

## ORGANIZATION OF COLUSA CIRCUIT.

--By H. C. Bailey.

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In the fall of 1856 a strange character made his advent among the ranchers living <sup>along</sup> ~~among~~ the west bank of the Sacramento. He was of medium height, very spare, black eyes and sallow skin; dressed in a black cloth suit, worn slick and shining, and so large that it hung loosely on his figure; a white shirt (an exceedingly rare article in those days) much soiled, a battered stovepipe hat and a queer old-fashioned cloak for an overcoat. He was mounted upon a small mule and carried a large pair of saddlebags. This was "crazy Bob Martin," the first representative of the Methodist church, south, ever seen in Colusa county. We called him crazy, not without reason. His actions, like Bret Hatte's Heathen Chinee, were peculiar. The first time I ever saw him was at a neighbor's house. He was drying his butfit, singing, praying and shouting alternately, according to his humor. My neighbor Hoy was a "Piker," (a name applied to all Missourians and afterwards included all southern sympathizers on the western coast). There were two classes, "Pike" and "Yank." An acquaintance of the preacher, a mischievous fellow, had directed Martin to cross <sup>5</sup> cypress slough, about 100 feet wide and 8 or 10 feet deep, telling him it was all right. The result was he, the mule, saddlebags and cloak all got mixed and he or no one else ever knew how they got out. He was praising the Lord for his deliverance and praying for the fellow who sent him in the water.

The next day he called at our house. I was called in to entertain him and be entertained, and this is the way it turned out: I found him in one corner of the room and my wife in another, she looking very serious, and he

wringing his long slender hands, swaying his body and groaning as if in great pain. He stopped long enough to shake hands, then renewed the groaning and other performances, with an occasional burst of song or praise. This was kept up for some time, when he said, "Let's pray," and down he went on his knees and prayed loud and long. After ten or fifteen minutes of this he got up and left in a great hurry. This was a sample of his conduct at every house he visited and was allowed to do so.

There was only one family in that part of the country that made any pretensions to religion. This was an old Baptist couple with two children. Bob made their home his headquarters, and during the summer held monthly services there. It certainly was an unique service. The first Sunday we all put on our best clothes--which generally meant changing our soiled ones for clean ones--and went to meeting. At 11 o'clock we went into the house and there sat the preacher with a long, lank body and woe-begone look, wringing his hands, his body writhing as if in great pain, and the tears raining down his cheeks. He would sometimes cover his face with his hands and bow his head a few moments, then suddenly look up and either groan or shout "Glory to God!" or some such expression. This continued until our patience was well nigh exhausted. He gave out the hymn in regular Methodist style--lining the hymn--prayed, read a chapter, sung again, took his text and preached us his first sermon. And such a sermon! It would have required an expert to tell the difference between the prayer and the sermon. All that followed were about like this one, but we became accustomed to them, and, strange to say, the more we saw of the preacher, the better we liked him. His zeal and his harmlessness so impressed us that we began to take an interest in him and were glad to see him when he made his monthly rounds. He took all our jokes and sly fun



so kindly and good naturedly, even to answering gross insults in the kindest manner; always saying: "I will pray for you, you can't prevent that!"

He visited all the bachelor camps and houses, and proposed prayer, as was at that time the custom of Methodist preachers. Some would take offense and sneer at him and tell him to leave. He would do so with the remark: "I will pray for you," and go off singing one of his favorite hymns at the top of his voice, "Ye angels who stand around the throne and view Immanuel's face," being his favorite. He sung it with his whole soul, and interspersed it with loud "amens" and similar outbursts.