

Hiram A. Cody

Heroes of New Brunswick

(This is the 25th and final in a series of articles on the Heroes of New Brunswick by author Arthur T. Doyle of Fredericton)

By **ARTHUR T. DOYLE**

Less than a half century ago, Hiram A. Cody, an Anglican clergyman from Saint John, was one of Canada's best known authors. He wrote 25 full-length adventure novels, hundreds of poems and dozens of short stories, essays and articles. At the same time he managed to become perhaps the most popular speaker in New Brunswick in his generation.

Hiram A. Cody's legacy was that he was able to do all this and also play a leading part in the religious and cultural life of Saint John and the provincial community. His role as the leading Anglican clergyman in Saint John was recognized when he was named Archdeacon in 1927.

Founded Authors Association

As one of Canada's best-known authors he was a founder of the Canadian Authors Association and counted among his friends Bliss Carmen, Robert Service, and Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, who taught him when he was a student at King's College in Nova Scotia.

Hiram Cody was born in 1872 at Codys Station on the Washademoak in Queens County. His ancestors, of English and Irish origin, had settled there generations before and the community was named after them. Cody was raised on the family farm. When he was 19 he enrolled in the Saint John Grammar School to prepare for matriculation to a divinity college. It was a difficult period in Hiram Cody's life. The long days of commuting by train from Codys Station to Saint John, and his studies, took a toll on his health and he was forced to interrupt his attendance at the school for several months. For this reason he didn't matriculate until the fall of 1893, when he was 21.

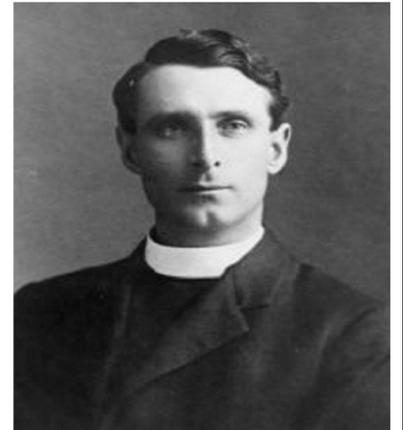
Impressed By Roberts

Hiram Cody enrolled at King's College, Windsor, N.S., in October, 1893. Here he came under the influence of Charles G. D. Roberts, who even then was a nationally renowned writer. The young Cody was greatly impressed by Roberts and years later wrote "What a pleasure it was to attend his lectures! There was nothing dry, nothing formal, but pulsing life and interest so that the hour seemed but a few minutes. Nearly every student who came under his influence resolved to devote his life to literature and become an author."

Cody obtained his bachelor of arts degree three years later and, in 1896, was ordained to the Anglican ministry in Christ Church Cathedral in Fredericton. His first assignment was to the Parish of Greenwich on the St. John River. Here the young Anglican clergyman immersed himself in the duties of his calling. He travelled his parish by riverboat and by horse and carriage, covering 5,000 miles annually.

Accepted Post In Yukon

After seven-and-a-half year in the Parish of Greenwich, his missionary spirit persuaded him to accept a post in the Yukon where new communities had sprung up overnight in response to the gold mining boom at the turn of the century. In the Yukon he was exposed to log cabin churches, Indians, Mounted Police, backwoods miner's cabins, dog teams, a primitive social life, and bitter cold winters. It was this period of Cody's life that gave him the experiences for many of the best selling novels and popular lectures he would produce in later years.



In 1910, at the age of 38, Hiram Cody returned to New Brunswick to accept the rectorship of St. James Church in the southend of Saint John. For the next 35 years Hiram Cody remained in that post and became one of Canada's most prolific writers. In 1908 he published his first popular novel entitled *An Apostle of the North*, depicting life as he had witnessed it in the Yukon. After that he published a average of one new novel every year until 1937.

Very Modest Income

Although many people in the Saint John community believed that he had made a great deal of money off of his writings, it was not so. He raised his family including five children on a very modest income, his only luxury being a summer cottage he acquired at Oak Point on the St. John River.

Cody drew on his first-hand knowledge of the Yukon and county life in New Brunswick when writing his adventure novels. The heroes of his stories were simple, courageous men who strictly adhered to Christian principles as Cody interpreted them. Although Cody's writing style was simple and sometimes awkward, his stories made compelling reading and he developed a large and loyal national readership. Each year thousands looked forward to his latest book. And he never disappointed them.

Touched Lives of Thousands

It was remarkable that Hiram Cody managed to combine his prolific writing career and his busy lecture schedule with his calling as an Anglican clergyman. Yet he carried out his priestly duties of administering his large parish and serving the spiritual and many of the social needs of his parishioners and others to a degree matched by few of his peers. His humanity, tolerance, enthusiasm for life, and dedication to his chosen work, touched the lives of thousands, not just in Saint John, both throughout the province and indeed the country.