

## Lemuel Haynes

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It is interesting to note that the name of the church appears in various forms at different periods in the records of the Parish. At times it is called the First Congregational Society in Middle Granville. At other times it appears as the Congregational Society in the Middle Parish of Granville, but the writer has failed to find any record of any change from the original name: The Second Church of Christ in Granville.

A Prudential Committee was chosen, and having already a meeting house, manifestly the next thing was to find a preacher. Strangely enough there was one right at hand, none other than Lemuel Haynes, who was to become famous later as one of the most powerful preachers of his day.

Few, if any, have had greater obstacles to overcome than Lemuel Haynes had, and few overcame them so successfully. A brief sketch of his life is of vastly more than passing interest. It is a story of handicaps overcome, and the kindly affection of a kindly people.

He was born July 18, 1753, in that part of Hartford, Connecticut, which is now known as West Hartford. His father was a negro whose name has passed into the limbo of forgotten things, and his mother was a Scotch girl by the name of Alice Fitch. She was employed as a domestic in the family of John Haynes. After the birth of her child she was discharged by her employer, who kept the child, probably much to her relief. For the lack of any other name, the boy was called Haynes, and given the first name Lemuel. In some way not now apparent, David Rose, of Middle Granville, heard of the child and took him as an indentured servant until he was twenty-one years of age. Mr. Rose brought him home to

Middle Granville on New Year's Day, 1754. It was a real New Year's Day for Lemuel. Mr. Rose was a very devout and strict Christian, and he brought up Lemuel in the best traditions of the time. Took him to church. Sent him to school. Taught him to work. Gave him opportunity to read the very few books available in such a rural community. From his mother Lemuel had inherited traits of thrift and prudence, and such was his dependability that long before his term was up, he had the oversight of no small part of his benefactor's property. In due time he was baptized. When he came home from service at the meeting house on the Sabbath, it was his custom to relate the sermon to Mr. Rose.

There was always on Saturday night at the Rose homestead, a sermon read and discussed. The reading of these sermons soon came to be a part of Lemuel's duties. One night he read a sermon which greatly interested Mr. Rose, who said, "Lemuel, whose sermon was that, Davies', or Watts', or Whitfield's?" Lemuel did not at first answer, but finally said with much hesitation, "It is Lemuel's." Thus early did he indicate the field in which he was to succeed. After that he was encouraged, not only by Mr. Rose, but also by the entire neighborhood.

He was a member of the Company of Minute Men who marched on the Lexington alarm that April day in 1775. He was also on the Ticonderoga expedition, where he was stricken with typhus fever and invalided home. His time of servitude had expired, but the doors of David Rose's house were always open to him for so long as he wished to stay. He recovered his health and in 1779 was studying Latin with the Rev. Daniel Ferrand, of Canaan, Connecticut. The next winter he taught school in Wintonbury, now Bloomfield, Connecticut, and studied Greek with Rev. William Bradford. On November 29, 1780, he was examined in theology and languages by a committee which recommended him as qualified to preach. He was then licensed and preached his first sermon in Wintonbury. Having no other home than Mr. Rose's, and being one of the charter members of the Middle Granville church, he was right on the spot when a preacher was needed. He was given a unanimous call to be their first pastor, which he accepted, and at the age of twenty-seven, in spite of all the prejudices caused by ignominious birth, color and

limited education, he occupied the pulpit of the Middle Granville meeting house, as Dr. Cooley said, "with universal approbation." Such, briefly, is the story of the struggles, the Saturday evening sermons and chimney corner education of one of the foremost preachers of his generation.

Five years he preached to this congregation of his neighbors, and it is said that all ages of people were carried away by his eloquence. His ability was perhaps the only thing which kept his church active and prevented it from being overcome by the general slump in the moral life of the country following the War for Independence.

He married Elizabeth Babbit, of Dighton, Massachusetts, on September 22, 1783, who was at that time teaching one of the schools in Granville, and the wedding was highly approved by all the ministers of the section. The marriage took place in Hartland, Connecticut, and the ceremony was performed by the Rev. Samuel Woodbridge. He was ordained as a regular minister of the gospel November 9, 1785. After a few weeks he received and accepted a call to a church in Torrington, Connecticut. This officially closed his connection with Granville.

After two years at Torrington, he accepted a call to Rutland, Vermont, where he preached thirty years, and was regarded as the leading minister in Vermont. In 1814 he was in New Haven, Connecticut, and was invited to speak in Dr. Edwards' church. Only the blue bloods went there. President Dwight, of Yale, entertained him over the week end. He then attended, as a delegate, the convention of the Connecticut General Association at Fairfield, where he was asked to preach the annual sermon. Twenty years after that, President Humphrey, of Amherst College, spoke of that sermon as one of the most remarkable ever preached in New England. Later he had a pastorate in Manchester, New Hampshire, for two years and then he had a church in Granville, New York, for eleven years till his death September 28, 1833.

Dr. Timothy M. Cooley, in describing this remarkable preacher, said: "The writer of this narrative, though a resident in a different parish in the town, and having opportunity to hear him in comparatively but few instances, owes more under God to Lemuel Haynes than to any other minister among the living or the dead.

His sermons are the earliest which I now remember to have heard, and, though preached more than half a century ago, are at this time recollected with a distinctness entirely inapplicable to those of any other preacher. They uniformly left the impression of the majesty of God; the importance of immediate repentance; the awful solemnity of the judgment day; the attractive loveliness of Christ; and the pleasantness of wisdom's ways . . . His delivery was rapid, his voice charming, like the *vox argentea* of which Cicero makes frequent and honorable mention, his articulation uncommonly distinct, a perennial stream of transparent, sweet, animated elocution, presenting his arguments with great simplicity and striking effect."\*

Granville may well be proud of this self-taught and able colored gentleman who grew up in their midst and whose remarkable oratorical ability was fostered and cherished by a kindly people.

After Mr. Haynes gave up the pastoral work in Middle Granville and accepted a church in Torrington, the Rev. William Bradford supplied the pulpit for a short time, as he had done for the First Church shortly after the Revolution.

\* Dr. Cooley's *Life of Lemuel Haynes*, page 66.