Leers C. Todd

By

[Signature]

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Mr. President, Members of the Chautauqua County Society of History and Natural Science:

History to be of real value must be accurate. Wrong history is worse than no history.

The task of gathering the almost lost and widely separated threads relating to one who in the very early days of our County's history was active in its development, and who removed from the County more than eighty years ago, may be one of pleasure and delight to the "Historical Hunter", but to a layman, accustomed to deal with cold facts at hand including vexed problems of the present; the effort has been attended with many misgivings. I wish this paper were more complete and better prepared. I am glad it is no worse. As it is, it is respectfully submitted.

Lewis Caleb Todd, the subject of this paper, was of Scotch origin. His ancestors removed from Scotland to Cornwall, England, thence to Connecticut. He was the son of Caleb, and grandson of Gideon and (Prudence Tuttle) Todd. He was a strong man and took an active part in the early history of Chautauqua County. The records show that on October 24, 1819, he bought one hundred acres of the Holland Land Co., situate on lot one of the Fourth Township and Thirteenth Range; which he sold to Judson Tyler February 17th, 1831.

Another record shows that September 26th, 1832, James Prendergast and Nancy, his wife, deeded to Lewis C. Todd Lots 25 and 26 on situate on the west side of Main St. Bounded south by the north line of Sixth Street in the Village of Jamestown. Having located him in Jamestown, where he lived until his removal from the County, it is my
best thought that Mr. Todd should tell his own story. I quote from
a sketch written by himself under date of March 4, 1845.

"I was born in North Haven, Conn., February 17th, 1794.

When an infant was removed to Fairfield, Herkimer County, N.Y.
My father was a farmer by occupation, in limited circumstances
and a member of the Close Communion Baptist Church of which he
finally became an Elder, and preached at Salisbury for about twenty
years. He received no salary, but labored on his little farm to
support his family. He was uneducated. He possessed some reasoning
powers and considerable independence of mind. As my father
was poor, I was given away at the age of six years to be done
better by. Parents must be very poor not to be able to do as
well by their children as strangers. The people who took me out
of great kindness, and kept me four years were devoted and un-
stood the proverb well "He that spareth the rod spoileth the
child". At ten years of age my father being dissatisfied took
me home, where I was trained to hard work till I became twenty-
one years of age.

"In my early life I was very different and dull, but
my mind was much inclined to religious feeling and reflection.
At the age of twelve I had learned to read, write and spell, but
very imperfectly. From that time I could not be spared for
school until I was eighteen years of age. My father's library
consisted of a bible, Watt's Psalms, a dictionary and almanac.
During this period I frequently spent leisure hours in writing
compositions. These articles were much like other juvenile pro-
ductions. I only mention this, because I believe boys often
have a peculiar taste or turn of the mind which is natural, and
which often manifests itself in spite of all disadvantages, which parents should consider in educating and fitting them for the pursuits of life.

"When I was about fourteen years of age, our vicinity was visited with what was called 'A Great Revival.' I then supposed the stories I had heard of 'Ghosts and Goblins Damned' were true, and believed the awful judgment was then probably at hand. I took hold in good earnest to get religion, so as not
I knew very little of the evidence of his doctrine, but I felt perfectly certain that it was true, and that Mr. Dean was inspired from Heaven to promulgate it. After this, my father and myself frequently debated the subject while at work together as long as I remained at home. I soon discovered my father's views were undergoing a gradual but certain change; which after some five or six years resulted in an open avowal of Universalism.

On my eighteenth winter I was permitted for the first time in six years, to attend a little school in the vicinity for the term of six weeks, where I studied English Grammar, which is all the time I ever devoted to that branch. It is true I improved that time with all my might. My nineteenth winter allowed me eight weeks of school, which was devoted to arithmetic and language, and I found myself master of such works on that science as were used in common schools. On my twentieth winter my father engaged me to teach school in our own neighborhood for four months and a half. My evenings and mornings were all devoted to arithmetic and mathematics. I detailed these trifling matters, to show our boys, if they wished to learn and are willing to work for it, very few can find an excuse in the want of opportunity. Those who have no taste and do not love study should never be sent to college -- it is not their place. Education cannot be given, nor bought nor sold -- it must be acquired. The next two years after I became twenty-one I devoted to teaching school and attending the academic institution at Fairfield. During that time I passed through the Latin and Greek grammars, Virgil, Cicero, the Greek Testament, surveying, Euclid, algebra and logic.
"I liked the study of mathematics, but loathed that of the
dead languages. I came to the conclusion, which has never
changed, that a vast deal of time and labor is sacrificed through
the literary whim of making so much account of the dead languages.
They are not of sufficient use to remunerate the labor they cost.
The Greek, to be sure, is necessary for biblical criticism,
but there are living languages, and deeply important studies
enough that have a direct connection with practical life, to
engage and exercise the mind without wasting the energies of
youth upon the dead and useless lore of past ages.

"My teacher was a rector in the Episcopal church, who
informed me that they had a fund for educating a limited
number of young men for the ministry; that if I felt disposed
to take orders with them they would provide for my collegiate
education. A liberal education appeared to me of great value;
but my answer was, 'I am a Universalist'. My mind was that
if I ever preached the gospel I should be unwilling to suppress
a doctrine, which appeared to me to unfold the very elements of
christian morals and human happiness.

"In the fall of 1817 I took leave of my paternal home
and journed to Chautauque Co. in the most western part of the
state of New York. My object in going was to find employment
in some school. That was then a very new country, its prin-
cipal villages were but just located and commenced and new
settlements were just extending into different parts of the County.
Small openings and log houses separated by extensive forests. These
constituted the general scenery of that region. On my arrival,
I found the Rev. S. R. Smith itinerating through that region as a promulgator of Universalism. He was in full vigor and prime of life and justly considered a man of uncommon eloquence and power. He learned my views and suggested the propriety of engaging in the ministry at once. I considered myself very unqualified for preaching, as was the fact, but finally yielded to persuasion and agreed to try. I delivered a short extemporaneous discourse in presence of Brother Smith, who encouraged me to go ahead. After delivering in all five discourses to very small assemblies in that region of forests, I became satisfied that I was not qualified to preach the gospel and felt compelled to abandon the premature attempt.

"Having abandoned the idea of preaching, I was in the woods without an object and pretty much indifferent to everything, and of course in proper condition to take advice. Accordingly in the spring of 1818, I contracted for a piece of wild land, took a wife, and went into the woods to clear up a farm. This was pursued until September, 1821. I had at this time professed the doctrine of Universalism and felt free, clear and full of the subject. My congregations were at once full; my acquaintances were rapidly multiplied and extended into different parts of the County. After preaching some years in that region I was solicited to return to Salisbury, Herkimer Co., where my father used to preach to the Baptists. I did not feel much at home in Salisbury, although ample justice was done me, and after two years I returned to Chautauqua. Here I had a small farm, which I cultivated at my leisure, and usually
rode to my appointments, which were at most all distances within fifty miles. I received such pay as my friends were disposed to give, which was sometimes liberal and on the whole, with my work at home, I was satisfied. In the spring of 1831 I sold my farm and moved to Jamestown, a respectable town on the outlet of Chautauque Lake, where I had preached a portion of the time for many years. Here I started a periodical paper called the "Genius of Liberty." The paper was devoted to the propagation of Universalism. A large portion of it was written by the editor. In association with the people, I discovered some habits prevailing among my friends there, which I had not formerly supposed to exist among them; and began to feel much anxiety that the doctrine did not exert more reforming energy and moral power. Since that, however, I have been able to account for all these things without impeaching the influence of the doctrines at all.

In the meantime my habits were more sedentary than usual; and I was engaged more intensely in reading, writing, and reflection on moral and religious subjects than formerly. These things combined, brought on a kind of nervous affection and depression of spirits. I do not think that I was worse dejected than sedentary men often are; but a combination of circumstances rendered the effect more visible and public. My moral sensitiveness became so acute as to fill my imagination with images of crimes and vices that had but little existence. Melancholy and mental suffering magnified the religious stupidity, apathy and all the faults of Universalists; and spread around me a gloomy world of darkness, wrongs and crimes. About this time I took
hold of the temperance reform; lectured extensively on the subject; and felt deeply engaged in its promotion. I then considered it paramount to all other moral subjects. The Partialists all encouraged and seconded my efforts — so did some Universalists, but many of them were dissatisfied about it, and treated me very ill. This opposition tended to increase my disaffection. Treachery, perfidy, treachery, violence and crime filled up my meditation by day — and my dreams were haunted with forms of vice, which seemed preparing to break up the foundation of society, and bring upon the world the most appalling wretchedness. I read Professor Stewart's works as applied to future punishment and felt pretty much convinced. Of course, I was very unhappy and often wept like a child.

"In relation to pecuniary matters, I was doing better than at any time before, but I had imbibed a deep impression, that Universalism was untrue and must be denounced. My public renunciation was made on the 3d of April, 1833, and then I had publicly engaged in the cause thirteen years and seven months. I only intended to abandon Universalism, not to war against it. This little change of views, which had resulted from mental despondency produced an excitement from Maine to the Mississippi, though the public press, which I had not anticipated, everybody seemed to know the reason. Those, who had large acquisitiveness, knew it was to make money — those who had large approbative-ness, knew it was to gain popularity — whereas, marvelousness prevailed it was known to be a genuine conversion to God. But as often happens, when men undertake to judge that which they
know nothing about, they all guessed wrong. Offers and requests came to me to unite with other denominations, which were refused. At last the presiding elder of the P.E. Church proposed to give me a circuit on trial, and after becoming acquainted with their people and usages he doubted not I should be satisfied to go with them. I finally yielded to this proposal.

"Now that I was on the circuit I believed myself to have been misrepresented and my motives impeached on account of my renunciation, by Universalist editors. This had deepened my prejudices against them and their system. While at Mr. Spafford's of Erie, Pa., our conversation turned on this subject. He asked me why I did not write on Universalism and correct the misrepresentations, and proposed if I would do so he would publish it at his own risk. Mr. Spafford is and always has been the sole proprietor and the only one who has ever had a chance to either make or lose by the book. After attending my appointments about eight months and writing the book referred to above, I determined to retire to private life. I purchased a farm in the town of Nelson, Portage County, Ohio, and moved on in the summer of 1834, a little over one year from the time I left the Universalists. There I was at last in a breathing spot, disgusted with sectarian arrogance, deceit, intolerance and fraud. Religious subjects seemed impenetrable to me, and mankind a selfish multitude of inconsistent beings. I assumed the occupation and habits of a farmer and thought my public career forever closed. Here I spent my time till the winter of 1843, when I incidentally re-engaged in the reading of the bible. I concluded to read im-
partially. It seemed to possess new interest and attraction. My attention became fixed and my affections deeply engaged in the investigation. The result removed a great weight from my mind, and I became satisfied that the idea of an endless punishment is not in fact a Bible doctrine. But great difficulties were in front of me. The farm required attention. I had neglected mental pursuits and I was in doubt as regards my ability; my tools had become dull, lost and out of order. However, unexpected incidents soon brought me into the long neglected field. I commenced my labors in Parkman, Meauga Co., Ohio, April 3, 1843, ten years to a day from the day of the renunciation, and after a religious and mental sleep of about nine years. In June following I took the Fellowship of the Association at Ravenna, and in less than two years we had erected a beautiful church and established the leading society in the Village of Parkman. This brings my story to March, 1845. The rest is future. Upon retrospection it is obvious, I have committed many errors, and would revise a large portion of my life had I the power. I have performed about as much manual labor as most working men, taught some sixteen or eighteen schools, read but little, thought more. Written considerable works, besides considerable for the periodical press, preached over two thousand times, and if I live to get this little book before the public, I shall think I have done more good than harm, and suppose I ought to be satisfied. I have always had good friends; and have always been blessed with enemies, on account of being much disposed to tell the truth, and never felt much disposed to purchase friendship. Among the
honorable and good, however, I have never found much difficulty.

A somewhat careful and extended search discloses the following additional facts and incidents in the life of this man. He was married to Ellen Steadman May 3d, 1819. His family consisted of himself and wife and two children, Lewis C. Todd, Jr. born July 13, 1822, and a daughter Catherine. He taught school in Stockton, also a select school in Jamestown; was one of the superintendents of school in Stockton in 1821. While in Jamestown he was associated with Alfred Smith in the publication of the Chautauqua Republican. He was the author of a work entitled "An Abridgement of English Grammar," which were the first books published in Chautauqua County, by A.G. Frossner at Fredonia. He was also author of a work entitled "Moral Justice of Universalism." He was the officiating minister at the funeral service held for Major Samuel Sinclair, who died in 1827.

The Masonic excitement began in 1826 was at its height. The sermon delivered by Mr. Todd was considered to have been one of the great sermons in defense of Masonry and the life work and character of Major Sinclair. In 1832 in the Congregational Church of Jamestown there was held a protracted meeting, conducted by an Evangelist named Avery.

I am informed that among those who were said to be converted were Honorable S. A. Brown, Dr. E. T. Foote, and Reverend Lewis C. Todd.

In answer to the charge that Mr. Todd was an Athlete he says:

"I do not recollect that I ever had a doubt of the existence of a God."

Spiritualism he carefully investigated during his last years. Among his
papers there is nothing indicating his belief in the doctrine of the
existence of spirits as distinct from matter.

The removal of Mr. Todd and family to Nelson, Portage County,
Ohio was in 1834, where he lived until 1854, when he removed to the
adjoining town of Parkman, Geauga Co., while a resident here he
was elected to represent the County in the Ohio State Legislature
during the years 1856 and 1857.

During the years from 1850 to 1860 Lewis C. Todd was an active
official of the underground railroad, whose main line extended from
Marietta, Ohio, across the state, passing through Portage and Geauga
Counties to Erie Co., Pa., and thence through Chautauqua, Cattaragus
and Erie Counties to the Canada line.

To tell of the work of this man in the interests of the
colored people, who were being helped to Canada and to freedom would
take much space. The fact is established that this man was the friend
of humanity, regardless of color. In 1862 Mr. Todd and wife removed to
Nelson, Portage County, Ohio, where they spent their remaining years.
Should you pass along the Garrettsville and Parkman highway, through
the Township of Nelson, you will see a well kept cemetery, located about
two hundred yards west of the highway. There on a suitable, yet modest
marble slab, you will see engraved "Hon. Lewis C. Todd, Died June 26,
1863, Age 69 Years, 4 months and 9 days." On a duplicate slab you may
read "Ellen, Wife of Lewis C. Todd, Died Aug. 31, 1874, Aged 76 years,
3 months and 9 days." His son Lewis C. Todd, Jr., has passed away.
There is now living at Ashtabula, Ashtabula County, Ohio, a grandson
of Lewis C. Todd and son of Lewis C. Todd, Jr., by the name of Melvin B.
Todd, who is a leading physician of the County.