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Hall County history

Lorenzo Dow may have preached in Hall

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Although no records have come to light showing that Lorenzo Dow once preached at Hall County, histories of surrounding counties record his appearance in this area. Hart and Elbert Histories tell of the visit of the itinerant preacher.

Alongside Georgia Highway 11, between Mansfield and Monticello, Jasper County, is the historic pulpit from which Lorenzo Dow once preached. The Daughters of the American Revolution have placed a plaque on a huge rock to commemorate the occasion.

DOW'S PULPIT: "On this rock in 1803 Lorenzo Dow, of Connecticut, famous pioneer evangelist, preached the first gospel sermon in Jasper County according to well founded tradition.

"Upon the great journey of life, eternity is the country to which all are traveling" — Dow's "Road to peace".

Lorenzo Dow's visit to Hall County may possibly be recorded in early records of some Methodist church in this area; however, if not, it is evident that Hall Countians had certainly heard of the evangelist. This is substantiated by the fact that many children became name sakes. Lorenzo Dow Wood was one of the founding fathers of Hopewell Methodist Church near Murrayville and several children by name of Lorenzo or Dow are enumerated in the 1850 federal census of Hall.

The publication Natchez gives an interesting account of the life of this unusual preacher.

"Of all who wandered into this area none could claim greater rank as a bazaar individualist than Lorenzo Dow. From his first days Lorenzo

had been set apart. Born in Connecticut, he had five brothers and sisters. At age of four, he said he knew spiritual experiences, dropping into 'muses about God.' Spindly, unhealthy, he had coma-like seizures in which he spoke to God. . . His first preaching efforts singed his listeners; what came forth was full of thunder and broken cries. Several times he was asked not to come back. He meant well, but. . . Yet the boy had an almost savage courage and good ingenuity. He hit on a device to 'hold' his crowd; gathering the flock in a meeting hall, he locked the door, backed against it and preached. Launching a career as an itinerant, he made conversions by the score. Admitted on trial as a Methodist preacher, he sifted about, startling audiences, then winning them by his furious words."

Lorenzo was long, lank and pale-faced, with pinched features. He never cut his hair, which fell in a red-brown maze below his shoulders. He never shaved, though he was made significant gifts of razors. Through his life he was sure that Satan pursued him in person: "Oh! how can people dispute there being a devil! If they underwent as much as I do with his buffetings. . ."

For a time he felt sure God wanted him to head for Ireland and catching hold of a skiff, he stuck up a bush for a sail, went from New England to Canada, and caught a boat to Ireland. The Irish Catholics listened to him, goggle-eyed and reached for their sticks, but Lorenzo was delighted at their beatings and the riots that he caused — the Almighty was just testing him. Upon his return to America he

decided to travel throughout Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, and preach to the people.

Through heat, through downpour, he pushed on, ever humble, ever fervent. Miserably poor, he nevertheless got along. His feet stuck out of his shoes, his threadbare clothing was falling off and from a distance he looked like a

bunch of hair on a sorry nag.

The first location in the Mississippi territory to be deeded for a Protestant house of worship was that given to Lorenzo Dow in exchange for his sole possession — a watch. It is said that in the Natchez county he perfected his preaching techniques. Once he gave out a startling announcement that his sermon

topic would be "latest news from Hell." The crowd gathered and he quoted the scripture:

"And in Hell He lifted up his eyes. . ." Again, as if idly, he opened the Bible and read: "I can do all things," Lorenzo looked angry and said, "Ah, no, Paul. I'll bet you five dollars you can't." He pitched a bill on the pulpit and read on: ". . . through Christ which

strengtheneth. . ." Lorenzo grabbed up the money and said, "Ah, Paul, that's a different story!"

There is the interesting tale about Lorenzo's sermon about Gabriel's Horn. It was to be an open air meeting and Lorenzo secretly placed a little colored boy in a pine tree and carefully instructed him just when to blow on a little tin horn.

"Judgment Day. And you," he asked, "suppose you found this your final day; suppose, at this moment, from the sky there came the blowing of 'Gabriel's Horn!'"

As if from the heavens themselves were issued a terrible blast. Men ran for the trees, children were trampled, and people scattered. "That shows you! Now, brethren, if a

boy blowing a tin horn can do that to you, how will you feel when Judgment really comes?" Lorenzo Dow won converts then and there.

The amazing and unusual itinerant evangelist, Lorenzo Dow, left his mark in Northeast Georgia if only in name sakes only. He died as he lived and was buried by the Order of Odd Fellows.

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*This itinerant preacher**hit on a device to "hold"**his crowd; gathering the flock*