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Pedlar, James E. Review of *Lift up a Standard: The Life and Legacy of Ralph C. Horner*, by Laurence Croswell and Mark Croswell, in *The Free Methodist Historical Society Newsletter* 14, no. 1 (Summer/Fall 2013.)

# Book Review

*Lift Up a Standard: The Life and Legacy of Ralph C. Horner*, by Laurence Croswell and Mark Croswell (2012; no publisher listed). 468 pp (hardbound), with photos, appendices.



Ralph Horner (1853-1921) is one of the most significant figures in Canadian church history, and perhaps the most significant figure in the Canadian holiness movement. He founded two denominations, the Holiness Movement Church (HMC) and the Standard Church of America (SCA). His ministry bore much fruit, particularly in Eastern Ontario, though its reach extended to other parts of Canada,

the Northern U.S., Egypt, and China.

Despite his importance, Horner has received relatively little attention over the years. Laurence and Mark Croswell have done the church a great service in writing this engaging full-scale biography. Though not an academic book, it is responsibly researched and fills an important void in Wesleyan historical literature.

The book deals with Horner's entire life, beginning with his birth and early years on the family farm near Shawville, Quebec. He was converted at a Methodist camp meeting in 1876, and began his ministry in the Methodist Church of Canada.

Horner came into conflict with the Methodist Conference, however, because he believed he was called to be a "mass evangelist," travelling freely without the responsibility for a circuit. This led to his expulsion in 1894. Along with other likeminded Wesleyans, Horner went on to form the Holiness Movement

Church in 1897. The HMC made significant progress, mainly in small communities, and is remembered for its fervent camp meetings.

A schism in 1916 led to the formation of the Standard Church, with Horner serving as Bishop. The Croswells note that this schism drained some of the life out of the burgeoning Hornerite movement. Indeed, while they celebrate the successes of both the HMC and the SCA, the authors (who have deep SCA roots) also note how clericalized decision-making, creeping legalism, and entrenchment in rural contexts all worked against the two denominations as the twentieth century progressed.

The later chapters of *Lift Up a Standard* focus on the continuing ministry of the SCA after Horner's death, up to the merger with the Wesleyan Church in 2003. Horner's other spiritual descendants, the HMC, merged with the Free Methodist Church in 1958. Thus, although the institutional bodies Horner founded no longer exist, the fruits of his ministry can still be seen today.

Horner's story is a compelling one, and *Lift Up a Standard* does a good job of retelling it for a contemporary audience.

— James Pedlar, Tyndale Seminary, Toronto