

## 2012 Annual Meeting: Methodism's Civil Wars



For the first time in the history of the Historical Society, our annual meeting was hosted by The Northeastern Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History on May 15-17, 2012, in Gettysburg, PA, featuring a unique integration of American and United Methodist history.

The meeting opened on Tuesday morning at the Gettysburg UMC with opening devotions led by the Rev. John Piper and the message provided by the Rev. Deborah Heisley-Cato, the Superintendent of the Harrisburg District, entitled, "Help Us Remember."

Following worship, Chuck Teague, Park Ranger and Baptist minister who has also served as the Historian for the Lincoln Fellowship of Pennsylvania, presented a paper entitled, "The Spirituality of Abraham Lincoln."\* Well into his adult years Abraham Lincoln was not merely an agnostic, but he was anti-religion in general and anti-Christian in particular. His life and interactions reveal an aggressive bitterness toward anything sacred. Gradually, however, through associations with Christian colleagues who patiently lived out their faith, Lincoln was forced to recognize his unjustified bias for what it

was. Largely through Presbyterian influence, Lincoln eventually professed faith in Christ and became an active participant in regular religious services and Bible studies. It was this faith which led him to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves.

GCAH Executive Secretary, Robert Williams, then made his annual report. He summarized his views of the 2012 General Conference, noting the more positive actions which were taken to designate for the first time three Heritage Landmarks outside of the United States and one Native American site within the States, as well as Simpson House in Philadelphia. (See page 5 for more extensive views on GC). He noted that the 2012 GCAH annual meeting will be in Philadelphia to honor Distinguished Award recipients Mother Bethel AMEC and St. George's UMC for their historic work in worshipping together for the first time since the 1790's. Archivist Training will be held at the Archives Center on the Drew University Campus in September 2012 and the GCAH 2013 Annual Meeting will be held there from September 12-15, 2013, when Conference Commission Chairs are also invited to join GCAH for their annual meeting. HSUMC will also hold their annual meeting at the same time.

After lunch, Lawrence Keener-Farley, retired Director of Education at the National Civil War Museum and a gallery historian at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum presented a paper entitled, "The Gathering Storm." He offered an extensive timeline that emphasized the cultural and socio-economic differences between the North and South which made conflict inevitable. Slavery, however, was the issue that pushed the competing viewpoints to the point of armed conflict, splitting the nation and the Methodist Church.

Milt Loyer, who has served as the Archivist for the Susquehanna and the former Central Pennsylvania Conferences since 1991 and who was the 2010 recipient of the HSUMC Ministry of Memory Award, then discussed "Evangelical Civil Wars". What began as differences about the nature and place of the (cont. p. 3)

*\*Due to the fact that your editor was unable to attend the 2012 Annual Meeting, many thanks go to Milt Loyer, Peggy Rhorer, Margaret Bickford, Jane Donovan, and John Gooch for providing materials, pictures, and summaries of papers presented there.*

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## From the President, Dan Swinson

At our most recent meeting of the Historical Society in Gettysburg, held in conjunction with the Northeastern Jurisdiction (kudos to Milt Loyer and all of the folks of the Jurisdiction for the fine meeting and wonderful hosting), we heard about some of United Methodism's civil wars. We concentrated on those which caused splits (Methodist Episcopal, Evangelical, United Brethren) and their reasons (slavery and episcopacy, modes of dress and comportment, attitudes toward secret societies, etc.). I was struck by the ways that persons of faith were alienated from one another, even when physically present. John Gooch's account of the silence between editors of Church papers, north and south, though they occupied the same building in St. Louis and had offices in close proximity, remains with me as an example of how far we can separate in heart.

We guard the memory of a Church devoted to God who, in Pauline words, was "in Christ reconciling (2 Corinthians 5:19)," yet we can "un-reconcile" in a mighty hurry. In the process, we become distracted by the minutia of our differences. In the Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference of 1848, folk were preoccupied with the fallout of the division of 1844. The new Church, South was raising questions about "fraternal relations" and the settlement of the property question. Delegates brought petitions from as far afield as Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri asking not to be alienated from "the old Church." The Committee on the State of the Church, devoted to the issues of division, was not even on the list of Standing Committees to be formed at the beginning of the Conference, but became the most important committee of the session. It was almost a relief when J. Spenser asked that the Committee on Law rule whether horse feed was a travelling expense.

In the process, as I noted at the closing worship at Gettysburg, the Church found it increasingly difficult to follow either the God of justice or the Prince of Peace. I have been struck with the increasing ineffectiveness of the descendants of Wesley to speak a message of reconciliation to a similarly fractured nation. The only consolation (if it can be called such) is that few others called followers of Christ seemed able to do any better. Despite the massive influence of religious institutions in mid-nineteenth century America, they were so compromised by their divisions that they could not stand apart from, or in opposition to the flow.

As we come away from a General Conference session where dividing issues predominated, we may be in a position to give context. We can note that it has been worse. The divisions foreshadowed in 1844 ended in a war that cost lives in the hundreds of thousands. None of our issues tend to so dire a consequence. On the other hand, we can note that it needs to be much better. If we are not careful, we can divide to the point that we will no longer talk to, or even recognize each other, and in that division lose any ability to speak reconciliation, to ourselves much less our world. We who do the ministry of memory can bring this gift to our Church.

We can even note the value of a petition on horse feed. After all, where would the Wesleys or Asbury, and thus we, have been without it?



(cont. from p. 1) experience of sanctification in the life of the believer turned into a conflict between personalities that split the Evangelical Association in 1891. The 1922 re-union of the two competing bodies did not satisfy all the parties involved, and separate denominations tracing their roots back to Jacob Albright and the Evangelical Association continue to this day.

These papers were followed by the first session of the NEJCAH Annual Meeting. After dinner the Historical Society had responsibility for the program, beginning with President Dan Swinson presenting the Ministry of Memory Award to the Rev. Roy Howard from the Holston Conference. Grady Winegar, Chair of the Holston Conference Commission on Archives and History, introduced Roy, describing his extensive involvement in the historical organizations of the Holston Conference and beyond, noting that, "He has spent those countless hours in research on the smallest details of names and dates and places." Your editor has her own personal experience with Roy's expertise in this area.

In 2004 as I began to work on gathering information for my 2006 publication, *Courageous Past, Bold Future: The Journey Toward Full Clergy Rights for Women in the United Methodist Church*, I contacted all Conference Chairs of Commissions on Archives and History seeking



Grady Winegar, Roy Howard, Dan Swinson

information on the first women (both white women and women of color) in the current or predecessor conferences to be granted full clergy rights. The first response which I received was from Roy Howard, listing two African American women, Sally A. Crenshaw and Nora E. Young, from the former Black East Tennessee Conference, who had been granted probationary membership in 1956 – the first year that Methodist women were granted full clergy rights. These two women had not been included on the original list of 1956 women gathered by GCAH. I was really excited as I knew that this would be just the first of new information which the project would produce, and Roy and I became good friends.

Rob Sledge, Chair of the Saddlebag Selection Award, then made the 2012 choice to Jennifer Woodruff Tait for her book, *The Poison Chalice: Eucharistic Grape Juice and Common-Sense Realism in Victorian Methodism* – University of Alabama Press. Due to the fact that Jennifer is pregnant and unable to travel, Rob was able to make the presentation by way of Skype, which also provided her with the opportunity to respond and give a brief overview of her publication, a discussion of how "common-sense realism" effected a change from the Eucharistic use of wine to unfermented grape juice in late nineteenth century American Methodism.

The annual meeting followed. In particular, the declining membership of the HSUMC was highlighted, noting that though the Society is currently solvent, with decreasing income from membership, our available funds will also continue to decrease. The Iowa Conference has offered to provide \$2,000 from the John Witmer estate to fund a membership drive for the Society sometime during the coming year. The Treasurer's Report was received and a Budget for 2012-13 was passed. These will be published in the next issue of *Historian's Digest*. (cont. p.4)



Rob Sledge presents the Saddlebag Selection to Jennifer Woodruff Tait via Skype.

(cont. from p. 3)



*Chaplain William McCormick*

Wednesday is always tour day for the NEJCAH and this year was no different. The tour commenced at St. Paul's AMEZ Church in Gettysburg, where devotions were led by Pastor Ruth Boatwright, and a visit was made by Methodist Episcopal Chaplain William McCormick (aka the Rev. John E. Lee, a retired pastor in the Susquehanna Conference) sharing his thoughts and feelings as he and his men were on the move in Virginia, not knowing that they were on the way to Gettysburg for the pivotal battle of the war but sensing that something big is about to happen.

At the King Street United Brethren Church, the largest United Brethren (Old Constitution) Church in the denomination, Milt Loyer presented, "United Brethren Civil Wars." Conservative 1869 and 1889 splits in the United Brethren in Christ denomination produced denominations that exist to this day. While time has erased the bitterness of these separations, examination of the theological and practical differences that still exist give insight into the nature of the original United Brethren of Otterbein and Boehm. In 2000 these two bodies joined with the mainstream of their parent denomination, now part of the United Methodist Church, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the formal organization of that parent denomination.

Following Milt's presentation the group was given a choice of five options to view sites in the Chambersburg area. After lunch was served at St. Paul's UMC, the tour moved on to Mt. Zion Evangelical Church, where Bill Williams, a past president of the Harrisburg Civil War

Roundtable, presented, "Retreat from Gettysburg." In the panic of the moment, the story of the two 17-mile long collection of wagons, artillery and wounded soldiers that fled Gettysburg and struggled to reach the safety of the Potomac River at Williamsport, Maryland, has been largely forgotten and undocumented. But the drama and suffering of the retreat from Gettysburg is no less compelling than that recorded during the actual battle.

At the Rehoboth UMC, originally a Methodist Protestant church formed by a sizeable number of members who seceded from three MEC churches in the area, Brand Eaton, an ordained elder in the Susquehanna Conference and current president of the Susquehanna Conference Historical Society, discussed, "Methodist Civil Wars." The issues of slavery and church administration led to the splits that formed the African Methodist denominations, the Methodist Protestant Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Jacob Gruber of the Baltimore Conference was intimately familiar with each of these struggles, and an examination of his involvements gave insight into the issues and helped to make them more personal.

Supper was served at Rouzerville UMC followed by "Songs and Stories of the Civil War," a lively program presented by Matt Dodd, currently a presenter of a series of programs on the songs and stories of a variety of topics and holidays, all of which are described on his website: [www.songsandstories.homestead.com](http://www.songsandstories.homestead.com).

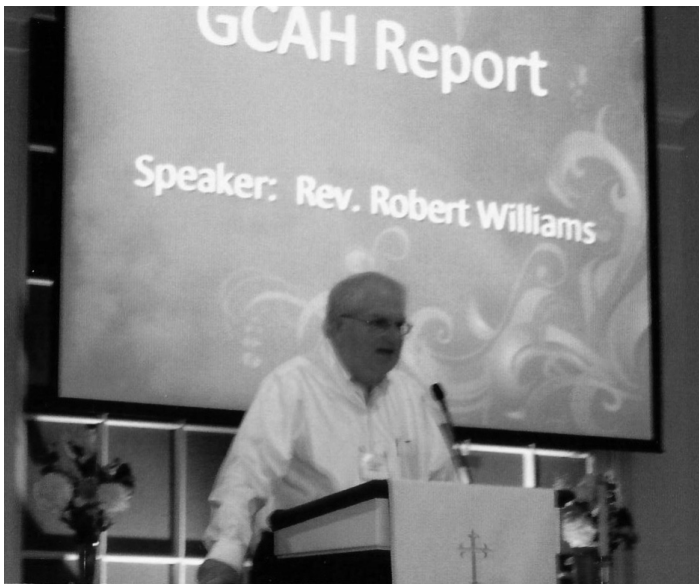
Thursday morning commenced with a paper entitled, "It Was Different in the West," presented by the 2011 HSUMC Ministry of Memory recipient, John O. Gooch, an ordained elder in the Missouri Conference. The war in Missouri actually began five years before Fort Sumter, with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the violence on the frontier as parties struggled to make Kansas either slave or free. The War in the church (*cont. p. 8*)



*Matthew Dodd*



## From the GCAH General Secretary, Robert Williams:



The commentaries and blogs have been plentiful since the end of General Conference and I trust there is some interest of those of us who care about our collective memory. As far as I can tell, and I am open to correction from anyone, there has been no change to paragraph 641 in the Discipline mandating the existence of a conference commission on archives and history. The restructuring plan of the general agencies was found to violate the Constitution of the church following review by the Judicial Council. Thus, GCAH will be governed as it has been with no change in its organizational pattern. I am very pleased with that as I believe that our 24 directors bring great value to our work. For those who believed that reorganization was the way to a more promising future for the church, this was a tragic outcome. Following the voiding of the restructuring plan, several of the agencies reintroduced legislation reducing the number of directors on their boards. GCAH did not because it reduced the number of directors in 1996 and 24 seem to be a good number for our work.

Five sites have been declared to be Heritage Landmarks: Old Mutare Mission site in Zimbabwe; College of West Africa in Monrovia, Liberia; Mary Johnston Hospital in Manila; Newtown United Methodist Church in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference; and Simpson House in Philadelphia. This is the first time that Heritage Landmarks have been named outside the United States. The Commission also added to its purpose its partnership with the African American Methodist Heritage Center.

Even though I think there has already been enough written about General Conference, I will add a few comments of my own. I do not find the reorganization of the governing structures of the general agencies to be the most pressing issue confronting the church. Everyone that I work with agrees that we desire

efficiency, effectiveness and economy in the work we do with the connectional agencies. Everyone desires that all congregations demonstrate vitality and engage in significant ministry. It is fair to want useful evaluation and fair to reduce budgets. The general funds of the church were reduced 6.6%. But changing organizational governance wastes time, energy, and money. I have not experienced validity to the accusations made against the agencies by their critics that we are pulling in different directions. We have different responsibilities but all seek to be faithful to the Scriptures and to the directions of the General Conference.

Our task should be to help elevate the conversation about what is the best way to deliver the benevolence work of the church in the global arena. We need to articulate how "the ministry of memory" can be a tool to help congregations engage in vital ministry. What can be learned from the former Board of Church Extension or the ministries with immigrant populations in the early 20th century? We should lift up an accurate retelling of our history. I found that little attention was given to prior restructuring plans and at times the facts were just wrong. Corporate structures for connectional work go to the 19th century and not the 1960's as one spokesperson suggested. Security of appointment was a practice for clergy predating 1956, contrary to what others were saying.

I would hope that everyone who has been involved in advocating for structural change, everyone who found the proposed plans seriously flawed, and everyone who could have been affected would approach these years with humility and introspection. What must each person do to live faithfully and help our witness to be as God intends? Trust has been a word used a lot in this conversation. There are those suggesting that smaller groups with more power should be trusted more. Others suggest that we have not trusted God enough. The appeal to the concept of trust seems to me, to be misplaced. Someone may want to trust the vote of the general conference; I may say that I trust the decision of the Judicial Council. Anyone in power may resort to simply saying, "Trust me." I can trust the good intentions of those I disagree with but that shouldn't prevent disagreement. I can trust that God was working even in the torturous legislative process of general conference.

In these coming years I am grateful that the staff of GCAH can continue to work with a dedicated group of directors of the commission that understand and appreciate this work so they can provide the oversight and set the policies that govern our work. When it comes to trust, I go to II Timothy 1:12b: "I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him;" or in the words of the hymn, "'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus."

## Names Sought for Nominations for New Officers

Every four years an election is held for the officers of the Historical Society: president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. Our bylaws call for the election of a nominating committee in the same year in which General Conference is held to prepare a slate of officers to be elected in the following year by mail ballot. The nominating committee is required to present at least two names for each office unless they can demonstrate a good faith effort to find two names without success. It has recently become our practice to solicit **suggestions** for possible nominations from our membership. Simply submitting a name does not necessarily mean that that person will be nominated but the name will be considered among others that are offered.

Officers for the Society serve for a four-year term with the possibility of being elected for an additional four-year term. The Board meets once a year on the day before the annual meeting; therefore, it is generally necessary for the Board members to arrive the day before the beginning of the annual meeting. Travel expenses are paid for all Board members.

For the upcoming quadrennium nominations are being sought for all four offices; however, only the vice-president's and treasurer's position must be filled as current vice-president, Jim Morris, has served for two

quadrennia and Chuck Yrigoyen, Jr., treasurer, filled the position in the middle of the quadrennium and was re-elected to serve a second quadrennium. Both president, Dan Swinson, and secretary, Barb Essen, can be re-elected for an additional quadrennium.

Persons whose names are suggested should be contacted prior to submitting their names to assure that they are willing to serve, must be members of the Society, and ideally will have attended at least one or two annual meetings so that they have some familiarity with the workings of the Society. These folks should also be able and willing to conduct business via e-mail. Please submit a short biography with your suggestions, including your reasons for proposing a name.

The following members were elected to serve on the nominating committee: Thelma Boeder, convener – tboeder@visi.com; Rob Sledge – sledger@mcmurryadm.mcm.edu; Charles Yoon - cyoon@clumc.org; Sue Alexander - sueroyal@sbcglobal.net; and Pat Thompson - pajt8817@aol.com. **You may submit your suggestions to any of these persons no later than October 1 so that a slate can be prepared for the February issue of *Historian's Digest*.** Thank you for your assistance in preparing a slate of officers.

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## A Word from Our Ministry of Memory Award Recipient – Roy Howard



In the words of Grady Winegar, "Roy has been the driving force in the work of the Holston Historical Society since 1989, helping to arrange for papers and speakers for three meetings each year. He has helped to see that the *Holston Historic HERITAGE* journal is published regularly." Recently, as editor of *Historian's Digest*, I have been contacting the presidents of historical societies around the country (and the central conferences where I have such information), asking them to send me copies of their newsletters and/or short articles from their members which might be published in the *Digest*. Roy sent me a copy of the Spring 2011 *Holston Historic HERITAGE* which included two articles which he had written. I am including a copy of one of those which is a commentary on two other articles in the volume and which demonstrates the kind of detail work which Roy carries out. If you would like a copy of the original articles, please contact Roy at hols1824@comcast.net. (see p. 7)

## Some Comments By A White Historian [Roy Howard]

The articles by the two Revs. Davis give us a real picture of Black Methodism in East Tennessee in the last third of the nineteenth century. We see a few of the problems the blacks had to overcome.

I have to disagree with at least one statement in the articles, and in so doing I speak even more highly of the black ministers of that time.

The first article above [entitled, "Some History of the East Tennessee Conference,"] says, "because of the low educational standard among the men it made it necessary for the conference to elect white Presiding Elders. White Elders continued until 1888 when Negroes began to take over this office."

There were only four Presiding Elders in the East Tennessee Conference from 1880 to 1888: (1)W.C. Graves, (2)S. J. Harris, (3)Eli Provine, and (4) D.W. Hayes.

1. W.C. Graves was a white man who had been a member of both Holston MES and ME Conferences.
2. The 1880 Census shows that a *black* minister named Samuel J. Harris lived in Chattanooga. The Holston ME Conference Journal shows that S. J. Harris was appointed Presiding Elder of the Cleveland District in 1879, and the Journal of East Tennessee Conference shows that S. J. Harris was appointed Presiding Elder of the Chattanooga District in 1880 and 1881. *I believe* that all this proves that S. J. Harris was a black Presiding Elder.
3. Eli Provine transferred to East Tennessee Conference from Tennessee in 1883. He served in the conference until he died in 1900. His name appears in no United States Census, so we have no independent records to confirm his race. Because he continued to serve black churches in East Tennessee, *I believe he was black*.
4. The East Tennessee Conference Journal states that D. W. Hayes transferred to the conference from Tennessee. The 1870 Census relates that an eighteen-year old black male named D. W. Hayes lived in Davidson County Tennessee. *I contend* that that was the person who was a Presiding Elder in the East Tennessee Conference.

Based on the statements above, I submit that *only one* Presiding Elder in the East Tennessee Conference was white.

Mr. Davis made the following statement: "Dr. J.J. Robinett (white) a Presiding Elder in the Holston Conference looked after the Negro work on the Knoxville District." I suspect that during several years a white man did some of the detailed work for the black man who was appointed as presiding elder. (However, J. J. Robinett served as a Presiding Elder in Holston only five years – Chattanooga, 1886-90, and Knoxville, 1890-91).

In addition, I contend that all the presiding elders of the black districts in Holston Conference (1969-79) were black.

Records do show, as Mr. Anderson [Davis] claimed, that for several years the Conference Secretary of the East Tennessee Conference was a white person; they will not be named here.

However much help the black superintendents may have had from white persons, it is a great credit to their determination.

Since several of the Presiding Elders transferred from other conferences, I speculate that they were persons of ability who were asked (or *told* by the bishops) to come to East Tennessee to serve as a Presiding Elder.

One other minor disagreement: William Bluford did not transfer from Washington in 1888 as Mr. Anderson [Davis] stated on pages 12 and 15, above. According to Conference Journals, he joined Holston ME Conference in 1869 and should have been included in the list of charter members of the East Tennessee Conference.



*Inside Mount Zion Evangelical Church*





*The Rev. John O. Gooch*

(cont. from p. 4) began in 1845, as both Northern and Southern branches of Methodism sought to gain control of Missouri. This paper covered both wars and the ways in which each played on the other. In military terms, Missouri was occupied by Federal troops almost from the beginning. Kansas Jayhawker regiments continued to harass and destroy large portions of western Missouri. Missourians fought back with continual guerilla warfare.

The Southern church caught the brunt of the military occupation, with various test oaths, restrictions on movement of preachers and the confiscation of property. Seven Southern Methodist ministers were murdered simply because they were Southern Methodists. The burning of Lawrence, KS, by guerillas under the command of Wm. Quantrill was the height of the resistance. After the war, Southern Methodists in Missouri met and chose not to consider returning to the Northern church. This led to the revival of Southern Methodism.

A very successful meeting ended with the second business session for NEJCAH and closing worship led by HSUMC President, Dan Swinson. Many thanks to Milt Loyer and the members of the Susquehanna Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History for all their work in organizing this meeting.



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