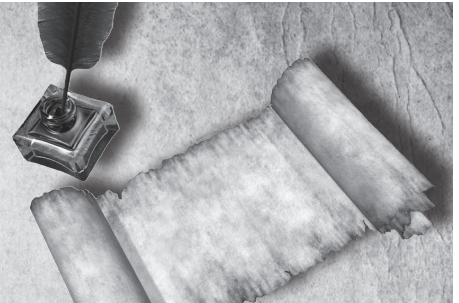


HISTORIAN'S DIGEST



Volume 55, Number 4

Fall 2014

A HISTORIAN'S HOLIDAY

What would *you* do? Suppose you have recently accepted a top historian position and you are invited to take a junket into the field to do grubby, basic historical research? Do you go?

"It sounds like an Indiana Jones safari," you think. Hot sultry weather, primitive terrain once covered with swamps, treks through tough undergrowth searching for long-covered foundations and even a hidden cave. The only resemblance to Indiana Jones, however, lies in the name Indiana, for you are in the table-top flatlands of the rich agricultural fields of the Hoosier Northwest. Jasper County, to be exact.

Out here, serious settlement came late, well into the 1800s. Here a dedicated Methodist Protestant preacher found that he could turn the prairie to a profit, something which had eluded him elsewhere. Rev. John Alter didn't let farming interrupt his preaching, however. He formed a little class in the walnut grove on his farm near Remington and branched out to surrounding communities up and down the Iroquois River valley, planting the MP standard about as far west as it would ever go in those parts.

His raven-haired daughter, the one with the deep blue eyes, felt the same tug of the Lord. The first-born of her father's many children, she had early learned to put self aside and care for others, and now she ached to minister more widely. She saddled a horse beside her father's mount and set off with him to partake of the food and lodging in lonely settlers' cabins or deserted shanties. There came days of threading their way through treacherous sloughs, of depending on sun or stars to navigate the trackless stretches of rosinweed and grass taller than a man could reach. Green-headed flies pestered the horses, and black flies and mosquitoes plagued the riders almost unbearably. Not long after the insect attacks ceased, heavy snows came. If the father gave any thought to discouraging her, he merely bit his lip and let her come on.

Her name was Ellen or Helenor, and her husband stayed home as she made these sorties. For three years, with the tacit blessing of the Bradford circuit quarterly conference, she kept her appointments, meeting folks in schoolhouses or in barns or in arbors of trees and brush. The crowds were never large, but her quiet, reassuring, confident manner and wells of resourcefulness born of frontier hardship won them.



*Helenor Alter Davisson**

The day came when someone-- Helenor? her father? another preacher? -- took thought of the clause in the MP *Book of Discipline*: "Every preacher shall be eligible to deacon's orders, after he shall have preached two years under a license ...". Helenor had been licensed for three years. So the quarterly conference recommended

(cont. page 3)

**Commissioned by the Rev. Christopher Shoemaker and painted by Clayton M. Powers (in acrylic) for the dedication*

Historical Society of the UMC

Priscilla Pope-Levison, President
poppep@spu.edu

Dan Swinson, Vice President,
Chair, Program Committee
djswinson@wowway.com

Barbara Essen, Secretary
grangevilleumc@mtida.net

Kerri Shoemaker, Treasurer
kerrishoe@zebra.net

Program Committee:
Chris Shoemaker
brothershoe@zebra.net

Philip Lawton
Plawton302@gmail.com

Daniel Flores
Dflores.phd@gmail.com

Joyce Plyler
joyce@charlotte.twcbc.com

Linda Schramm, GCAH Rep.
lars@greatlakes.net

GCAH General Secretary
Alfred T. Day
atday@gcah.org

Marge Benham, Membership Sec.
9750 W. 66th Place,
Arvada, CO 80004
mbenham@comcast.net

Patricia J. Thompson, Editor
P. O. Box 538
Morrisville VT 05661
802-888-2185
pajt8817@aol.com

Please send address changes
to Marge Benham. Editorial
correspondence should be directed
to Pat Thompson. The deadline for
submissions for the next issue is
January 10, 2015.

Historian's Digest is published
quarterly by the Historical Society of
the United Methodist Church

A Message from our President

The deaconess movement in Methodism was by far the most robust and far-reaching of any other mainline denomination, such as the Lutheran and Episcopal churches, yet few people now know its significant contributions both past and present. Thousands of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became Methodist deaconesses. Most were of marriageable age. Some had been schoolteachers; others were fairly illiterate. Few had encountered a metropolis except in their imagination. Yet from rural farms in Iowa, river towns in Ohio, and one-street villages in Illinois, to the great urban centers – Chicago, New York City, San Francisco – they flocked, seeking an opportunity to put their faith into action. In these cities, they knew that needs abounded with unsanitary and overcrowded tenements housing new arrivals from Southern and Eastern Europe as well as from rural America. There they could nurse a torn and tattered humanity, school the unlearned child, mentor the expectant mother, interpret for the immigrant, and tell the stories of Jesus to those they visited. These women from America's heartlands, who became Methodist deaconesses, felt an unmitigated compulsion to rescue urban America.

Deaconesses were educated theologically and practically at deaconess training schools across the country. They completed a two-year Bishops Course of Study that included courses in Bible, Theology, Church History, Ethics, and Methodist History and Polity. They took these courses during the weekday mornings; in the afternoons, as they moved out beyond the deaconess training school's walls to labor in urban America, they received first-hand training in their field of service, whether evangelism, nursing, visitation, or assisting a pastor. In this way, they experienced a daily blend – quite holistic -- of theology and practice.

The earliest and best known deaconess training school was the Chicago Training School, founded in 1885 by Lucy Rider Meyer. She also was the primary fundraiser and Bible teacher, and served as principal for over 30 years. Her husband, Josiah Shelley Meyer, worked alongside her as the business agent for the school. When the couple retired, forty agencies, including hospitals, orphanages, training schools, and homes for the elderly had been established either directly by the Chicago Training School or one of its graduates.

The extent of work accomplished even by deaconesses in training remains staggering. In one year alone, 1887-88, students from the Chicago Training School paid more than 5,000 visits to homes—and incorporated Bible readings and prayer in close to 600 homes. Even more incredible are these numbers: deaconesses-in-training taught over 19,000 Bible lessons in Sunday Schools and more than 8,000 in Industrial Schools, all in a single year.

Last weekend, I had the privilege of participating in a conference sponsored by the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner. Revisiting the history of the Methodist deaconess movement and speaking with current deaconesses in the United States and other countries reminded me of the great work for the reign of God accomplished in the past and ongoing in the present by these unsung Methodist heroes. For more on the current work of contemporary Methodist deaconesses, follow this link: <http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/what-we-do/service-and-advocacy/deaconess-and-home-missioner-office>



Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison

her to the Wabash Annual Conference for ordination. Daring stroke!

In its turn, the annual conference took a deep collective breath and voted "yes." The date? August 24, 1866.

Fast forward 148 years to August, 2014.

More than a hundred earnest souls, having learned Helenor's story, converged on a church within a couple of miles of her grave to mark the exact date of her election to orders.

The Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church had set aside five "Historic Sites": her burial place and four other Jasper County locations sacred to the memory of her deeds and those of the Methodist Protestants, and this audience came solemnly determined to celebrate her anniversary, honor her example, and seek to inspire others to dare to step out in faith. And that's precisely what they did.

But the all-too-scanty record of Helenor Alter Draper Davisson continues to leave her friends with a thirst for more information. So, just the day before, on August 23, 2014, a small party of inquirers set off around the county in search of more answers. True, none of them rode horseback, and all traveled in air-conditioned comfort on paved roads and ate well at a fast-food restaurant. There wasn't a black fly in evidence. But there *was* a note of adventuresomeness, nevertheless, as they repeatedly stopped at the unmarked sites of significant structures now demolished or removed: the house which Helenor and her second husband owned when she died, the Rosebud school house where early MPs collected, and the lot on which not one but *three* houses of worship were raised and two of them successively struck down by lightning.

An abandoned church and several cemetery stops punctuated the tour, and a brisk prairie downpour tried to break up the jaunt.

And, yes, one of these intrepid travelers was indeed a "historian on holiday." He is known to his many friends as Fred, and he is fast making new friends, all the way out to the Hoosier Heartland.

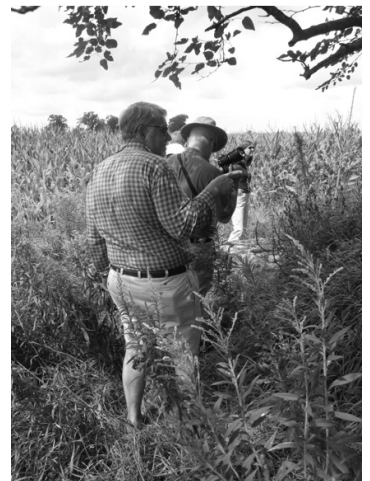


Fred Day presenting Historic Site marker to Bishop Michael Coyner

Here's a photo of General Secretary Alfred T. Day III preparing to present the marker of Historic Site No. 487 to Bishop Michael Coyner of the Indiana Conference. But may we be forgiven for also sending along a photo of our top Historian on "holiday" in Indiana?

Have an incredible ride in the Secretariat, Rev. Fred.

Submitted by Richard A. Stowe, Historian, Indiana Annual Conference



For more information on the dedication, see the following links:

<http://indiana-email.brtaapp.com/viewemail/187790>
<http://gcsrw.org/Portals/4/helenor%20davisson.pdf>
<http://www.gcsrw.org/Portals/4/davisson%20portrait.pdf>;

http://www.inumc.org/photogalleries?gallery=galleries/helenor_davisson_dedication



The Rev. Chris Shoemaker and Bishop Michael Coyner unveil Davisson portrait. Photo courtesy of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, The United Methodist Church.



Mrs. Josie Zacher, Mrs. Dale Alter, Dale Alter, William Henry at Davisson gravestone. Photo courtesy of the Indiana Conference, The United Methodist Church.

From the new General Secretary of the General Commission, Fred T. Day:

Greetings HUSMC members:

I'm delighted to be sending this first posting to the *Historian's Digest* as the newly-elected General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History.

It's an honor and a privilege to be in this office. I'm grateful to Bob Williams whose mentoring is helping get my feet on the ground and the rest of the GCAH staff who are making sure said feet are daily headed in the right direction.

In thinking about the work we do as archivists and historians, I've brought some of what I experienced as pastor and librarian at Historic St. George's UM Church in Philadelphia with me—especially the Ben Franklin Bridge.

No, not the bridge itself, it wouldn't fit well here in the Drew University forest. I'm thinking of when the bridge was constructed and all the change and uncertainty that stirred in the life of St. George's Church.

Church membership had diminished from the thousands to less than 100. The Delaware River Bridge Commission didn't wince at all at the thought of demolishing St. George's in the name of progress in the mid-1920s. Who'd miss it? Many thought its best days were in the distant past and we're building for the future, right?

Thank heavens for a small group of church folk and Bishop Thomas Neely who took up the cause of historic preservation. Together they fought a battle through the courts and eventually saved the oldest Methodist church building in the USA from the wrecking ball. The bridge builders were ordered to revise the path of the bridge. Since that time, St. George's, among all its other historical notoriety, is known as "the church that moved the bridge."

Nice story. But not in the way you might think. In considering our work as General, Jurisdictional, Annual Conference Commissions on Archives and History and Historical Societies, in giving leadership to the tasks of caring for and promoting the historical interests of The United Methodist Church (Para. 1703.1), it strikes me that the reverse of St. George's storied bridge tale is also true. Our work isn't simply marshalling the means to be the church that moves the bridge BUT serving as the bridge that moves the Church! Our work is being the bridge that connects our rich Wesleyan birthright and heritage. Our work spans the challenges of the times in which we live with the core of our "the people called Methodist" identity, grounded in the prevenient grace of God and the lived-experience of such love as the driving force in our lives. Our work must not be mired in nostalgia for nostalgia's sake but as the basis for crossing over to the places where God always seems to be calling us, with what has been bequeathed to us in tow.

And, the Lord help us, the Spirit stirring us, this "ministry of memory" as Bob Williams so wonderfully called it, may cause us to change a course or two. How fortunate and blessed I feel to be working with you on this next leg of the journey.



The Rev. Alfred T. Day, III



New for HSUMC Members:

We have just recently developed a new google group chat list so that members can exchange information about events that are happening, ask questions about historical projects, events, etc., and let folks know about information that is now available on the web, etc. It is called hsumc-chat and is available to all HSUMC members. If you have not yet received any e-mails from this list and wish to be a part of the list, please contact Pat Thompson at pajt8817@aol.com.

2015 Annual Meeting and Historical Convocation to be Held at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary in Chicago – July 20-23

The Historical Convocation 2015 will be held as a joint meeting of the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church, the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church, the North Central Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History, and the Northern Illinois Conference Commission on Archives and History. The Convocation will be held at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, with accommodations at the Hilton Garden Inn in Evanston. The event will begin with the annual meeting of the General Commission commencing on Saturday, July 18, 2015. The Historical Society, along with the Jurisdictional and Annual Conference Commissions, will join the Commission in convocation beginning on Monday evening, July 20, and continuing through lunch on Thursday, July 23. HSUMC President, Priscilla Pope-Levison, will deliver an inaugural/keynote address on Tuesday morning, followed by additional speakers through Thursday morning. On Wednesday, there will be travel to United Methodist sites in the Chicagoland area. The General Commission will present the Distinguished Service Award, and the Historical Society will present the Saddlebag Selection and Ministry of Memory awards

during the proceedings. The theme of the Convocation is “Diversity: It’s Complicated.”

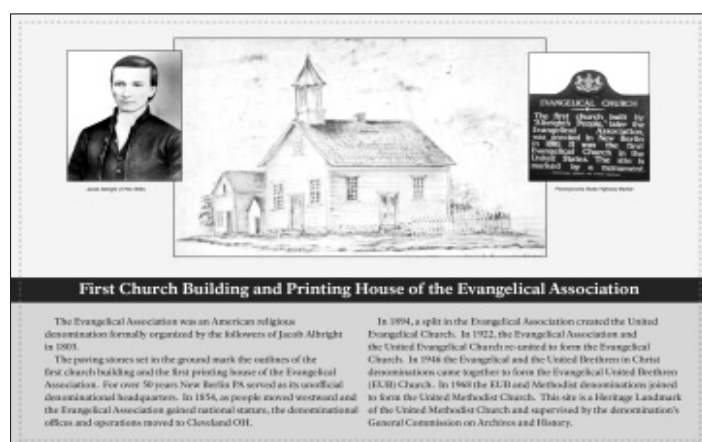
Because of Summer sessions at both Garrett and Northwestern, primary accommodations will be at the Evanston Hilton Garden Hotel, less than a half mile from Garrett. A shuttle service is available to Garrett, and other parking options will be provided. We will receive the Garrett courtesy rate (yet to be determined). This will be more expensive than campus housing, but will include amenities ranging from the expected (individual temperature control, private baths, etc.) to the leading edge (sleep number controls on the beds). The Hilton has breakfast available for a separate price, though there are a wide range of other options in this college town/urban center. We will also be presenting options for those desiring less expensive options.

More details about the annual meeting as well as registration materials will be available in the February issue of *Historian’s Digest*. The folks in Indiana are contemplating an add-on opportunity (either before or after the scheduled sessions) to allow participants to visit the new Helenor Davisson sites in Jasper County, Indiana (see lead article, page 1).

From Monument to Learning Center: Historic Evangelical Association Site at New Berlin, Pennsylvania Transformed

On Sunday, September 7, 2014, the site of the first meeting house and printing establishment of the Evangelical Association at New Berlin, Pennsylvania was rededicated following extensive improvements. Under the planning and direction of the Susquehanna Conference Commission on Archives and History, the site was transformed from a granite monument on a grassy lot to an outdoor learning center promoting some of the early history of this predecessor denomination of The United Methodist Church. Site renovations include new landscaping and walkways, paving stones, outlining the foundations of the church building and printing house, and four pedestaled interpretative markers installed at appropriate locations.

The marker introducing visitors to the site is pictured above. Other markers share the story of the construction of the first church building, the establishment of the printing house, and direct visitors to other historically significant United Methodist



locations in this small Pennsylvania borough. The project was made possible through the Clayton W. Hoag Fund of the former Wyoming Conference. The fund was established for use in preservation and educational projects by the Conference Commission on Archives and History through the generosity of the late Rev. Clayton W. Hoag, Sr.

(cont. page 6)

History of the Site

Jacob Albright first preached in New Berlin in 1804. During his preaching itineration to New Berlin in the years following, a number of persons were converted and several small societies were begun in the area. The exclusively German-speaking societies gathered under the preaching of Albright and his confederates did not yet have an official denominational name, and were variously known as “German Methodists” or “Albright’s People.” Among the early converts in New Berlin was John Dreisbach.

Following Albright’s death in 1808, Dreisbach became the leading figure in the denomination. His leadership was officially recognized by his fellow ministers among “Albright’s People” in 1814, when they elected him the first presiding elder, or conference superintendent. As the denomination grew numerically and geographically, Dreisbach recognized the need for publishing, printing and distributing official resources in the German language. In 1815, the believers at New Berlin were able to purchase a small lot at the corner of Plum and Water Streets where they intended to build a meeting house. Later that year, Dreisbach purchased a printing press and binding equipment in Philadelphia using his own funds, and arranged for his brother-in-law to transport them to New Berlin.

In February, 1816, the construction of a small frame building was contracted to be built on the south side of a log meeting house being erected on the property at Plum and Water Streets. In June, the only organized annual conference within the denomination met near New Berlin. They established a Chief Book Commission to superintend the printing house. The annual conference also directed Dreisbach, along with Rev. Henry Niebel, to prepare a large hymnbook and a revision of the first discipline for printing. Dreisbach subsequently obtained the Chief Book Commission’s consent to hire George Miller of Hanover, Pennsylvania as operator for the printing operation.

On October 14, 1816, the first General Conference was held at the Dreisbach home. The conference adopted the official name, Evangelical Association. After some revision, it approved the hymnbook and discipline presented by Dreisbach and Niebel and accepted them for the denomination. The hymnbook became the first book published and printed at the new printing house at New Berlin. On March 1 and 2, 1817, the printing house and first church building were formally dedicated.

The printing house only remained in operation under

the guidance of the denomination until 1822, when it became financially unfeasible. By 1826 the printing house had been altogether removed from the site. A second printing house was eventually established in 1836 at Market and Plum Streets. The log meeting house was later weather-boarded and a small steeple was added. It continued in use for 57 years, being the site for three general and eighteen annual conference meetings. In 1873, the congregation located to a large, modern brick church constructed two blocks to the north, and the original meeting house was torn down and the property at Water and Plum Streets was sold.

The New Berlin Historic Site was later purchased from private ownership by the Evangelical Church. On August 2, 1927, the Historical Society of the Evangelical Church held an unveiling ceremony of a granite monument on the site in recognition of its significance to the denomination and the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the first church edifice and printing house. With the merger of the Evangelical Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ in 1946, and the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and Methodist Church in 1968, the New Berlin site came under the administration of the General Commission on Archives and History as a Heritage Landmark of The United Methodist Church.

Rededication Day Activities

September 7 Rededication Day activities began with the 10:15 morning worship service at Emmanuel United Methodist Church in New Berlin. Susquehanna Conference archivist and certified lay speaker, Milton Loyer, gave the morning message. Loyer’s text was taken from 2 Kings 5:1-14. Entitled, “Lower Lights,” the message lifted up the unsung saints whose lives and work in the New Berlin area led to the formation and continuance of the Evangelical Association in its early critical years.

Following a full Sunday dinner prepared by the Emmanuel congregation and enjoyed by participants and guests in the church social hall, festivities reconvened in the church sanctuary at 1:00 pm with the Dedication Service. Gleanings from the 1927 unveiling ceremony were shared prior to the keynote address delivered by Rev. Alfred Day, General Secretary of the Commission on Archives and History for The United Methodist Church. Secretary Day’s theme focused on what the early Evangelicals published and proclaimed from their site at New Berlin, which informs the ongoing mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church today.

(cont. page 7)

At 3:00 pm a brief Dedication Ceremony was held at the Heritage Landmark Site with Dedicatory Remarks offered by Rev. Charles Campbell, Great Lakes Region Conference Minister of the Evangelical Congregational Church. The EC Church is also a successor denomination to the Evangelical Association. The Evangelical Church,

also a successor denomination, could not send a representative to attend on September 7 but sent greetings of celebration by letter, which were shared at the 1:00 pm Dedication Service.

Submitted by Brand Eaton, Susquehanna Conference Historical Society

ENTRIES FOR THE 2013 SADDLEBAG SELECTION COMPETITION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Adams, Elaine Parker, *The Revered Peter W. Clark: Sweet Preacher and Steadfast Reformer* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2013) from the author, 10906 Holly Springs Drive, Houtston, TX 77042.

Chilcote, Paul W. And Kenneth J. Collins, *Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises II: The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 13* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013). PO Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Collins, Kenneth J. and Jason E. Vickers, ed., *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013) PO Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Dunn, Durwood, *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013) 600 Henley St., 110 Conference Center Building, Knoxville, TN 37996.

Moore, Mary Elizabeth Mullino, ed. *A Living Tradition: Critical Recovery and Reconstruction of the Wesleyan Heritage* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013). PO Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Rogal, Samuel J., ed. *A New and Critical Edition of George Osborn's The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley (1868-1872) with the Addition of Notes, Annotations, Biographical and Background Information* [13 Volumes in 21 books] (Lewiston, NY; Queenston, Ontario; Lampeter, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009-2013) Box 450, Lewiston, NY 14092.

Vickers, John A. *The Letters of Dr. Thomas Coke* (Nashville: Kingswood Press, 2013). PO Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Yrigoyen, Charles Jr. and Susan E. Warrick, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Methodism, 3rd ed.* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013) 4501 Forbes Blvd., Suite 200, Lanham, MD 20706. [2014 Winner]

2013 - 2014 Treasurer's Report – Kerri Shoemaker

Balance: September 13, 2012	\$11, 123.23¹	
	Budget	Actual
Income:		
Dues and Gifts	\$5,000.00	\$5,237.75
From Reserves	<u>6,600.00²</u>	<u>00.00</u>
Total Income	\$11,600.00	\$5,237.00
Expenses:		
Methodist History (quarterly)	\$5,000.00	\$ 3,643.86 ³
Historian's Digest (quarterly)	1,400.00	1,138.39 ⁴
Awards	1,500.00	770.34
Travel (Board of Directors)	3,000.00	00.00 ⁵
Insurance	500.00	00.00
Postage and Miscellaneous	<u>100.00</u>	<u>18.39</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 11,600.00	\$5,571.54
Difference between income and expenses		-43.79
Balance – June 22, 2014	\$11,079.44	

¹Includes money in Albea Godbold Fund totalling \$3,000; *cont. next column*)

no new donations have been received this year.
²There is no separate reserve fund; this figure indicates additional money needed in order to fully meet budgeted expenses
³ Costs for October 2013, January and April 2014
⁴ Costs for Summer and Fall, 2013, Winter 2014
⁵ Members of the Board of Directors neither requested nor received reimbursement for travel.

2014-2015 Budget

Income:	
Dues/Gifts	\$5,000.00
Total Income	\$5,000.00
Expenses:	
Methodist History	\$5,115.00
Historian's Digest	1,700.00
Travel (Board)	3,000.00
Awards	1,600.00
Insurance	500.00
Postage/Miscellaneous	<u>100.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$12,015.00

Please Note: A few years ago the Albea Godbold Fund was created by the Board of Directors for the purpose of receiving contributions toward the work of the Historical Society. If you would like to make a donation to the Society to help offset expenses not covered by dues, you may send a check made out to HSUMC to our treasurer, Kerri Shoemaker, at PO Box 1087, Wadley, GA 30477.

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Clarksburg WV
26301
Permit #87

Historian's Digest
c/o WV Annual Conference of UMC
P.O. Box 2313
Charleston WV 25328