

Presque Isle¹

This article is transcribed from a clipping that appeared in an Owen Sound paper. From the circumstances and people mentioned, the excursion must have taken place somewhere between the mid 1870s and mid 1890s.

(From a correspondent)

The B.M.E. excursion and picnic was held here to-day, Friday, 3rd Aug., to commemorate the freedom from slavery of the British slaves in the West India Islands. The steamer *Alderson* arrived at 11 a.m., amid a fine shower of rain. She had only got fairly tied up to the dock when the rain ceased and the day turned out all that could be desired. After having dinner in the park, and the boys having a run on the flying trapeze, all adjourned to the Methodist church for the intellectual feast of song and story. S. Graham, Esq., Superintendent of the Sabbath School, took the chair, and was surrounded by the speakers of the day, Elder Miller, Father Henson, W.P. Telford, the Rev. Mr. Kerr and Rev. Mr. Holmes, the new Methodist ministers of Owen Sound. After a very eloquent introductory address by the chairman and a Jubilee song by the colored choir "There's a meeting here tonight, come along," Elder Thomas Miller gave a brilliant speech on the emancipation of the slave; and before concluding thanked his white brethren for so many joining their picnic and assisting them in their Sunday School and all good works. After a few words of welcome from Mr. Mackenzie, of Presque Isle, thanking the B.M.E. people for making Presque Isle park the place of holding their first steamboat excursion, the chairman called on old Father Henson, who is supposed to be 100 years old, and from his doubled up position no one would doubt it. Mr. Henson is a brother to "Uncle Tom," made famous by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," a name that will live as long as the English language. Mr. Henson was greeted with immense applause, and was so glad to meet so many white folks. In his slavery days "the n-----s was not allowed to mix up with the white folks, but the good time was coming when we would be all brederen and sisters, and when we get to Heben you can't [tell] the white man from de black [sic]." He was so pleased to be here; "it was de fustest steamboat disursion" he "eber" was on, and he expects it will be the last till he makes "de big jump over dar" [sic].² W.P. Telford and Rev Mr. Kerr gave short eloquent speeches, when the chairman called on Capt. Ludgate, of the Salvation Army, for a solo, and gave "I am satisfied with Jesus now," in his usual able manner. His pleasing manner of speech, and his beautiful song and story of Jesus and His love, carry all with him. Rev. Mr. Holmes finished up with the speech of the day, which was short, sharp, eloquent, and kept to the text, which

¹ Presque Isle is an island north of Owen Sound, in the former Sarawak Township.

² The editors of *Northern Terminus* have inserted quotation marks around the parts of Henson's speech which were supposedly quoted verbatim - or at least paraphrased.

was “the freedom of the black and white slave from the slaveholder;” after which all adjourned to the dock, where for fifteen minutes the colored jubilee choir discoursed sweet music to the delight of all, and at 5 p.m. sharp the *Alderson* steamed away with one of the most pleasant and orderly picnicking parties that ever visited Presque Isle.