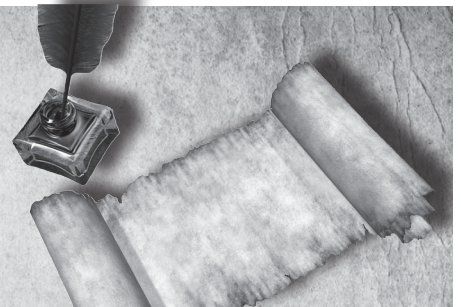


HISTORIAN'S DIGEST



Volume 59, Number 2

Summer 2019

The Historical Society of the UMC Invites You to Join Us in St. Louis in September as We Explore the Opening of the West to Methodism



Grace UMC, St. Louis, MO

The 2019 Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of the UMC will be hosted in the South Central Jurisdiction by the Missouri United Methodist Historical Society at the Grace United Methodist Church in downtown, St. Louis, from September 11-13.

The program will open on Wednesday evening with a keynote address given by Dr. John Wigger, Professor of History at the University of Missouri, entitled, "Methodism at a Crossroads, 1820." Francis Asbury's death in 1816 marked a divide in the history of American Methodism as the culture of the church shifted from upstart outsider movement to part of the mainline. Regional divisions also became more pronounced, particularly over the issue of slavery. Asbury had tried to forestall this transition, but he was in many ways the last link in the church's leadership to its eighteenth-century roots.

The meeting will also include plenaries on "The Opening of the West," by Dr. Robert Moore from the National Park Service; "Methodism Comes to Missouri," by Dr. John Gooch, retired elder from the Missouri Annual Conference; a portrayal of Jacob Lanius, Pioneer Circuit Rider, by Rev. Cleo Kottwitz, also a retired elder in the Missouri Conference; "Old McKendree Church and the 1st Annual Conference in Missouri," by the

Hon. Stephen Limbaugh, a federal judge and a Trustee of the McKendree Chapel; and "Missouri, Mother of Conferences," by Ms. Elizabeth Terry, archivist at Salem in Ladue UMC.

In addition to these plenary presentations, there will be an excursion to the Gateway Arch National Park and Museum and the Old Courthouse (home of the Dred Scott decision). For an additional \$12 (not included in the original registration fee), participants may ride the tram to the top of the Arch and for another \$7 view a 35-minute movie. Wednesday evening is "on our own," providing a opportunity to explore more of the city.

Thursday afternoon will include the annual meeting of the HSUMC as well as a special plenary, "Where are We? 2019 and 2020 General Conferences," and a presentation by Chief Janith English, from the Wyandott Tribe (see picture page 5). The meeting will conclude with the HSUMC Banquet with a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the HSUMC as well as presentation of the Ministry of Memory and Saddlebag Selection Awards.

A Registration form is available on page 4 along with a detailed schedule on page 3. You may also register online on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/Historical-Society-of-The-United-Methodist-Church-251370175665367 or on our website, www.UMChistory.org. However, you will still need to send your registration check by regular mail to John Finley. Registration deadline is August 28.



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Please send address changes to Christopher Shoemaker. Editorial correspondence should be directed to Pat Thompson. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is October 1, 2019.

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Please visit us at our website:
www.umchistory.org.

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Message from our New President

— Ivan G. Corbin

I was 10 years old when our family moved from Fremont, Michigan to Fort Smith, Arkansas. Gerber Baby Foods was transferring Dad once again and this time it was to totally new territory for our family. I remember piling into our station wagon and heading southwest to go see Fort Smith for the first time and to find a house. In order to get to Arkansas, we would cross the Mississippi for the first time in my life. I was in awe of the "Mighty Mississippi" as we crossed over into Saint Louis, Missouri. But, I was in even more awe at the giant Gateway Arch that loomed before us. It had been built only 5 years earlier in 1965 to commemorate the Lewis and Clark Expedition of the early 1800's that opened up expansion of our nation to the West. Because my parents wanted my brother and me to learn all we could about our great nation, we were known to take side trips as the final destinations became secondary. So, after crossing the river, we found our way to the base of the Arch where we bought tickets and took the thrilling ride to the top. What a spectacular view of what lay behind us and what lay before us.



Ivan G. Corbin

Unbeknownst to me at that time, my great grandfather Francis Marion Corbin had ridden a bicycle from Newton County, Indiana, crossed the Mississippi River for the first time and ended up in Nodaway County, Missouri where he met my Great-grandmother Hester Herring. Both their families had left the southeast in the mid-1800's to make their way out to new possibilities in the west. Through this bicycle ride of 1896 their two worlds came together. They married a couple years later and settled for a while in northern Indiana and were active in their United Brethren Church and their community.

Earlier this year my spiritual family, the United Methodist Church, met in the shadow of the Gateway Arch at a special General Conference to decide the future of our denomination. We are still trying to figure out what our future holds based on the decisions made there and by the Judicial Council in April. Will we remain united? Is this the beginning of the end of what was brought together in 1968? These and many other questions loom large before us and there is enough pain and agonizing to go around.

Now our Historical Society has the opportunity to come together in Saint Louis in September not to decide the future of our denominational family, but to celebrate her past and perhaps gain insights we can share with the rest of the denomination about her possible future. We will learn all about Missouri Methodism and its denominational roots. We will also reflect together on the decisions made at General Conference 2019 and by the Judicial Council. And, we will pray together for the future of our church that many of us have called home not just in our lifetimes, but for some, many generations going back. It is my hope that our gathering in September will be a joyous one where we will do the work of the Historical Society as well as celebrate who we are as United Methodist Christians. It's been a while since I've been to Saint Louis. The last time was at the Russian Initiative gathering back in the 1990's. I hope that you will mark your calendars for September and meet me in Saint Louis!

In Christ's service,

Ivan
Ivan G. Corbin

**Schedule for 2019 Annual Meeting
September 11-13, 2019**

Wednesday, Sept. 11

Executive Board meetings:

11:00am – HSUMC Board of Directors

2:00pm - Missouri Historical Society Board of Directors

4:00 – 6:00pm - Registration

6:00pm – Dinner and Speaker - Methodism at a Crossroads, 1820 – Dr. John Wigger

Thursday, Sept. 12

Breakfast in hotels

Devotions

Plenary 1 – The Opening of the West – Dr. Robert Moore

Break

Plenary 2 – Methodism Comes to Missouri – Dr. John Gooch Lunch

Plenary 3 – Jacob Lanius, Pioneer Circuit Rider - Rev. Cleo Kottwitz

Trip to Arch and Museum of Westward Expansion

Dinner and Evening on your own

Friday, Sept. 13

Breakfast in hotels

Devotions

Plenary 4 -- Old McKendree Church and the First Annual Conference in Missouri
– Hon. Stephen Limbaugh; Missouri, Mother of Conferences – Ms. Elizabeth Terry

Lunch

HSUMC Business Meeting

Special Plenary – Where Are We? 2019 and 2020 General Conferences

Indian Mission - Coming Full Circle – Chief Janith English

HSUMC Banquet and Closing (including a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the organization of the HSUMC and presentation of the Ministry of Memory and Saddlebag Selection Awards)

Registration Form
Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of the UMC
Hosted by the Missouri Annual Conference
St. Louis, MO – September 11-13, 2019

Questions, Address to John Finley - jfinley@centralmethodist.edu

\$80 Registration fee, Mail to: John Finley, Missouri United Methodist Archives, 411 CMU Square, Fayette, MO 65248. Registration deadline: August 28, 2019

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

IN WHICH UM CONFERENCE ARE YOU LOCATED: _____

ANY SPECIAL NEEDS OR REQUESTS? _____

Please mark the box at the end if you do not wish to have your picture appear in any pictures which might be published following the annual meeting. ____

If you wish to register online, you may go to the HSUMC website, www.umchistory.org and click on the "2019 Annual Meeting" Tab, or go to our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/Historical-Society-of-The-United-Methodist-Church-251370175665367. However, you will still need to send your registration to John Finley via regular mail.

Upon receipt of your registration, information re: lodging possibilities and other logistical information will be mailed to you.

Mission Agencies Celebrate Anniversaries

150th Anniversary of the Founding of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society/UMC

200th Anniversary of the Organization of the First Methodist Missionary Society

2019 marks two significant anniversaries in the history of United Methodist missions. In 1869 the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized at the Tremont Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston, MA. On April 5, 1819, the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in New York City to support the mission work of John Stewart, a freeborn African-American, among the Wyandotte Native American people of Ohio. This group, whose creation was affirmed by the 1820 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was the first denomination-wide mission society for Methodists in the United States.



Founders' Windows at BUSTH

On March 23rd, exactly 150 years to the day, about 150 people met at Boston University School of Theology to remember and celebrate the eight courageous women who met on a stormy day at the Tremont Street MEC and voted to organize a Society of women to respond to the needs of women in India who could not be ministered to by the men of the denomination due to Hindu prohibitions. The celebration actually began on Thursday, March 21 with the dedication of stained glass windows which had originally been installed at the Tremont Street church and have recently been installed in the reading room of the library at Boston University School Theology. These windows honored the original eight women founders, and several other early leaders and missionaries of the WFMS.

The program on the 23rd included presentations on the first eight women founders, as well as women's missions in Boston by the Rev. Patricia Thompson, Historian for the New England Annual Conference (and editor of this newsletter), the relationship of the female founders of the WFMS to the male founders of Boston University by Dr. Dana Robert, Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission, at BUSTH; a presentation of the former Tremont Street MEC by Leeda Marsh, who was one of the primary organizers of the celebration; remarks from Thomas Kemper, General Secretary of the Board of Global Ministries and Bishop Devadhar, resident Bishop of the New England Area; and a presentation on the future of United Methodist Women's missions by UMW CEO, Harriet Olsen. See: <https://www.neumc.org/umw150> for more information.

Then, April 9-11, over 250 people including scholars, church leaders, current and former missionaries, mission agency staff, members of partner organizations and representatives of ecumenical and affiliated Methodist denominations, gathered in Atlanta to celebrate the Bicentennial of Methodist Missions, "Answering the Call: Hearing God's Voice in Methodist Missions: Past, Present, and Future." The opening celebratory banquet focused on the first Methodist missionary, the Rev. John Stewart. From there, keynote addresses and over fifty presenters who made panel presentations in breakout sessions, focused on a wide variety of topics related to missions - past, present, and future. Go to: <https://methodistmission200.org> to learn more about this celebration. It was truly inspiring to have had the privilege to participate in both of these celebrations.



Chief Janith English of the Wyandot Nation, displayed a slate from a previous roof of the church named after John Stewart, to the Rev. Alfred Day. Photo by Jennifer Silver, Global Ministries (from Global Ministries website)

A Message from our GCAH Secretary, Fred Day

"Sometimes It's Personal"

When people think about the work that happens at the General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH) they are likely to think in terms of the arcane. Come to our processing room and find staff buried in archival boxes mining, chronicling and cataloging data for preservation. Drop into our offices and witness researchers referencing resources for academic papers, news articles, dissertations and soon-to-be-published books, dealing with requests from denominational boards, agencies and councils, and of course, addressing genealogical inquiries. One also cannot neglect to mention the time and resources utilized by staff to manage the increasingly complex computer infrastructure required to support this mission.

But more often than not the work gets very personal. We love it when that happens. It reminds us of the ministry in our mandate, the humanity over, under, around and through all we do.

A few weeks ago a call came from a patron from Toledo, Ohio. The caller was hoping to reconnect with a fellow Wesley Foundation member. They were members of the Ohio State University Wesley Foundation in 1958 but had lost contact. The patron contacted OSU and the Archives of Ohio United Methodism hoping to find Wesley Foundation membership records that might provide a lead in search of her friend. The Ohio Conference Archives referred the patron to GCAH.

After listening to her story, and hearing her strong desire to reconnect with this friend, our GCAH reference archivist forged a path. Wesley Foundation membership records are not housed at GCAH and were unlikely to be of help as the contact information would be six decades old. A general search of Internet sources yielded an obituary for the friend's husband thus providing the married name of the friend and her current city and state of residence. Using this information, an additional search yielded her name on a church bulletin for a local United Methodist Church in that city.

Our reference archivist then contacted the local church and received an immediate response from the church secretary who mentioned that the woman she was seeking was a church member and volunteer. And that woman just happened to be in the secretary's office when they received the request for her to contact our reference archivist! Can you imagine? The long-lost friend in turn emailed our reference archivist who was able to provide the contact information for the patron in Toledo, Ohio.

A long-lost friendship of 60 years initially forged in the Wesley Foundation was reconnected through the vibrant United Methodist Church connection, the power of the Internet and the persistence of GCAH's reference archivist in connecting the dots. And we all share in the joy that they are still, after all these years, connected to The United Methodist Church.

We promise an update on this story when the friends eventually reconnect. Tissues will be distributed at that time.

The day-to-day grind, the one-foot-in-front-of-the-other regimen for getting things done has a way of dulling the heart and zapping the soul that spirits what we do, why we do it and who we serve.

Thank you caller from Toledo for the chance to reengage in a ministry of conservation that preserves the past in order to be truly present in the present, true to the sources that shaped us in the first place and be our keystone in forging our future.

Thank you UM archivists across the denomination for your patient persistence in connecting-the-dots so that those we get to serve can experience revelations, reconnections or new connections instead of dead-ends. Thank you for all that you gather (including church bulletins and newsletters), probe, cull, catalog, keep and make accessible. We cannot manage without you!

Thank you Church and thank you Lord for the privilege and blessing of the work you give us to do.

Fred Day, June 12, 2019



Fred Day

¹ The Wesley Foundation is the historic educational and campus ministry arm of The United Methodist Church with origins stemming from The University of Illinois (1913). Over the years The Wesley Foundation has been a vibrant source of Christian *koinonia* and Wesleyan values in more than 200 colleges and universities in the United States and across global United Methodism.

Wolcott, VT, UMC, Still Has Special Reason to Celebrate Black History Month

–By Patricia J. Thompson



A year ago, a story about this little church was included in the Spring issue of the *Digest*, describing the history of the church that is the *only known* white UMC in the country to have been organized and built by an African American – the Rev. George S. Brown, the first African American pastor in the former Troy Annual Conference.

At that time, we had just launched a major fundraising campaign for \$115,000 to repair current damage to the foundation of the building caused by the on-going water infiltration (due to the fact that the church is constructed against a stone ledge), and to install a permanent solution to prevent any further damage. It is our dream to restore the building, so that we can develop a small museum which will be open to the public to honor the life and ministry of the Rev. George S. Brown.

I am excited to report that over the past year we have invested about \$160,000, in repairs and have a new cement foundation, a cement slab for the basement floor, and a new handicapped accessible entrance and bathroom. *Though we were able to use some non-restricted invested funds, we could not have accomplished this without the wonderful support of our many friends, many of whom came from the greater United Methodist Historical community, and we want to thank all of you who donated so generously to help make our dream come true.*

We still have a long way to go – installing flooring over the cement slab, completing the kitchen, sealing up the back corner of the kitchen and – the most challenging – painting the exterior of the building, but we strongly believe that God has brought us thus far and will continue to be with us in our fundraising efforts in the days ahead. You can follow our progress on our website, www.wolcottvtumc.org.

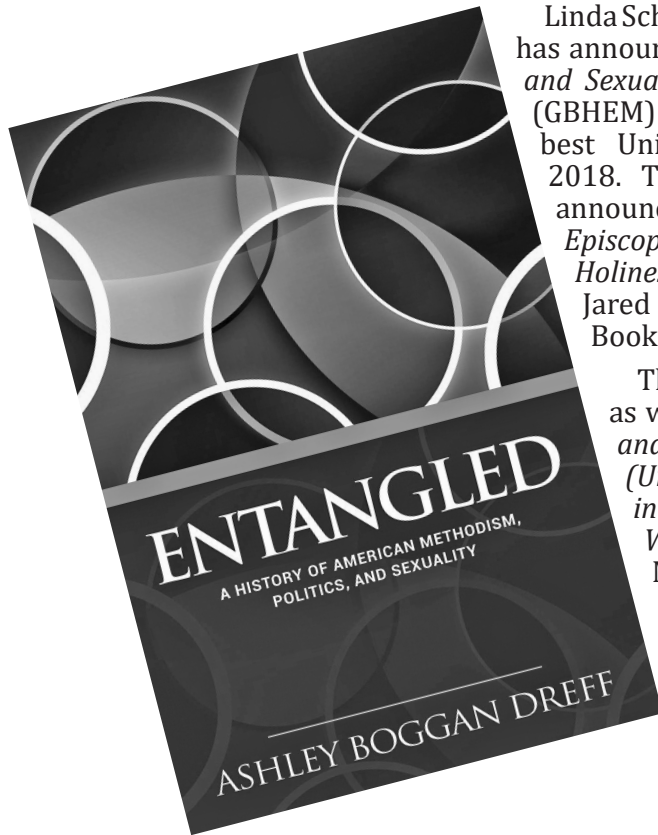
As we celebrate the life of the Rev. Brown, however, we are not just celebrating his work in organizing the Wolcott United Methodist Church. Nearly twenty years prior to traveling to Wolcott to organize the congregation there, George S. Brown sailed to the newly formed colony of Liberia as a missionary – not to the slaves from the United States that were being re-located there, but to the native Africans – one of the few who actually ministered to the natives at that time. In April, I had the great privilege of attending the Bicentennial Missions Conference in Atlanta (see p. 5) and presenting a paper on the experiences of George S. Brown while in Liberia – most especially, the issues of white privilege and racism which he endured because he refused to become embroiled in a controversy between the Methodist mission and the Liberian government over taxes which the government wanted to charge on the many goods that were being shipped from America to Liberia for the colonists (former slaves) settling there.

Because he refused to take sides, he was eventually expelled from the mission and relieved of all duties there, returning to America and leaving his wife behind. It took him nearly ten years to receive the pay that he was due as well as to have his credentials restored. The latter did not happen until he came to Vermont in 1852 with a white preacher named Henry Boardman Taylor – after having sued the white mission Superintendent, the Rev. John Seys, for slander, in civil court in Albany, NY – and winning his suit!

In 1849, following the settlement of his suit out of court, George S. Brown, then published his *Journal*, in which he chronicles some of his early life and many of the difficulties which he experienced in Africa and then back here in America. Despite all of these struggles, however, Brown states, *“O but still, I call heaven to witness, that I truly love the M. E. Church with all my whole soul. I love her none the less for what a few individuals have mangled me.”*

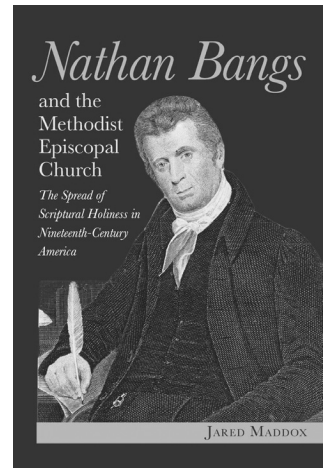
As we look to the future of our beloved United Methodist Church in this particular time of turmoil, George S. Brown’s words continue to ring in my ears as so many of us wonder if this is the time that we should leave, or stay and fight for the church that we love and serve.

2019 Saddlebag Selection Award Announced



Linda Schram, Chairperson of the HSUMC Saddlebag Selection Committee has announced that *Entangled: A History of American Methodism, Politics, and Sexuality*, by Ashley Boggan Dreff published by New Room Books (GBHEM) is the winner of the 2019 Saddlebag Selection Award for the best United Methodist book published in 2018. This year a “runner-up” has also been announced: *Nathan Bangs and the Methodist Episcopal Church: the Spread of Scriptural Holiness in Nineteenth-Century America* by Jared Bangs, also published by New Room Books.

Three other entries were nominated, as well: *Near-Insurmountable Challenges and Persistent Hope: A History of the (United) Methodist Annual Conference in Southern California and Arizona from World War II to the Present* by Paul F. McCleary; *For Each and All: The Moral Witness of Asa Mahan* by Christopher P. Momany; and, *Out of Exodus: A Journey of Open and Affirming Ministry*, by Darryl W. Stephens, Michael I. Alleman, Andrea Brown, Ruth Daugherty, and Mary Merriman.



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