

# HISTORIAN'S DIGEST



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## *The Historical Society of the UMC Meets at the Gateway To the West and Explores Methodism in Missouri and Points West in the Early 1800's*



Grace UMC, St. Louis, MO (photo by Christopher Shoemaker)

Many thanks to John Finley (South Central Jurisdiction) and John Wright and Grace United Methodist Church for hosting the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of the UMC. As we gathered in St. Louis, under the Arch which is

known as the Gateway to the West, we were greeted warmly by our hosts and members and staff from Grace UMC and treated to a rich array of presentations which introduced us to Methodism in the Mid-West at the beginning of the 19th century and beyond.

The Board of Directors of the Historical Society convened in the late morning on September 11 to conduct the needed business of the Society. As it was the anniversary of 9/11, President Ivan Corbin asked the members who were present (at-large members Phil Lawton, Luther Oconer, and Joyce Plyler were unable to attend) to share their memories of that day as a way of checking in with each other since our last meeting in Dayton, OH. Though eighteen years have passed, memories of that day seemed as clear as if it had happened recently.

The Board concluded their business in time for the official opening of the meeting with dinner on Thursday evening. Dr. Doug Tzan, the Vice-President of the Historical Society of the UMC, introduced our key-note speaker for the meeting, Dr. John Wigger, Professor of History at the University of Missouri. Dr. Wigger received the 2010 Saddlebag Selection Award for his publication, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists*, published by Oxford University Press in 2009. He received his Bachelor's Degree from West Virginia University in 1981, a Master's from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1989 and a Master's from Notre Dame in 1990, and his PhD from Notre Dame in 1994.

In his presentation, "Methodism at a Crossroads, 1820," Dr. Wigger traced how Francis Asbury's death

in 1816 changed the culture of American Methodism from that of an upstart, outsider movement to one that became part of the mainline. Asbury was born in 1745 near Birmingham, England to Elizabeth and Joseph Asbury. His father was a gardener, who worked for a couple of wealthy families and he also worked for a brewery for a period of time. In fact, Wigger stated, Asbury's father had a moral failing which he never really discloses.

When Frank was 6 years old, his younger sister Sarah died and this was very hard on his mother, who eventually became a Methodist as a result Sarah's death. Frank followed a common school education, learning to read and write, though he dropped out of school at age 13 and apprenticed with a metal worker. He eventually, however, became a Methodist class leader, an exhorter, and then a preacher under John Wesley, who sent him to America in 1771. Fourteen years later he was elected the first Methodist Bishop. By the end of the century over 200,000 Methodists regularly congregated on a Sunday morning. The Methodists had more members and more churches than any other Protestant denomination. A good deal of the early growth of Methodism could be attributed to Asbury and his ministry.

Wigger identified four major elements of that ministry: 1) Piety, 2) Connection to ordinary people in the church, 3) Cultural sensitivity, and 4) Organizational sensitivity. **Piety** was the basis of Asbury's spirituality. He regularly arose between 4 and 5am and prayed for an hour and read his Bible. He never owned anything that he couldn't carry on horseback and gave away all his money. He often started out without enough money to complete his journey, forcing him to rely on the support of others, dressed plainly, and practiced poverty. Over the 45 years of his ministry in America, Asbury developed an amazing **connection** to ordinary people in the church. He traveled relentlessly from place to place across the connection, spending the winter in Charleston, SC, then traveling up the East Coast into Canada in the spring and summer and traveling back down to Charleston again. Along the way he always stayed in the homes of people in the

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## Message from our President

— Ivan G. Corbin

I've been reflecting on the nature of this thing called "history" lately. So many times, I've been guilty of thinking of something as historical only if it happened way in the past, but the truth is that history continues to unfold on a minute by minute, day by day basis. What happened an hour ago is history. What we see on the news, read about online and participate in each day is history the moment it has occurred. History is living and breathing, not something dead, buried or filed away.



*Ivan G. Corbin*

In the Church we believe and proclaim that history is moving us closer and closer to the fulfillment of God's Kingdom. Where we have been is not just something about which to remember and reminisce, but rather something to learn from and allow to inform where we are going in the future. What I find disconcerting in today's world, both in the Church and in society in general, is that we suffer from severe memory loss and very short attention spans. I don't know how many times I've heard colleagues in the ministry dismiss the value of our collective history only to later propose a "new" mission or ministry that, in fact, has already been done but has been forgotten. I suspect that our current situation within the United Methodist Church and our uncertain future could be much better informed and guided through these turbulent waters if more of those in leadership would spend time learning from our experiences with division, healing and compromise within the Methodist/Wesleyan bodies in the past. The split in 1844 would be a good place to start, but so would what led to the formation of such sister denominations as the Wesleyans, Nazarenes, Free Methodist, AME and AME, Zion, CME Churches, etc. The mistakes and what was done well could all be extremely helpful to us now.

I hope you will forgive these musings, but I would suggest that this is one area where we who are passionate about the Ministry of Memory can serve the greater United Methodist Church and Church in general. File this in the "for what it's worth" category.

I'd like to conclude by saying "Thank You" to everyone who made our Annual Meeting in Saint Louis worthwhile and a time for continued learning from our shared history and experiences. I look forward to our time together next year at Saint Simons Island in Georgia as we join with the SEJ and South Georgia for their annual meetings. Once again, we will have the opportunity to walk where the brothers Wesley walked, struggled with ministry and found frustration that allowed room for heart-warming experiences that led to the creation of the Methodist movement. My prayer is that in the midst of all our unfolding history the Holy Spirit will initiate such a movement again that will take us beyond the divisions and help us reach a world that is growing more indifferent and sometimes hostile to the Church and the message we bring. What we have to share is not just history: it is the story of the God Who is with us and the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth. It is the very essence of the Gospel.

In Christ's service,

*Ivan*  
Ivan G. Corbin



church, and he never did the same circuit twice. As a result, many people saw him up close – when he went to bed, when he got up, when he was ill. The closer he got to them, the better they liked him as he had that ability to connect to folks.

Asbury also had a well-developed **cultural sensitivity**. John Wesley had taken the Church of England and connected it to working people, turning it into something with which working people could connect. Asbury did the same thing in America. He was amazingly perceptive in the way he did it, though there was nothing in his upbringing that would have predicted this. When he arrived in America, pastors from New York and Philadelphia were pushing into the South where they met a lot of native-born Southerners who were very enthusiastic and were often called the “shouting Methodists.” Most of the English preachers were uncomfortable with this style of worship but when Asbury met them, he thought that they were authentic even though it was not his way of doing things. So, he went against the staid English preachers and endeared himself to the young Southern Methodists.

After Asbury came to America, Wesley sent Thomas Rankin to this country. Rankin was more of a disciplinarian who didn’t like Southern preachers. On one occasion when everyone was gathered at a meeting in Delaware, Rankin began laying into these preachers. Suddenly, Asbury jumped up and said, “I thought I thought...” “You thought what, Mr. Asbury?” “I thought I saw a mouse!” All of which served to break the tension in the room.

Asbury himself was not a good public speaker; in fact, while he was excellent one-on-one and in small groups, he was a terrible public speaker. He was the venerable, respected Bishop who couldn’t address his preachers with a coherent message.

Finally, Asbury’s **organizational sensitivity** served him well. He knew American Methodism better than anyone else and this helped him to build a strong Methodist organization. He had attended a few camp meetings and saw how they were pulling people in, and he believed they were a powerful way to reach out to people. Camp meetings were an outgrowth of regular quarterly meetings when all of those on a circuit came together, often in one little space. This sometimes overwhelmed the resources available. This led to holding summer quarterly meetings at the camp meeting sites, which then opened the meetings to outsiders who came and weren’t bound by the same restrictions as those from the churches.

However, by the end of his life Asbury was worried about a couple of major issues. He felt that slavery was a moral sin that he couldn’t seem to find a way around. Over the years he came to believe that slavery could not be rooted out of the South, and yet he chose not to

abandon his Southern brothers and sisters, either.

Further, however, he was also very concerned that Methodism was becoming respectable and comfortable; the denomination was becoming the center of the middle class. Methodism had built more churches than anyone else. And, they had begun to build colleges, as well – Vanderbilt, Duke, Syracuse. And Asbury was not alone in his concern. Others, too, were against the increasing refinement of the denomination, feeling that it was too comfortable and too mainstream.

Something vital began to be lost in church as people became more comfortable, and there was a decline in zeal in the young preachers. The autobiography of Jarena Lee (a well-known African American female preacher) is filled with visions. She explained these visions in her autobiography, writing:



Rev. Jarena Lee

*It is known that the blind have the sense of hearing in a manner much more acute than those who can see: also their sense of feeling is exceedingly fine, and is found to detect any roughness on the smoothest surface, where those who can see can find none. So it may be with such as I am, who has never had more than three months schooling; and wishing to know much of the way and law of God, have therefore watched the more closely the operations of the Spirit, and have in consequence been led thereby.*

American Methodism continued to grow right up into the 1950’s, faster than the aggregate population, until it finally hit a decline in the 1960’s. Methodism’s growth came from the middle class who began to desire ministers who were educated. And with the education of the pastorate, Methodism then became more refined. There were also divisions, however, as a result, as the Holiness movement (in the 1800’s) and Pentecostalism grew out of Methodism. Methodism was a movement of the 19th century while Pentecostalism was a movement of the 20th century. American Methodism grew because it found a way to connect with American culture. But American culture often pushes back at you, as well, and the question is how to balance the two.

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*Dr. Robert Moore*

The opening plenary for Thursday began with a presentation by Dr. Robert Moore, Historian for the National Park Service in St. Louis, who gave an excellent presentation on the "Opening of the West." St. Louis was originally founded in 1764 by two French men, Pierre Laclède Liguist (known as Pierre Laclède) and his 13-year old stepson, Auguste Chouteau, who wanted to start a fur trading post.

Prior to this time, most settlements had been on the East side of the Mississippi River. Most of those living in the Mississippi Valley were French farmers who chose to live there due to the fertile ground which was created as a result on constant flooding. Everything to the south became a sort of "bread basket" for the French – New Orleans, etc.

Laclède and Chouteau were successful in starting their fur trade. The Osage tribe of Indians and the women prepared deer hides which were the cash crop marketed throughout Europe. They made leather gloves, trousers for hunting, leather-bound books, etc. which fueled the fortune of St. Louis. Great economic opportunity brought folks from Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland but the village remained predominantly French. Eventually, however, the French Government had to give up their possessions because they lost the French and Indian War - just before St. Louis was established in 1764.

The West side of Louisiana was deeded to the Spanish King by the French in 1762. There was also a large population of slaves in the city, though some had been able to work enough hours to buy their freedom and purchase land. Some of them became wealthy and created a "Colored Aristocracy." One of those was Pelagie Rutgers, who eventually became one of the wealthiest women in St. Louis.

The invention of the steamboat in 1817 revolutionized travel on inland waterways and changed St. Louis forever, equalizing travel time to New Orleans.

The Oldest part of St. Louis was torn down to build

the arch. Planning for the arch began in 1930's with the goals of putting people back to work, cleaning up a blighted neighborhood, and bringing tourists to the city. Moore showed a picture of a typical



*Typical French House*

French house which was built with vertical logs and held together by mud, with wide porches on the outside. In 1820, St. Louis was still a blending of American and French cultures. There were two-wheeled carts. Laundry was typically washed outside at the mill pond southwest of the village. There was a large Roman Catholic population where it was mandated that Catholic Priests were paid by the state and no collections were taken. When one priest did take collections, he got in trouble for it. The French language was used in town and church records until the mid-1830's.

St. Louis originally had a public square fronting the river. There weren't many public buildings except the church until the Americans came and began building taverns, etc. The French had religious holidays and ecclesiastical calendars while the Americans brought secular holidays – especially the 4th of July.

A young woman named Anna Maria Von Phul drew many watercolor images from 1817 – 1820 while visiting her brother in St. Louis. These revealed a good deal about French life during the times. The painting is of a young Creole man with a beaver hat (taken from Wikipedia). Eventually, the Americans began to outnumber the French. After the Americans came, the French lost a lot of their rights. The fur trade began to change as the beaver trade increased. Beavers began to be trapped for hats and fur. The French had relied on the Natives (Osage) and there was intermarriage, as well. The Americans didn't want to interact with the Indians and had forced them out by 1825. The Osage gave up many of their native lands.

Rendezvous systems came into being with Rocky Mountain Men who also didn't want to interact with the Natives. Between the 1830's-1840's, a caravan to the Platte River rendezvoused with mountain trappers headed to the Oregon Trail. The Santa Fe Trail had been opened in 1821. The Mexicans won their freedom from the Spanish and the fur trade began with Mexico, St. Fe being a part of Mexico at the time.



*Pierre Laclède Liguist*



Joseph Charless started the first newspaper. Street names began to be changed in 1804. Prior to that all street names were either French or named after Indian tribes. But then they began to be changed to American names. Many settlers came from Philadelphia and as improvements began to be made, the street names were also changed, often copying names from that city. Early on the city was spread out, and there was a lot of land with each house. However, the Americans eventually passed a law that owners had to pay for paving the roads in front of their homes and some folks began to sell their lands and build their houses closer together. August Chouteau, one of the city's co-founders had one of the largest homes, with a large wall around it with holes for rifles.



*August Chouteau Mansion*

French houses began to be replaced by brick federal style houses in the Eastern United States style and eventually Philadelphia row houses were re-created. Many of these were on the grounds that would be occupied by the Arch when it was built. St. Louis' first physician was a Frenchman named Antoine Saugrain who had a large home with extensive gardens with medicinal herbs which he used in his medical practice. These gardens eventually were a part of what inspired Henry Shaw, the founder of the St. Louis Botanical Gardens.

Buying and selling of goods originally took place in the Market building downtown until folks finally began to spread out beyond that building to sell their wares. In 1820 the only church in town other than the Roman Catholic churches was a brick Baptist church. Eventually a public square was created downtown with the old Court House and a county jail behind it.

Thomas Hart Benton became Missouri's first Senator. His daughter Jessie married John C. Fremont, who led several expeditions into the western territories, following on the Lewis and Clark expedition. William Clark was eventually appointed as US Agent for Indian Affairs and established his headquarters in St. Louis. He established a trading post which had a stable for horses with a blacksmith,

a gun shop and a store where folks could trade. It was all built with government money as it was an official government agency. Eventually a museum was also created as an extension of his home – one of the first in the nation - established with items given to Clark by various Indians with whom he had made treaties or had other interactions as Indian agent.

After the Civil War St. Louis began to grow upward. The Mississippi is wild and unpredictable even today. Early on there was no protection. The river district was on a steep hill. The Americans quarried it away and built levees to accommodate the river boats to load and unload, using slanted pavers. Over the years there were major floods, however – 1844, 1927, and 1993 among others.

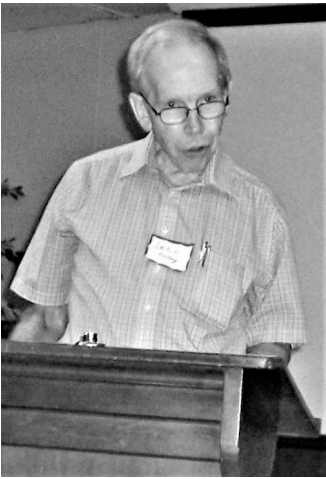
There is also some indication that free persons of color may have, in fact, owned slaves themselves. In 1853 the Legislature passed a law that freed persons of color could not hold slaves. In fact, there were many rules re: free persons of color. In 1860 there were between 77-100,000 people with 2500 slaves and 1700 free persons of color. In 1847 a law was passed making it illegal to educate persons of color and anyone who was providing such educations could be prosecuted. Nevertheless, between 1850 and 1860 at least ½ of the children of color were attending school!

As St. Louis was the Gateway to the West, a lot of people going west came through the city because it was easier to travel on the river. You could put your wagon on a riverboat and carry it out to the edge of the frontier. St. Louis was the last big city on your way west and supplies were cheaper here. Eventually, you could travel all the way to Fort Benton, Montana on the Missouri River.

Dr. Moore ended with a description of the well-known Dred Scott case which took place in St. Louis and was one of the deciding factors leading to the Civil War. Among the questions addressed in the case was whether the “once free, always free” status of slaves who were taken by their owners to free states could actually be upheld, as well as whether an African American could gain status in the United States as a citizen. After more than ten years of long, involved court cases, Dred and Harriet Scott were finally purchased once again by the Blow family who had originally owned them, and then set free, eighteen months prior to Dred Scott's death.

Following Dr. Moore's presentation, John Finley read the paper, “Missouri Methodism and the Opening of the West,” prepared by Dr. John Gooch, one of the organizers of our annual meeting. Unfortunately, Dr. Gooch was in the hospital at the time. In 1800 Missouri was not yet a part of the US. It was basically Spanish

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*John Finley*

Territory, though it changed hands between the French and Spanish several times. The Mississippi River was a highway to Europe through New Orleans, and thus it was important to the new President, Thomas Jefferson, to keep the port open. The Spanish, however, closed New Orleans to goods from the United States, seemingly on a whim. President Jefferson then sent a delegation to Paris to negotiate the

purchase of the Louisiana Territory to the United States, and Napoleon agreed to sell for \$15,000.

According to Methodist legend, there was Methodist preaching in Louisiana during the days that the Spanish occupied the land, even though it was forbidden by law. It was Roman Catholic territory, and Protestants were forbidden to preach or hold services. Supposedly, Zenon Trudeau, vice-governor of Louisiana at the time, turned his back when John Clark came across the river and preached along Coldwater Creek (in modern St. Louis County). It was said that Trudeau wanted settlers from the United States and thus was willing to tolerate Protestants if that is what it took. There is no documentary evidence for Clark's preaching, and no Methodist classes seem to have survived if that were the case.

In the spring of 1804 Captain Amos Stoddard of the US Army took possession of Upper Louisiana. Right after that Captain Merriweather Lewis left for his famous expedition to the West, and the size of the United States doubled. The following year, at the meeting of the Western Conference, Bishop Asbury appointed Joseph Oglesby to Illinois. Although it was a large circuit in itself, Asbury suggested that Oglesby might travel down into Missouri territory, as well. He traveled up the Missouri River as far as the Femme Osage and the home of Daniel Boone. Although Boone had no interest in becoming a Methodist, his daughter, Jemima and her husband, Flanders Calloway, did so, as did most of Boone's children. Oglesby reported back to the conference that there were 200 prospects for Methodists in Missouri – that is, there were about 200 English-speaking people in the area at the time and Oglesby apparently believed that all of them had the potential to become Methodists!

In 1806 John Travis was then appointed to Missouri, just about the time that Lewis and Clark were returning to St. Louis with their enthusiastic reporting about the wonders of the American West.

Many would have been attracted by the prospect of rich farmland and other opportunities to make money in that "raw land." At about the same time, the Second Great awakening was taking place in the East, having started in 1790 with Timothy Dwight leading a revival at Yale University. This coincided with a period of great population growth over the United States, with immigrants from Europe moving in large numbers to the western frontiers and the promise of land.

The Methodists and the Baptists particularly benefited from both the revival and the migration, due to the freedom of the clergy to move where people were going. Their theology was compatible with the Revival, as well, with its emphasis on personal salvation. Both groups also believed that salvation included life in this world and put strong emphasis on both personal morality and the reform of society. Movements such as abolition and temperance came out of this revival. It was within this context that Methodist work in Missouri began.

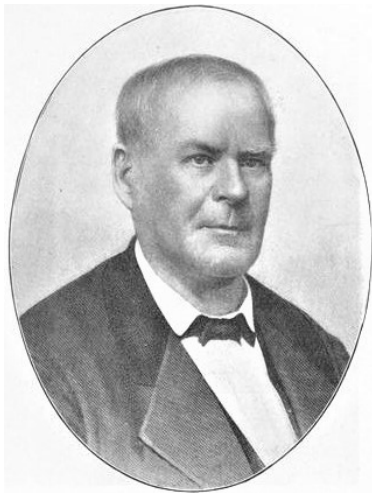
Elmer T. Clark has said about circuit riders that they 1) were primarily evangelists, taking seriously Wesley's dictum: "you have nothing to do but save souls." 2) spoke the definite and concrete language of the people; 3) gave up their own lives and desires to lead a normal life; 4) were responsible for building up holiness; 5) were careful about instructing the children; and 6) insisted on strict morality. The circuit riders transformed the American frontier with their emphasis on social justice as well as personal holiness, lifting up both slavery and temperance.

John Travis was a great example of such a circuit rider. He established two circuits – one along the Missouri River and one along the Meramec River. On the Missouri Circuit he organized the first camp meeting west of the Mississippi along with Bishop McKendree, where the first communion service in Missouri was conducted by the Bishop, using corn bread and polk juice. Although this did not violate anything in the Discipline, polk juice is mildly toxic – though there were no known fatalities coming out of the meeting despite the fact that the Presiding Elder tried to poison them!

In 1807 Manuel Lisa led a group up the Missouri as far as the Yellowstone River in a commercial fur-trading expedition, which was key to the economy of the area for more than 100 years. St. Louis had started as a fur-trading outpost and remained the center of the trade. Lisa's company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company founded by William Ashley in 1822, developed the famous rendezvous system for annual meetings in the Rockies with white and native trappers. This produced a ¼ of a million dollars from 1822-1826.

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Rev. David R. McAnally

St. Louis was at the junction of the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio rivers and the natural early center for westward expansion, as well as the center of both the fur trade and the growing commerce from the river trade. Both trappers and river men were hard-boiled and often ready for a fight and were described as “uncouth savages” by one eastern newspaper. David R. McAnally, a leading Methodist minister and the editor of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*, once wrote, “there was so much dissipation and so much of infidelity of various shades; so much wickedness and crime of every kind, so many duels and murders, and so little piety, that he was often made to exclaim, ‘Lord who is sufficient for these things?’” Although the circuit riders saw it as a part of their calling to raise the level of morality in society, they often avoided St. Louis until after 1821, thinking that God had created the countryside, but the devil made the cities.

The area was growing so fast that simply the number of wagons, cattle and horses was enough to cause commotion. In 1804 the population of Missouri was around 10,000. By 1810 it had grown to 20,000 and by 1820 there were 60,000 people in the area. The majority came from Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Virginia and were attracted by the rich farmlands at reasonably low prices, located along the rivers, making it easier to ship their produce. It was also important to them that slavery was not forbidden there as it had been in the old Northwest (north of the Ohio River).

There were two events in 1811 that had a profound impact on both Missouri and Methodism. The first was the appearance of the first steamboat on the Ohio River. Since they could travel against the current, it made trade between St. Louis and New Orleans faster and more economical. And they were also able to transport settlers traveling westward up the Missouri as far as the Yellowstone and eventually even further. The circuit riders either followed the settlers – or moved westward ahead of them.

The second event was the great earthquake on December 16, 1811, when the New Madrid fault slipped. The fault itself was about a mile deep, buried under that much of the Mississippi delta in southeast Missouri. Buildings shifted from their foundations and many were destroyed. Giant crevices appeared and many swore that the motion of the earth caused the Mississippi to flow backward. The crevices allowed volumes of gases from the decay of organic matter to escape and caused a terrible stench to fill the air. Many steeped in revival language believed that this was a sign of hell and a warning to repent. The aftershocks continued for months; as they came during the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, many saw these as signs of the coming of the end of the world and acted accordingly.

As a result, many circuit riders seized onto the “end of the world” warnings as an incentive for repentance and revival and saw great growth in their numbers. The New Madrid circuit had been founded in 1810 with 30 members but had 165 members by the end of 1813. Cape Girardeau increased from 76 to 138 members and Meramec from 147 to 352. Dwight Culmer, a distinguished Missouri historian, argued that the sudden growth was due to the earthquake and when everything settled down again, so did the surge in religion. However, the General Minutes show only a relatively small drop in membership and some of this could easily have had to do with the mobility of the times with people moving further west into the frontier.

The General Conference of 1816 organized the Missouri Conference which, besides Missouri, included Illinois, part of Indiana and all of Arkansas. There was no boundary designated to the west, which may have led to the tradition that the western boundary was “the farthest cabin to the setting sun.” Certainly, this was the case for the circuit riders who continued to move westward. William Stevenson was an extreme example, appointed to the Hot Springs, Arkansas Circuit and told not to go south of there. So, instead, he moved into Texas, preaching the first Methodist sermon there, while it was still Spanish territory and Protestant preaching was forbidden. He later preached the first sermon in what is now modern-day Oklahoma and eventually organized a four-point charge in Louisiana.

At the time of its organization, the Missouri Circuit had seven circuits with 949 members. Missouri was a district with Jesse Walker as the Presiding Elder and only eight preachers for the entire state of Missouri plus Arkansas. There were never enough preachers in the early days. Calls frequently went out to the East for further help and many preachers responded. Some of the most prominent names among the Missouri clergy were those who answered the call from the East.

The need was great as wagons continued to pour into and through Missouri. Some stayed in the state, but many just passed through. All the great trails west – Oregon, California, and Santa Fe – began in Missouri. At first, it was St. Louis as, “the Gateway to the West,” but eventually that moved to Franklin, to Independence, and to Kansas City, all along the Missouri River. Methodism followed and established the church in many locations.

According to Dr. Frank Tucker, after 1816, Missouri Methodism began to take on the form of a church and not just an evangelistic movement. This seems an impossible task with only eight preachers; so, much of the work must have fallen on the shoulders of retired elders and/or local pastors who were present in the community and could help with the daily tasks of becoming a community. Tucker identifies five elements of becoming a church rather than a movement: 1) social concerns; 2) missions beyond the conference; 3) education; 4) the beginnings of Sunday Schools; and 5) the first indications of responsibility to the communities in which the church lived.

The Great Awakening had awakened an awareness of the evils in society as well as individuals. The two most common were slavery and temperance. Abolitionism could be seen as a child of the revival. Missions beyond the conference focused first on native nations living in Kansas and Oklahoma. Education was a desperate need. The Conference chartered St. Charles College in 1836 – a story that has yet to be told. The beginning of Sunday Schools suggests an awareness of the need for both literacy and education in discipleship for children. Sarah Barton Murphy had a Sunday School in existence in southeast Missouri as early as 1805 which could have served as a model for other congregations. Methodism was becoming settled into respectability and becoming an important part of the life of the towns where churches were located.

Missouri actually held a Methodist Conference before it had even become a state. The first conference was in 1819 in McKendree Chapel, near Cape Girardeau. At the time, statehood was the issue on everyone’s mind. Their biggest concern, however, was whether slavery would be legal if Missouri became a full state. A significant part of the population was from the northern states who wanted to see slavery outlawed. National population growth favored northern and free states in the House of Representatives, while it was important to both northerners and southerners that the representation of free and slave states continue to be equal in the Senate. This delayed Missouri’s entrance into the Union for several years.

This was also the first social issue to face Missouri Methodism. Debates raged across the state with various suggestions as to how to handle the issue from full rights to slavery, a plan for gradual emancipation of slaves, a plan for freeing them and sending them to Africa, to abolition. It was not until Maine separated from New Hampshire and petitioned to join the union as a free state that the two applications matched, and both became states. As a result of the Missouri Compromise, slavery was outlawed in the territories of the Louisiana Purchase north of the southern border of Missouri, with the sole exception of Missouri. Methodists found themselves on all sides of the slavery/statehood debate and never did speak with one clear voice.

One other non-church event in 1821 also changed the pattern of western expansion. William Becknell opened a trade route between Missouri and Santa Fe, which was then in Mexican territory. Trade with Santa Fe was another great economic boon for Missouri and opened another door to the West. The key event of 1821 for Methodism was the establishment of Methodism in the city of St. Louis, which had been a Roman Catholic town from the time of its founding in 1764 and still is today in many ways. The only other church in town in 1818 was a Baptist Church.

The annual conference of 1819 appointed Jesse Walker as “missionary-at-large” for the conference – with no specific charge and no financial support. He was to select his own field of labor and decided on St. Louis. He knew that John Scripps had done some preaching there and how difficult it was to even secure regular Protestant preaching. On the other hand, he was also aware that St. Louis was a thriving city and Missouri on its way to statehood. At first, he was laughed at and insulted, mostly by the rougher crowd. He surveyed the town and secured a temporary meeting place at the Baptist church, rented a house, and set up a school to teach reading and spelling. He kept Sabbath meetings and evening prayer meetings and spread the word by making pastoral visits to both homes and businesses.

By the time of annual conference in 1820 there was a small chapel at the corner of Spruce and Third, completely paid for, with a regular attendance of 70 members. The following year, when Missouri became a state, Walker added 87 new members to the church. In October 1822, the Missouri Annual Conference met for the first time in St. Louis.

Now it’s time to look at native nations in Kansas in more detail. It is one of the sadder parts of our nation’s history that indigenous nations were either forced

*cont. page 9*



westward by the pressure of whites seeking land or were forcibly removed. Missouri Methodists began working among the Indians in 1830. Daniel Morgan Boone, who was apparently a Methodist himself, wrote to his brother-in law who was a Methodist preacher, that he had been appointed to teach the Indians how to farm. The Kaw nation, with whom he had been working had Federal money to start schools, and he wanted the Methodists to get that money and start a mission. A Shawnee chief named Fish was also asking for a mission and a school.



*Rev. Thomas Johnson*

Methodists seldom ignore such an invitation, and the annual conference of 1830 organized a Conference Missionary Society and assigned missionaries to Kansas. Thomas Johnson was assigned to the Shawnee Mission and his brother William to the Kaw Mission, which in 1830 were "foreign missions" since Kansas was not yet even a territory, though it was a part of the Louisiana Purchase.

In 1831 Arkansas was still a part of the Missouri Conference. Arkansas Methodists re-established missions in modern Oklahoma among the Creek and Cherokee nations, which had been disrupted when those nations were forcibly moved to Oklahoma, along the Trail of Tears. Although a Presbyterian had been working among them, they wanted a Methodist. A school was opened in Fort Smith, Arkansas and preaching was carried on in the territory. This mission was not so much about converting the natives but finding and bringing those who were already Methodists back into the community.

The 1832 General Conference changed the boundaries of the Missouri Conference to include the Indian Missions in a separate district. There were schools and/or missions to the Shawnee, Kaw, Peoria, Delaware, and Kickapoo nations, plus the Manual Training School. The 1844 General Conference organized the Indian Mission Conference, which immediately affiliated with the M.E. Church, South.

Following lunch, we were blessed with a visit from Circuit Rider, Jacob Lanus, aka the Rev. Cleo Kottwitz. Br. Lanus began by explaining that we didn't have places like this church when I was an active circuit rider. I was born in Virginia on January 9, 1814, the oldest of 14 children – only six of whom survived. My family eventually ended up in Potosi, MO. My father was a saddler. Our parents didn't have much religion,

but our mother did teach us to pray, "Now I lay me down to sleep." For a long time, I kept my praying secret. In 1825, however, I visited a Sabbath School and they were very welcoming. The preacher came to visit my family and this Sabbath School became my second family. Eventually, I was baptized and joined the church. Don't ever underestimate the influence of the Sunday School.

My teen-age years were a struggle because around 1831 I began to struggle with a call to preach. I felt unworthy and said, "Anybody, Lord, but me." I couldn't eat or sleep. One day the area circuit rider came by and he wanted me to preach at the local camp meeting. He even gave me the text to use, and I did preach. And then the next day, I preached on my own, using the text, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

At the Annual Conference, October 1831, I received on trial and given an appointment with Brother Leach on the Bowling Green circuit. That year there was a great revival on Indian Creek. The Lord worked an amazing transformation and the whole community came alive.

In 1832 Annual Conference met in Cooper County, and I helped at two camp meetings along the way. These camp meetings were wonderful. They brought healing, salvation, weeping and prayer along with forgiveness and new life. Most of the time the preachers were preaching all along the way to annual conference. I was appointed to ride the St. Charles Circuit with Br. John C. Berryman, who was the holiest man I ever knew. That year they had had a terrible outbreak of cholera and lost over 100 people. Three camp meetings were held. At Danville 51 people embraced religion. Three years later the Danville Female Academy was organized. I was very disappointed that the annual conference did not embrace the academy. The chapel building still stands today and really should be a United Methodist Historic Site.



*Circuit Rider Jacob Lanus  
aka Rev. Cleo Kottwitz*



*Portrait of Jacob Lanus  
from Find-a-Grave website*

At the Annual Conference, 1833, I completed my two years on trial and was ordained deacon; at the age of 19 I was appointed to ride alone on the Paris circuit. I had more than 20 preaching places, mostly in homes of Methodist families. I remember the first night with the Boggs family; Mrs. Boggs was very ill, but they welcomed me anyway. And so, it was night after night with other families; I had no dwelling place of my own.

I kept a journal during those years. On February 11, 1834, I rode 30 miles and preached at Florida school; the next day I returned to Father Threshers and had a bigger crowd than ever before. I wrote about riding through the rain, getting stuck in the mud and getting very wet. That time I was confined for a week.

Sometimes nothing spectacular at all happened. At other times, people were really moved. Although there was cooperation between the various churches and denominations, there were also often debates about baptism, pre-determination, etc. We didn't always agree but we did support each other – the Presbyterians, Campbellites and Baptists. Some of the preaching places included people of color, a new experience for me. I realized that nothing much was being done for the salvation of the slaves, and I determined to minister to them and provide for the salvation of their souls. I added a preaching place to my circuit.



*Nancy Tong Lanus  
from Find-a-Grave website*

In 1835 I was ordained an elder at the age of 21. I did not preach along the way to annual conference as my mother died. The following year my father died, and I took a leave until someone could be found to take care of my brothers and sisters. The next year I preached 245 times and received 201 persons. Young

preachers began to be assigned to me. In 1838 I did not attend annual conference as I was sick in bed. Nevertheless, I was appointed Presiding Elder of the Springfield District at the age of 24. It was a huge task as it was ¼ of the whole state! There was wonderful Indian missionary work, and I got to know and love them.

In the spring of 1839, after I had completed my third quarterly circuit, I went home to Potosi and on July 23 in Fredericktown, I was married to Nancy Tong. The next two years I served as Presiding Elder of the Cape Girardeau District. At Annual Conference 1841 I was appointed to the Palmyra Station in north MO, a most difficult move with a 16-month-old and a 4-month old baby. Unfortunately, the younger child died at 11 months.

My final appointments were two different appointments as Presiding Elder – one on the Fayette District. I was also elected as delegate to General Conference. However, I became ill and before I could attend the General Conference, I died at the age of 37. Most of my ministry was focused on preaching though we Methodists were already a mission minded people: we were leaders in education and overcoming alcohol abuse; we had wonderful Indian Missionary work, especially with the Shawnees around Kansas City, and had a growing opposition to slavery.

As I leave you, I challenge you all to share your faith so that everyone can have “new life in Christ” and you can spread scriptural holiness across the land.

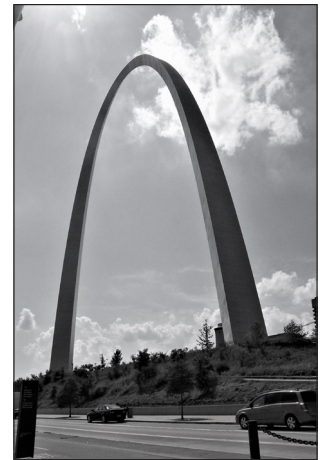
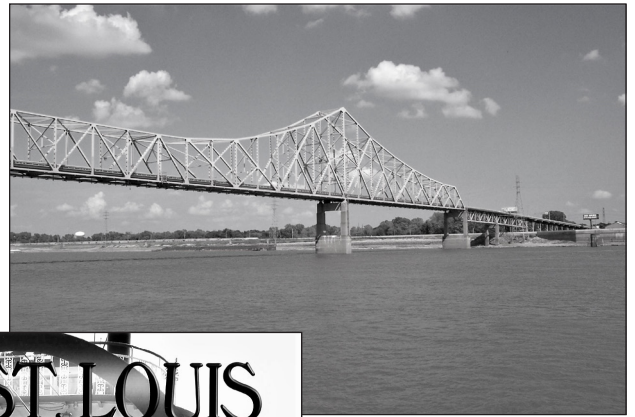
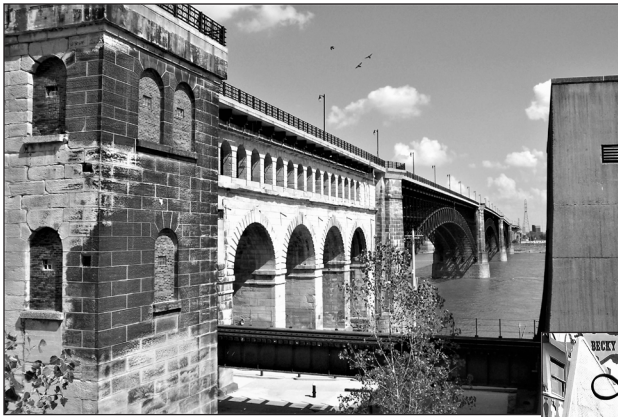


Following this presentation, the group made its way down to the city center to visit the Gateway Arch National Park. Several took a steamboat excursion on the “Tom Sawyer,” rode to the top of the Arch and then visited the museum. After spending the afternoon sightseeing, we shared a meal together before returning to our various places of abode. Except for the center photo in the following page which was taken on the steamboat, the picture of the Lewis and Clark sculpture by Larry Hayden, and the group photo on the boat by Ivan Corbin, the photos were taken by your editor.

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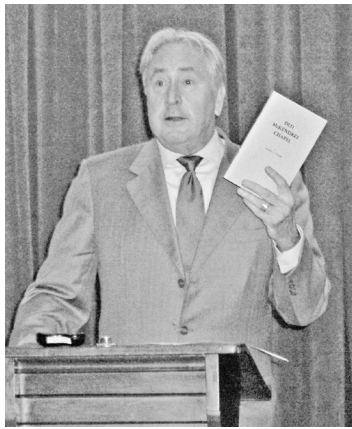






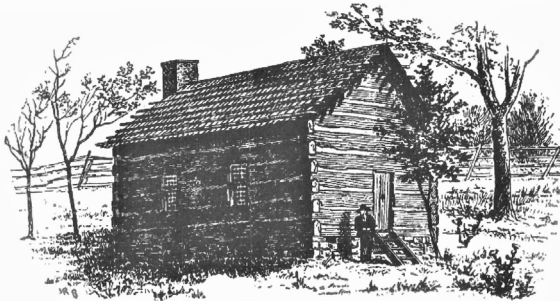


Friday morning opened with devotions led by the Rev. Sarah Mount Elewononi, the Secretary of the Historical Society. Following devotions, John Finley introduced the Hon. Stephen Limbaugh, a federal judge and a Trustee of Old McKendree Chapel, who made a presentation on Old McKendree Church and the 1st Annual Conference in Missouri.



*Hon. Stephen Limbaugh*

Built in 1819, McKendree Chapel is the oldest Methodist Church west of the Mississippi. and the oldest Protestant Church still standing west of the Mississippi. It is located 8 miles northwest of Cape Girardeau, Missouri and three miles east of downtown Jackson, Missouri. Dr. Frank Tucker wrote a history of the chapel in 1959. He says in the Foreword, "When it was built it stood upon the edge of civilization. It was the frequent assembly point of Methodist Circuit riders from which they pushed out in their assault upon the vast unsettled and unknown Western Country. By the time McKendree Chapel had reached its fiftieth years, it had become a country church in the center of a continent which had been covered by the westward sweeping tide of humanity, so swiftly did the tide run. Relatively few buildings of any character have survived from that era of remarkable expansion and truly heroic effort."



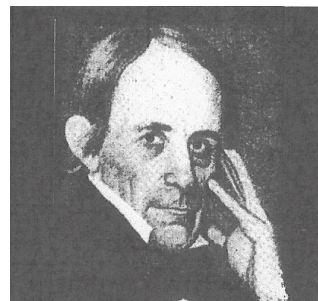
*Old McKendree Chapel\**

From the 25 years from 1819-1844 it was in its heyday with a lot of camp meetings being held there. Annual Conference met there in 1819 (first annual conference in Missouri), 1821, 1826 and 1831 and it was the epicenter of Methodism until the split over slavery in 1845. It was one of only a handful of churches in the area that went with the North. There were always 60-80 members in attendance until the Civil War when the membership began to dwindle, and in the late 1880s, the Chapel finally closed to regular services. For many of the years until the closure the Chapel was also used as a schoolhouse. After 1890, the Chapel was used from time to time for baptisms, weddings, church picnics and the like.

Then in September 1910, the St. Louis Conference of the MEC,S held its Annual Conference at Old McKendree. In 1916 the annual conference came back again to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the organization of the Missouri Conference. However, Dr. Tucker states, "These and other special services did not protect the Chapel from the effects of both the weather and neglect. Weeds and brushy undergrowth took over the Church Yard, while birds and squirrels took over the Chapel. Windowpanes were broken, allowing the beating rains to fall upon pews and floor. The roof turned very little of the rains and snows. The venerable old Chapel became an abandoned holy place."

Funds then were raised for the restoration of the chapel. In 1933, 2000 people came for the rededication from both the MEC and the MEC,S. By then, as a gesture of goodwill, the MEC had deeded a ½ interest in the Chapel to the MEC,S. Since 1933, annual services have been held there every year with the exception of a couple of years during WWII. Eventually, a metal roof was added to protect the original building. None of the furnishings are original, but the original huge poplar logs still form the superstructure. Weatherboards which had been placed over the original logs were removed in 1976. The Chapel grounds are now is comprised of 15 acres including a cemetery. Consultants have been hired who have developed plans for use of the entire 15 acres, including a Visitors Center, etc. The Bicentennial Celebration which is upcoming in the next week will include a kickoff for a 1 ½ million-dollar fundraising effort to complete the entire project.

In 1806 the Rev. John Travis organized the first two circuits in Missouri – the Missouri in the north and the Meramec in the south, and both circuits included white and colored persons. Between 1806 and 1821 the population grew from 20,000 to 66,000 and by statehood in 1821, 15.3% were enslaved. The Rev. Samuel Parker established the Cape Girardeau circuit in 1809, and he held camp meetings on a 2-acre site on the William Williams farm where McKendree Chapel would later be built.



*The Rev. John Scripps\**

Also, in 1809, John Scripps and his extended family moved to Cape Girardeau where he established a tannery. Under the influence of Parker and another circuit rider, Jesse Walker, Scripps was moved to enter the Methodist ministry. The following year Scripps went with Walker to New Madrid, where he had a part in founding a Methodist class in town, now the oldest Methodist congregation west of the Mississippi with a continuous existence.

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As the first circuit rider from Cape Girardeau, Scripps served as Secretary of the Missouri Conference for fifteen years and is probably best remembered for his reminiscences of early Methodists and churches, published in the *Western Christian Advocate* during 1842-43. He was a prolific writer and all of the historians writing about early Missouri Methodism rely on Scripps' articles.

The circuits were enormous at the time and took about six weeks to complete. The first annual conference in Missouri was held in 1819. Circuit riders came to McKendree from Central Illinois, northern Arkansas, Indiana, and from far up the Missouri River, covering a 500-mile radius. The Conference was presided over by Bishop Enoch George. A year before, in 1818, Bishop William McKendree held a camp meeting at the William Williams' farm, and it was his presence there that gave the impetus for the construction of the Chapel.

A newspaper article dated Dec. 1, 1819 described the attempt to hold a camp meeting in Cape Girardeau, Missouri Territory, the previous September that was broken up when a bunch of slaveholders invaded the meeting and drove out the preachers who were abolitionists or at least preaching against slavery. This was about the same time as the first annual conference. Some Methodists did own slaves at the time, but at most only a few. In fact, George Scripps, John Scripps' brother, who was running the tannery, owned six slaves. In 1824 John Scripps located in Jackson, MO, married and opened a general store. He ministered to local Methodist classes until his children were old enough to understand slavery, then moved to Rushville, IL in 1831. He died in 1868. His extended family also settled in Rushville, and his nephews founded the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Detroit Free Press*, *United Press International* and *Scripps Howard News Service*.

Methodist camp meetings in Missouri were every bit as wonderful and exciting as those in the

East. William Ranney in his "Reminiscences," says, "I attended camp meeting [at McKendree] between 1835 and 1840. McKendree Chapel was ... a place of great resort during camp meeting time. The whole country attended camp meeting there, and the young people would go there for a frolic. The Methodists would go there and camp in tents and stay on the ground during the whole meeting. Some built little huts. Sometimes five or six hundred people were there. The camp meeting would last for a week." Interestingly, Dr. Tucker also reports incidents of local ruffians riding through the camp meetings, often under the influence of "liquid spirits."

McKendree was a microcosm of what happened in the Methodist Episcopal Church over the slavery issue. McKendree split, with the majority going to the South, but many of the members stayed with the North. In 1845, the Missouri Conference voted 86-14 to go with the MEC,S, but the preacher at Old McKendree, Rev. Nelson Henry, was one of the 14 votes to stay North. Rev. Henry had married the daughter of a local judge, John D. Cook, and had local ties of kinship. He was an abolitionist, and his influence was strong enough to carry McKendree Chapel for the North. Although MEC,S was dominant in the area after the split, McKendree Chapel remained loyal to the North.

*(Pictures marked with a \* were taken from Stephen Limbaugh's powerpoint slides).*

Following a short break, John introduced Elizabeth Terry, the archivist for Salem in Ladue UMC, who made a presentation entitled, "Missouri, the Mother of Conferences." Methodism flourished in Missouri because Methodists thought they could; they were intentional. The first Methodist preached in Missouri in 1798. In 1805 Joseph Oglesby came to Missouri and in 1815 the Missouri Conference was created including Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Indiana was the only state. There was no western boundary.



*Elizabeth Terry*



*Old McKendree Chapel today  
(photo by Larry Hayden)*

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An elevation map of the time showed mountains, brush thickets, rivers and more – all of which the circuit riders had to deal with. The land wasn't cleared, there were no highways, there were insects to deal with along with wondering where they would get their next meal. The "last cabin toward the setting sun," became the western boundary.

Lewis and Clark put St. Louis on the map by mapping the Missouri River. Now printed material legitimized the area. When the circuit riders began to spread through the area, they had to locate the people. There were several Germans in the area at time who wrote a book in German about how wonderful Missouri was, and then took the book back to Germany for the folks there to read in order to attract them to come to America.

The circuit riders got out there and dealt with whatever they needed to in order to reach the people, including dealing with the native Indians. In 1826 Daniel Morgan Boone, the son of Daniel Boone was hired by the government to teach farming to the Indians. He then began to encourage Methodists to establish a mission with the Osage Indians who were sitting on a lot of money designated for educational purposes. In 1830, Jessie Green wanted the Missouri Conference "get in there and get that money for a mission to the Kansas Indians." In 1832 a school was started for displaced Delawarean Indians on the Missouri River. In 1838 the Missouri AC gave \$10,000 for that mission, and in 1844 the Indian Mission Conference was established. They were *intentional* about funding for Native Americans. This included Native tribes who had been displaced and who were also dealing with smallpox. There were also Plains Indians, some of whom were on their own territory. This mission work was the foundation of making Missouri the Mother of Conferences.

The circuit riders were at work in the countryside, finding people in rural areas, but what about folks in the towns and cities? Around 1820 there was a feeling that "God made the country; city people were not worthy." Nevertheless, St. Louis was a diverse city and a powerhouse of trade, importing and exporting goods to and from Europe and yet on the edge of the frontier. Jesse Walker was the first Methodist to approach St. Louis, and once the Methodists dared to face the devil in Missouri, they were intentional about ministering to folks in the city.

In the 1840's there was an upset in Ireland which led to many Irish immigrants coming to St. Louis because of their Catholic roots. Many other immigrants came to this country, as well, and many of them fled to St. Louis. Pleas were made to the Methodists to minister to these many immigrants – to be *intentional*. They were now city dwellers, esp. the St. Louis Germans. There had been an enormous influx of them, and

the city was bursting its seams. In the 1850's it was written that it was almost like being in Germany.

In 1847 Ludwig Jacoby took an abandoned Presbyterian church at the corner of Washington and 11th Street and established a German Methodist Episcopal church. They were really heckled, however, because the Methodists were preaching temperance while the German settlement was full of beer gardens which were places of fellowship for the immigrants, and they had established the Anheuser-Busch brewery as well. The Germans were also anti-slavery. In the 1880's they build a new building which became the Mother of churches in Missouri.

If you look at the list of the present-day United Methodist Conferences, 25 of those conferences grew out of Missouri – in Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and Yellowstone.



Dale Patterson  
(photo by Janet Mills)

Dale Patterson then gave a report on behalf of GCAH General Secretary, Fred Day, who was unable to be with us due to a special meeting of the General Secretaries which required his attendance. Dale reported that GCAH will be recommending the designation of four additional Heritage Landmarks to the 2020 General Conference: Christ Church, Hawaii – the first Korean Church in Hawaii; the Helenor Davisson Cluster in Indiana – sites related to the ordination of the first woman in the United Methodist tradition; the Lakeside Chautauqua site in Ohio, and Westmar College in Iowa – a merger in 1954 of the former United Brethren York College and United Evangelical Western Union/Westmar College.

Currently, GCAH staff are watching carefully petitions which are being submitted to General Conference and doing their best to stay on top of them. There are no plans at present, however, to respond to each one.

Dale then reported on the Transcription Project. On the 100-year anniversary of the Missionary Society, photographers were sent out to take pictures of mission projects outside of the United States – South America, Africa, Europe, Korea, etc., as well as to agencies inside the US – Board of Education for Negroes, Hospitals and Homes, Cities and Rural Areas, etc. This produced many, many photograph albums, illustrating the life of the church (buildings, schools, hospitals), the need to give (sickness, floods, etc.) health, and what

*cont. page 15*



life was like in general. It has been interesting to observe the wide-eyed excitement of people looking at the images for the first time, many of which capture a style of life that no longer exists. "We have homogenized it away."

There is now a need for persons to transcribe the notes and many have responded. For example, one person seems to do this every day, Monday-Friday, during her lunch hour. Others may pick areas that are of special interest to them. But there is something available for everyone who is interested, and you can do it on your own time. If anyone is interested in working on the transcription project, go to [catalog.gcah.org/transcribe](http://catalog.gcah.org/transcribe) to log in or sign up and Dale will finish the process of signing folks up.

There is currently a piece of legislation which will be brought forth to suggest that GCAH be merged with another agency where it would be illegal for agencies to send their records to GCAH any longer. GCAH will be watching this very carefully! Archives and records are important! We keep records from which comes history and accountability and responsibility!

Fred Day, our General Secretary, has announced his retirement as preferably no later than June 2020. He could stay later as it may be difficult to fill his position during this uncertain time for the denomination. The search committee has been formed and will be meeting during the week of September 23, during the annual GCAH meeting with the goal of releasing a notice for the position by the beginning of 2020.

GCAH will be meeting in Sandusky with Global Ministries at the Wyandott Mission. The MEC purchased a small piece of property in 1819 which the Church still owns, and which still houses the original school building. This property will be deeded back to the Wyandotts as a part of this meeting, celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the organization of the Missionary Society.

*We have also learned since the annual meeting that Dale will be resigning his position with GCAH as Archivist and Records Administrator as of December 31, 2019, after 26 years of service.*

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Following lunch, we moved upstairs to the chapel for our HSUMC annual meeting. The report from this meeting will be included in the Winter 2020 issue of Historian's Digest.

Following the close of the annual meeting, Vice-President Doug Tzan introduced Chief Janith English, who has been the Principal Chief of the Wyandott Indian Nation in Kansas for 24 years. Chief Janith is the 5th great-granddaughter of Wyandott Chief Tarhe, who was born in Wyandotte County, OH, just a few miles from the exact spot where the Wyandot people



*Chief Janith English*

arrived in 1843. She is married to a retired Methodist minister and they have three children. She has spent most of her professional life as a nurse, including Hospice nursing. Chief Janith made a presentation entitled, "Coming Full Circle."

380 years ago, in 1639, Fr. John De Brebeuf was one of the Jesuit missionaries who came to New France to establish St. Marie Among the Huron, the first Christian and Native community in our homeland on the North Shore of Lake Huron in Ontario, Canada. Fr. Brebeuf realized that the Wendat loved music and wrote a hymn in our language to teach us about the Nativity.

By 1649 disease and warfare for control of the fur trade escalated and approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of our people died as a result of disease to which we had no immunity and a level of warfare to which we had inadequate defense. Fr. Brebeuf was one of the 7 missionaries who suffered gruesome martyrdom at the hands of the enemy. Every Christmas Eve, he is remembered when "The Huron Carol" is sung in Wendat, French, and English. You might recognize the hymn as "'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime," #244 from the United Methodist Hymnal.

John Stewart understood the pain of disenfranchisement when he accepted the grace of Jesus. He answered the call to share the Gospel and joined the Wyandots of Upper Sandusky in 1816, where his ministry flourished. Three years later (1819) the Ohio Annual Conference approved a mission to the Wyandots, and the following year the General Conference received a request from the Wyandots that missionaries be sent to them. And the first missionary society of the MEC was established. In writing of this mission work, Fred Day, General Secretary of GCAH said,

*His passion and vision started a mission school in Upper Sandusky not FOR but WITH the Wyandot. This mission School was NOT the "kill the Indian save the man," type of schools Methodists and other churches were infamously and perilously party to 25 years later. The Wyandot Indian Mission School of*

*cont. page 16*

*John Stewart and those who followed in his footsteps was a school run by blacks, whites, and Indians side by side. In this school, (Indigenous) culture and identity would not be shamed but be a key in coming-together, established in the vision of a black man to have a school and a church together.*



JOHN STEWART — Missionary to the Wyandot Indians

*Rev. John Stewart*

John Stewart continued to work with the Wyandots until his death in 1823.

Twenty years later, in 1843, our families reluctantly became the last to leave Ohio. Many traveled by steamboat, leaving Cincinnati on July 12, 1843. The larger of the two boats, the Nodaway, made an unceremonious landing in Kansas Territory on July 31. Lucy Armstrong reported that all went well until the “first payments of fare had been made. The boat was nicely furnished, and the voyagers were well treated up to that point.” Then, however, the Captain became anxious, seemingly concerned that the Wyandots would ruin the furnishings, and he ripped up the carpets and put them away, put his patrons on short allowance and made them uncomfortable. But the worst was yet to come.

When they arrived at the intersection of the west line of the State of Missouri with the Missouri River, there was only one small house available and the captain was requested to allow his passengers to remain on the boat overnight. He refused, stating he needed to return that evening and turned the Wyandots out like sheep by a heartless shepherd. There was only a small spot that was treeless where everyone huddled together overnight, only to waken the following morning to find the boat still at the landing. After this, it was discovered that the transfer of promised lands from the Shawnee had been blocked, and the travelers were forced to find temporary shelter. Although about 100 died of disease and exposure the first year, they managed to build a church and by summer established the first free school in Kansas.

Just a year later, the Wyandots became enmeshed in the controversy regarding slavery, as a schism occurred between the Northern and Southern churches. As 1844 opened a period of controversy within the MEC, reverberations were felt among the missions to the Indigenous peoples, as well. General Conference had placed all mission work along the western border into a newly established Indian Mission Conference. The new conference held its first session in October of that year near Tahlequah with Bishop Morris presiding and they voted to adhere to the South if division came.

1848 brought changes of control in the Methodist Church that particularly affected the Wyandots. Their early missionary, John Stewart, had been a man of mixed race from the Ohio Conference from the North. Their present missionary, Rev. James Wheeler, was a free-state man and many Wyandots felt strongly about slavery. But, suddenly, they were under the control of the Southern Church.

That same year the records of the church were stolen, and at the end of the year Rev. James Gurley, a man of abolitionist tendencies, was sent by the Ohio Conference to preach to the Wyandots. He was soon expelled by the Indian sub-agent, however. The Bishops of the Northern Church objected strongly in Washington and that agent was removed; the Northern Church reorganized as an equal with other Christian groups. There was division in the local church, however, and both branches held services in separate buildings.

Along with the Wyandots, all who lived near the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers became enmeshed in the tension that aroused from fear of economic and social change, and eventually erupted in the violence of “Border Wars” between Kansas and Missouri. Both religious and culturally aligned groups and churches were split between anti-slavery and the “Free-State” movements. Cultures reliant upon an agricultural lifestyle which included economic dependence upon slavery collided with the interests of those aligned with the goals of increased industrial growth and Western expansion. In addition, a thirst for land for the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad arose. It was determined that, regardless of treaty covenants, the best way to obtain wide swaths of land for profitable western expansion was to somehow remove the physical and political footprint of First Nations People from Kansas.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 allowed folks in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery within their borders. By the early 1850’s settlers and entrepreneurs were wanting to move into the area now known as Nebraska, but until it was formally organized as a

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territory, they could not legally hold a claim to the land. Southern state Representatives in Congress were hesitant to permit such a territory because the land lay north of the 36 degree 30' parallel, where slavery had been outlawed by the 1820 Missouri Compromise. Senator Steven Douglas of Illinois, however, wanted Nebraska declared a territory and to win Southern support proposed Kansas as a Southern state inclined to support slavery.

Unrest eventually erupted into violence as both proponents for and against slavery met in Kansas. The MEC in Missouri was deeply divided over the question, and Methodists were particularly singled out due to their open pro-slavery stance. The Church in Missouri and Kansas was seen as a weapon of the antislavery movement. As "Bleeding Kansas" earned its name, the Methodist Church in Missouri became a target. Gary Roberts, author of *Massacre at Sand Creek*, wrote that on April 15, 1855, a mob gathered in Parkville, MO, across from Quindaro, to threaten Methodist ministers promoting abolition. *The Parkville Industrial Luminary's* editor, G. S. Park, had spoken out against a secret society whose purpose was to protect slavery in Missouri. Park was burned and his press dumped into the river. A report in the *New York Times* noted that no Methodist preacher should preach in the County upon pain of being tarred and feathered for the first offense and hanged for the second.

In April 1856 both the MEC North and the MEC,S churches on the Wyandot Reserve were burned to the ground within a 24-hour period, forcing the congregations to meet secretly in homes. Regional unrest continued to spread until War was eventually declared in April 1861, leading to the Civil War, the bloodiest four years in American history. When Kansas was finally admitted to the Union in 1861, escape attempts out of Missouri by way of Parkville and Quindaro, the first free port on the Missouri River and an important link in the Underground Railroad, increased.

"Ethnic conflict in Kansas City, Kansas dramatically escalated during the period of reconstruction and following the end of both World Wars I and II. The familiar process of diverse cultures rebuilding after crisis and conflict, each seeking to preserve their own cultural continuity, brought further disenfranchisement, chaos and violence to Indigenous people, African Americans, Catholics, Jews, and Immigrants.

"Wyandot men and women have risen to the challenge to advocate for justice and mercy through the Methodist Church, and we believe that our traditional cultural world view of interconnection and interdependence are harmonious with the teaching Jesus...

"In 1999 after 350 years of separation, the 4 Nations of our Wendat/Wyandot Confederacy from Quebec, Michigan, Kansas and Oklahoma met together in Midland, Ontario on the land from which we were dispersed in 1549. The Chiefs of the Wendat-Wyandot Nations stood together before the people of the Confederacy, on the Papal Field of Martyr's Shrine; and renewed our ancient bond. Like so many of you, your families, and your ancestors, we have chosen a path toward renewed strength, resiliency, and empathy in spite of centuries long patterns of dispersal and scattering."

Chief Janith ended with the familiar quote from Micah 6:8.

Following our evening banquet, we re-assembled



in the Chapel for the final event of the meeting – the presentation of the Ministry of Memory and Saddlebag Selection Awards. Doug Tzan, the Vice-President of the Society, spent a few minutes describing the Ministry of Memory Award which recognizes individuals who have done significant work in the area of archives and history at the local church, annual conference, or jurisdictional level. This year there were nine active nominations and Nell Thrift, from the Florida Annual Conference, was chosen as the 2019 Awardee. Nell has served as the archivist for the Florida Annual Conference since 1996, when the archives were kept in a closed church that served as both the Conference headquarters and the Lakeland District Office. Over the next ten years, she worked tirelessly to raise funds to design and build the McKay Archives Center which houses the Ruth K. and Charles T. Thrift, Jr. Florida United Methodist Heritage Center (named in memory of her parents). She is also well-known for her "red booklet," titled *Celebration*, a collection of ideas and strategies for celebrating special church anniversaries. The photo shows Nell being honored by Fred Day upon her retirement as archivist at the 2019 Florida AC.

Doug then introduced Board member, Linda Schramm, Chairperson of the Saddlebag Selection Committee, to make the 2019 Saddlebag Selection Award. The Saddlebag Selection is awarded annually for a book which is deemed by the committee to be the best book on United Methodist history or a related subject, published in the previous year. This year's award was given to Dr. Ashley Boggan Dreff for her publication, *Entangled: A History of American Methodism, Politics, and Sexuality*, published by New Room Books, Nashville, TN. Dr. Dreff is currently the Director of Women and Gender Studies, High Point University, having previously served as Director of United Methodist Studies at Hood Theological Seminary from August 2017-June 2019. Dr. Dreff received her PhD. from Drew University Theological School in American Religious History in 2017.



Linda Schramm presenting award to  
Dr. Ashley Boggan Dreff

Dr. Dreff then gave an overview of her book. She began by explaining that she had grown up with both of her parents serving as United Methodist pastors, in an environment where everyone was welcomed and affirmed. “It is only in graduate school that I learned how institutional United Methodism harms its LGBTQIA+ members and clergy. Upon this realization, what began as a crisis of faith led me on an academic journey to figure out how the American Methodist tradition has defined, limited, and broadened our constructions of human sexualities. Seven years later, we have at least a snippet of that journey in *Entangled*.

In her book, Dr. Dreff “contextualizes Methodist sexual narratives within changes in American constructs of sexuality across the twentieth century. It focuses on 5 aspects of sexuality: the right to access and use contraception, the right to divorce, the right to comprehensive sex education, the right to access abortion, and the rights of LGBTQIA+ persons. It is no secret that these topics have also been part and party to American politics, especially after the 1960s. Thus, the main argument of *Entangled* is that the Methodist sexual narrative not only parallels but employs the

political rhetoric of American politics, especially after rise of the New Christian Right, which I place in the mid-1960s...

“Up until the 1960s, the changes that Methodists made regarding sexuality only involved the rights of heterosexual married couples. The right to use birth control within marriage and the right to obtain a divorce when that marriage was no longer satisfactory or was harmful to one or both parties were accepted with relatively minimal conflict... Methodists realized that as society was changing, it had to change, too. It had to remain relevant to remain powerful.”

But, in the 1960's, “the birth control pill was released. Access to abortion was legalized on a state-by-state level. Colleges began to allow co-ed visitation after hours. And minority groups—African Americans, women, and LGBT communities—were beginning to stand up and demand equal treatment before the law. All of this threatened the power of one group—white, heterosexual, males. This group wanted to maintain their power but in order to do so they had to stop all of this change by convincing American people that the 1950s were better than the 1960s. Yes, the idea to make America great again has been the ideology of American, white, heterosexual, males for half of a century and it just so happens that the very thing that made America “great” in the 1950s were those same things that maintained the power of white, heterosexual, males.

This call to better times and to maintaining the power of a select group became the rallying cry of the New Christian Right which rose to power in 2 phases. The first was between 1940 and 1960 when evangelicals, primarily through the National Association of Evangelicals, began to align themselves with the Republican Party in order to fight the nation's number one enemy of the time-- communism. The second rise to power was after 1960 through roughly the early 2000s, and this is when the target changed from communism to secular humanism.”

Here Dreff defines secular humanism as, “the idea that we can have a values-system based not in theology but in humanity's innate ability to be moral, to know good from bad, and to act in moral ways. What worried 1960s evangelicals the most about secular humanism was its supposed invasion of the public schools.”

“In 1962 and 1963 two Supreme Court Decisions removed both prayer and scripture from public schools. And by 1964, comprehensive sex education was brought into the public school system. The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (or SIECUS) was the nation's first comprehensive sex education program with the goal of “giv[ing] students a scientifically accurate perspective on sex that avoided moralizing and

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helped students draw on their personal values to make informed choices about sexual behavior.” In the minds of evangelicals, religion was taken out of schools and sex was put in and thus religion had been replaced with sex not only in the public’s mind but now in the minds of children.” In fact, Dreff maintains that it was the introduction of comprehensive sex education into the public schools that both propelled forward the New Christian right as a political entity and began the intense division within American Methodism.

SIECUS was created in 1962 after the National Council of Churches and the Canadian Council of Churches hosted a conference on family life in rapid social change. “Here they developed an ethic for sex education, which promoted ‘authentic selfhood’ instead of scriptural commandments. Since social and sexual norms were challenged by the sexual revolution, the ‘churches needed to develop ways to talk about sex and sexual decision making that would empower youth and young adults—as well as their parents—to make choices that expressed their own moral commitments.’ The application of this new morality in sex education was the first time Methodists, and other Protestants, employed the radical, and quite controversial, ethic which proclaimed that the ‘only ethical norm that Christians should follow’ was ‘love.’ Methodists in attendance took the new morality and created Sex and the Whole Person, a sex education curriculum designed to provide persons with the information necessary to empower individuals with the ability to make their own moral and sexual decisions.

“In the mindset of American evangelicals—Methodist and non—this was the sign of America’s moral decline. But this was also the issue that they could use to build a new alliance with politicians to reassert their white, heterosexual, male interpretation of Christian morality.”

It was not much later, then, that Dreff sees the first inklings of division in American Methodism around sexuality when Dr. Charles Keysor published an article in 1966 in the *Christian Advocate* entitled, “Methodism’s Silent Minority,” which she feels, “single-handedly reignited the self-proclaimed evangelical flame in the new United Methodist Church.” The context of the article was the debate on sex education and the new morality (along with a host of other issues such as civil rights, women’s rights and a newly emerging gay rights movement.). Keysor maintains, however, that the world was setting the agenda for the church, rather than the other way around. “According to him, Methodism had compromised on social matters by supporting the

civil rights movement, the women’s rights movement, and the gay rights movement instead of focusing on converting souls. One of Keysor’s direct targets was the church-school curriculum which was no longer based in ‘orthodox’ Christian understandings,” including the new sex education curriculum. “Within a few years of writing this, Rev. Keysor had reinvigorated enough evangelical Methodists to begin a Good News Magazine by 1968 and an official caucus movement by 1970. Between 1970 and 1973, Good News articles primarily focused on critiques of United Methodist curriculum. After the 1972 General Conference, Good News Magazine would focus primarily on attacks against gay and lesbian persons and against abortion access. Thus, in order to uphold the power of the white, heterosexual, male, they would abandon their original call for spiritual renewal via curricular reform and focus instead on political and legislative action aimed at limiting the definition of condoned sexuality to one man and one woman.”

Dreff then stated that this brief look at Methodist history provided a few insights. 1) It shows a direct connection between the rise of American Methodist evangelicalism and the New Christian Right. 2) It shows that our intense disagreements over sexuality didn’t begin in 1972 nor with the rights of LGBTQIA+ United Methodists, but instead with sex education. 3) We’ve never agreed on sexuality. We made legislative adjustments up until the 1960s which allowed for the use of birth control and the right to a divorce but even these weren’t easy changes made without debate. Division and debate are part of our Methodist DNA. She then references the number of divisions within 19th century Methodism as well as the disagreements between John and Charles Wesley.

But she goes on to conclude that what is not part of our DNA is harm. In fact, not doing harm and seeking to actively do good are two of our three general rules. “As American Methodists we recognized harm being done to women who didn’t have control over their reproductive lives, who were enduring emotional, physical, economical, and psychological trauma because they didn’t have access to birth control. And we sought to relieve that harm by 1940. We recognized the harm between two persons in a marriage that just isn’t working anymore, and we sought to alleviate that harm by the mid-1950s. As Methodists we were willing to recognize harm for those heterosexual couples but what about the harm being done now?

In the 1960s, when sexuality began to encompass non-married and non-heterosexual persons,

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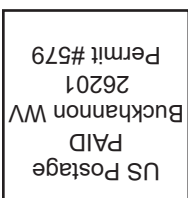
Methodists were less willing to recognize harm and, in fact, some Methodists were quite willing to institutionalize harm in 1972 and since. For almost fifty years, United Methodists have labeled LGBTQIA+ persons incompatible. We've banned them from full participation in the life and ministries of our churches. We've actively done harm.

Dreff ended by noting that a lot has changed since she finished writing her book. She merely hints at the rise of the Wesley Covenant Association and the Queer Clergy Caucus. The plans for the Commission on the Way Forward had not been released and the call for the special 2019 General Conference had not been issued. Nor had the Traditional Plan been passed. She concludes, however, "What we're witnessing now is United Methodism becoming untangled but not from politics, untangled from itself. And this might be the first crucial step in stopping some of the harm that our entanglement with American politics has created."

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**Note from your editor:** I highly recommend this book to all of our readers because it brings a broader understanding to the issues which currently face the United Methodist Church which could be useful in helping us to find another way forward.

In addition, I am announcing my resignation as the Editor of *Historian's Digest* by no later than the conclusion of the 2020 annual meeting in Georgia. I have had the privilege of editing the Digest now for the past ten years, which has resulted in my serving on the HSUMC Board of Directors for 26 out of the 30 years of our existence. I feel that it is now time for another individual to have the privilege of serving on the Board in this capacity and perhaps bringing a new perspective to our publication.



Historian's Digest  
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