

TEXAS UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2010 vol. 2, #1

President's Letter by Wm. C. Hardt

As most of you know, I blog a regular feature, *This Week in Texas Methodist History*, at <http://txmethhistory.blogspot.com/>. I keep a master calendar of my desktop, and in the course of my routine research or reading, when I run across a date; I enter it in the master calendar. It's hard to find topics for my blog in July and August because of diminished Methodist activity during those months. Annual Conferences met in November and December. General Conference was in May and the first week of June. Rivers were often low so steamboats quit running. Horses and oxen suffered terribly from heat and biting flies so overland transport was also more difficult. At least once John Wesley DeVilbiss rode his circuit at night because the flies were less active after dark. Farmers needed to tend to their crops. The Texas coastal plain was dangerous during the summer because of yellow fever. Northern immigrants were warned not to come to Texas during the summer. Many of you will remember that Martin Ruter delayed his entry into Texas until November when the yellow fever season ended. Presiding elders sometimes begged off holding quarterly conferences in July and August. They knew the churches couldn't pay their "quarterages" anyway since the farmers had no income until they sold their cotton in the fall. The whole rhythm of Methodist activity slowed in the Texas summer. The first cold snap of the fall was a cause for celebration, and the first freeze hard enough to knock the mosquitoes down was an even bigger event.

Things have really changed! In 2010 the Texas Methodist summer is full of encampments, vacation Bible school, mission trips, service projects, retreats, heritage travel, planning meetings, continuing education, internships, and other activities too numerous to mention.

Many of the summer events relate to our Texas Methodist heritage. I still hear of congregations that hold traditional summer events like ice cream or watermelon parties. Perhaps I hear about these events because I live in Brenham which is known for its ice cream and less than 25 miles from Hempstead which was once a famous melon shipping depot. Some summer events such as an old fashioned cemetery cleaning seem to be dying out. Maybe some reader can provide information about a cemetery association that keeps that tradition alive.

Some TUMHS members used the summer to travel to Missouri and attend the SC Jurisdictional Convocation of Archivists. Others were already hard at work planning events for the coming months. You can read about these events in the pages that follow.

Central Texas Conference Plans Centennial Celebration in Fort Worth, October 23

On October 23 the Will Rogers Memorial Center in Fort Worth will be alive with festive activities celebrating the first 100 years of the Central Texas Conference.

The 1910 General Conference of the MECS authorized the division of the “Old” North West Texas Conference. The western two-thirds retained the name “North West Texas Conference,” and the eastern one-third became the Central Texas Conference. The new conference contained some of the most prosperous cities in Texas including Fort Worth, Waco, Temple, Georgetown, and Belton. Although it was much smaller in area, it still retained two-thirds of the membership of the “Old” North West Texas Conference.

Our friends in the Central Texas Conference have planned a “can’t miss” celebration. Each church in the conference is being asked to prepare a display about its history. There will be barbecue from Risky’s, a famous local purveyor of delectable Texas food. The entertainment will be headlined by Willie Nelson and his sister Bobbie. Willie and Bobbie had some of their formative musical experiences as children as they attended the Methodist Church in Abbott.

Mr. Nelson never forgot his roots. When the church in Abbott was forced to close, he bought it so it could be turned into a community center. (pictured in next column) The offering will be divided

between the Conference and Mr. Nelson’s scholarship program to help Hill County students.



All events (including the meal) are covered by an admission fee of \$25. Tickets must be purchased before October 1. There will be no walk-up tickets sold. You may also purchase commemorative pins and shirts and reserve a copy of the centennial history that will be available later. The tickets, pins, shirts, and book reservation forms are all located at <http://www.ctcumc.org/news/detail/122>

Will Rogers Memorial Center is conveniently located just west of downtown Fort Worth in the Cultural Center.

Jurisdictional Convocation Report

The TUMHS bylaws specify that the organization's constituency is all the annual conferences that have churches in the state of Texas. There are eight such conferences: Texas, North Texas, North West Texas, South West Texas, Central Texas, Rio Grande, Oklahoma Indian Mission, and New Mexico. There are seven more annual conferences in the South Central Jurisdiction in Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska.

Historians and archivists from across the jurisdiction met at Central Methodist University in Fayette, Missouri, from July 8-10. Attendees from all 8 TUMHS constituent annual conferences were there. Jean Traster informs me that that this is probably the first event at which there were representatives from all eight conferences.

Fayette is off the beaten path so most of us were seeing CMU for the first time. One of the highlights was a walking tour of the campus led by Joy Flanders. I cannot remember a more informative campus tour. Since Ms. Flanders was an archivist, she knew what the group would be most interested in hearing. We convened in McMurry Hall, named for Bishop William McMurry, as is our university in Abilene. There was also Holt Hall, named for Bishop Ivan Lee Holt. The real surprise was a building named Payne—named for Howard Payne as in the Southern Baptist institution in Brownwood! I will leave it to you history detectives out there to explain how Howard Payne left his name at both Baptist and Methodist institutions.

We also toured historic Methodist sites in Glasgow, Missouri, a picturesque small town on the banks of the Missouri River. The highlight of that tour emphasized the Evangelical Church's heritage in the region. The Evangelical Association was a Wesleyan church of German speakers who became part of the EUB Church and therefore the UM Church.

The delegates were entertained and educated by a series of presentations and workshops. Rev. Leo Kottwitz (rtd.) enthralled the group with a reenactment of Rev. Jacob Lanius, a 19th century circuit rider who had once served around Fayette. It was a splendid reenactment.

Drs. Bob Williams and Dale Patterson of the General Commission on Archives and History in New Jersey both attended and shared their wisdom and continued to strengthen the connectional ties we find so important.

The photo credit for the TUMHS delegates goes to Bill Hedges. It's a shame that the photographer never appears in the picture.



I am confident I can speak for all TUMHS members in expressing our thanks to the Missouri Conference CAH for the hospitality they extended.

SAVE THE FOLLOWING DATES

OCTOBER 9-10, 2010

The African-American Methodist Heritage Center will offer *Telling Our Story; Creating our Future*, a workshop for local church historians in New Orleans. The Center offered a similar workshop in Atlanta in 2009 and received rave reviews. This year's workshop should also be great. <http://www.aamhc-umc.org/>

OCTOBER 23, 2010

The Central Texas Conference will celebrate its centennial in Fort Worth. (see complete coverage elsewhere in this issue.)

MARCH ??, 2011

Annual Meeting of the TUMHS will celebrate the bicentennial of Robert Alexander's birth with tours, entertainment, historical papers, meals, and fellowship. If you would like to present a paper on the theme, *Robert Alexander and His World*, contact Rob Sledge. Chappell Hill UMC is the host church.

JULY 21-24, 2011

The Historical Society of the UMC will convene at Oklahoma City University. The theme is "United Methodism in a Land of Many Cultures: Native American and Latino History." To request more information, email cwolf@okcu.edu with "Convocation" in the subject line.

Conference Archives Update

Two of the annual conference archives in our constituent conferences are in transition. The North West Texas Archives are being relocated from McMurry University to Lubbock. If you have any questions, contact the conference headquarters.

The Texas Conference Archives are moving from Lon Morris College to a place to be determined. Faulk Landrum will continue as Archivist through the transition.

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Have You Paid Your Dues?

If you have to stop and think whether you paid or not, then you probably haven't.

Annual dues in the TUMHS are \$12.50 per year for individuals and \$15.00 for couples. A life membership is \$200. To become a member in the TUMHS, send your dues to the Jean Traster, 2014 Iron Horse Ct. Arlington, Tx 76017

