks, books, foodstuffs, cloths, etc.”<sup>73</sup>

Barton concludes: “No known standard can measure the force and value of this century of Christian missions, and no intellect...[sufficient] to forecast its conclusion.”<sup>74</sup>

To be continued

---

<sup>72</sup> Barton, 751–754.

<sup>73</sup> Barton, 750.

<sup>74</sup> Barton, 757.