

TEXAS UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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President's Letter by Wm. C. Hardt

Another TUMHS Annual Meeting is now part of the historical record. I am confident it will be fondly remembered for years to come. Most annual meetings are held from noon Friday to noon Saturday, but this one started on Thursday so we could have a full day of touring Texas Methodist historic sites. What a tour it was!

One of the tour stops was Rutersville, one of the two United Methodist Heritage Landmark sites in Texas. Heritage Landmark Sites are distinct from the UM Historic Sites with which you may be more familiar. Both categories of historic site recognition are administered by the General Commission on Archives and History. Landmark Sites must be so designated by the General Conference of the UMC. There are currently 41 Heritage Landmark sites. They tend to be concentrated in the eastern states (12 in Pennsylvania and Maryland combined). The GCAH publishes A Traveler's Guide to the Landmark Heritage Sites of the United Methodist Church which may be accessed at http://www.gcah.org/site/c.ghKJI0PHIoE/b.2901385/k.4196/A_Travelers_Guide_to_the_Heritage_Landmarks_of_The_United_Methodist_Church.htm

UM Historic Sites, on the other hand, require annual conference rather than general conference approval. Applications are forwarded to the annual conference from the conference Commission on Archives and History. There are now about 100 such sites in Texas, and more are being added every year. The Texas Conference will consider three applications at its 2011 Annual Conference.

Texans are very interested in historical markers. I have discovered that some confusion exists between the UMC, State of Texas, and National Register of Historic Places. All three are worthy programs, but are administered by the UMC, the Texas Historical Commission, and the U. S. Department of the Interior, and have different criteria. They also have vastly different requirements in terms of costs and rigor of the application process. The Texas Historical Commission, in particular, has made it much more difficult and much more expensive to obtain a state marker. We are also experiencing some theft of the markers because of the high prices scrap metals have been bringing. In one dastardly act, the state historical marker at Sloan Memorial UMC in Houston was stolen.

If you are considering a marker for some historic site, get in touch with the chair of your conference Commission on Archives and History. If you want a Texas marker, contact

the chair of your County Historical Commission. You may find that person's contact information from your County Judge's office.

News From Here and There

Student Essay Contest Honors Walter Vernon

One of the business items transacted at the 2001 TUMHS Annual Meeting was designating the Student Essay Contest as the Walter N. Vernon Award.

Walter Newton Vernon (1907-1993) was the founder of the TUMHS, a minister, and historian. Dr. Robert Monk contributed a memoir about Walter Vernon in vol. 2 of the *TUMHS Heritage Journal*. I quote from that article,

So we remember and honor Walter Vernon as a gentleman, a wise leader, one who always encouraged and challenged others, a consummate author and editor, and excellent teacher, a loving friend, and a Christian gentleman to whom we in this society are forever indebted.

The same vote that designated the award as the Walter Vernon Award also made the award retroactive. The complete list is as follows:

Eric Nichols, *Robert S. Hyer's Methodist Vision*.

Betty J. Brownsted, *The Influence of Methodism in the Spiritual Formation of a Texas Preacher, Physician, and Pioneer*,

Reagan Lunn, *Because I Believe the Future Will Be Determined by the Ministry of the Church*,

You can help! If you know a student in college, university, seminary, graduate school, etc., why not suggest a research assignment dealing with Texas Methodist history? In addition to the honor, the possibility of publication in the *Heritage Journal*, there is a \$250 prize for the winner.

CU at OCU

Oklahoma City University will be the place; July 21-25 will be the dates. The event is the Historical Convocation of the UMC.

The theme is *United Methodism in the Land of Many Cultures: Native American and Latino History*.

Program organizers have planned an interesting experience that includes tours, speakers, visits to historic sites, and more.

Accommodations are available in modern dormitories at OCU. Registration materials which include a complete schedule and housing information is available at

<http://www.historicalsocietyunitedmethodistchurch.org/meetingarchives/2011-reg-form.pdf>

See you there!

Warnick Award

One of my favorite parts of the Annual Meeting is the announcement of the Warnick Awards for best local church histories published in the previous year.

We are pleased to announce that the 2011 Warnick Award is *Loving God. . . Loving Neighbor: Seventy Years of Methodists in Deer Park* by Ellois Jane Frantz.

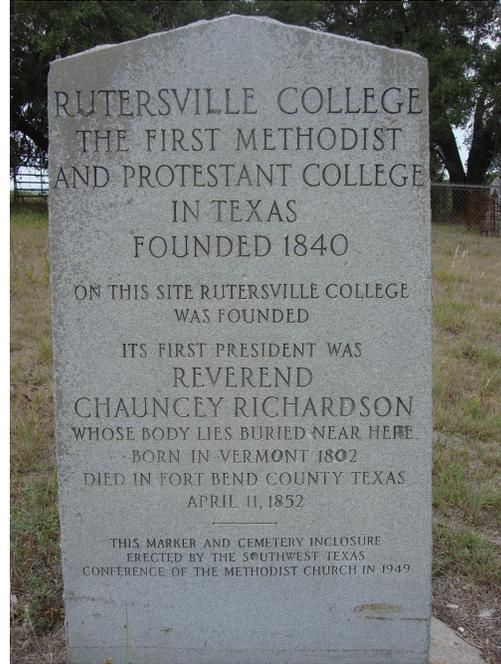
This history of Deer Park UMC is full of interesting and inspiring stories of faith and witness. Deer Park is located in eastern Harris County along the Houston Ship Channel. It is home to one the largest concentrations of petrochemical and refining facilities in the world.

This year's Warnick Award winner highlights ministries to a diverse community of people who were attracted to employment opportunities in those installations.

Images from Annual Meeting



Bishop John Wesley Hardt and Mary Brandt at Chappell Hill UMC. Photo on wall is Henry Brandt who built the church 1900-1901.



Marker erected at Rutersville in 1949 to commemorate Rutersville College and Chauncey Richardson.



Wm. C. Hardt and Jean Traster at
Rutersville.

Texas Conference Archive Update

Many of you have been following the continuing saga of the Texas Conference Archives and will be interested in an update. The Conference Commission on Archives and History is recommending the construction of a conference Heritage Center to be located at Chappell Hill. Here is background material furnished to the conference.

A Conference Heritage Center

Throughout its 171 year history the Texas Conference has attempted to keep its foundational documents secure. There is evidence of the existence of a “conference trunk” as early as 1866. In that year the custodian of the trunk, the Rev. J. W. Fields, transferred to the newly-created Trinity Conference (today’s North Texas Conference) and relinquished his custody of the trunk containing the historical materials of the conference. The custom of keeping the archives in a trunk continued until well into the 20th century. Care of the trunk was entrusted to a retired preacher who would bring the trunk to annual conference and allow the examination of its contents. The trunk survives and is part of our collection.

Several times in our conference’s history historically-minded preachers and laity would come together and form a Texas Conference Historical Society. The celebration of the centennial of the Texas Revolution in 1936 was one such occasion. The Historical Society that formed during that period was able remain organized after the centennial celebrations were concluded. The Society eventually achieved a semi-official conference status. Its president made reports to annual conference which were printed in the Journals. It solicited funds from the conference for historical projects such as maintenance of McMahan’s Chapel, subsidizing published histories, and locating and cleaning tombstones of pioneer preachers. It was a membership organization rather than an official committee of the conference. It promoted history, but did not have responsibility for the archives.

When the Central Building at Lakeview was built, the Texas Conference Historical Society was able to secure one room dedicated to our conference’s history. The room contained museum display cases with historical documents.

Soon after the establishment of the Heritage Room in the Central Building, General Conference action made the Heritage Room inadequate. At the Uniting Conference of 1968 the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren merged to become the United Methodist Church. The section dealing with archives in the new 1968 *Discipline* followed EUB practice. After 1968 each annual conference was required to have a fire-safe archival facility. The operation of that facility would be under the supervision of a Commission on Archives and History.

The first response of the Texas Conference in meeting this new requirement was to put the archives in the Heritage Room at Lakeview. It soon became obvious that custody of the archives was not an appropriate ministry for Lakeview. The room in the Central Building was inadequate, and Lakeview's human resources were devoted to promoting spiritual experiences for its campers—not for archival work.

The next stop for the archives was the library at Lon Morris College. Such an arrangement was a great improvement over Lakeview. The archives were housed in space specifically built for archival use. One of the professional librarians at Lon Morris divided his time between the archives and his regular library duties. The archives were now safe, secure, and under the supervision of a professional in the field.

After an accreditation team criticized Lon Morris for its inadequate library space for the size of its student body, the archives room in the library was incorporated into the general library space. The archives were moved to a double classroom in an academic building. The conference ended its relationship with the professional librarian who acted as conference archivist.

The new situation in the academic building had its advantages and disadvantages. It had not been built to archival standards, and it was below grade (a major problem!). On the other hand, it was spacious, accessible, and Lon Morris provided the space, telephone, internet, heating, air conditioning, electricity, maintenance, insurance, janitorial service, and pest control gratis.

In 2010 increased enrollment at Lon Morris created a need for the space in the academic building to be used for instructional purposes. In July 2010, Dr. Faulk Landrum supervised the removal to the archives to A-1 storage units in Jacksonville. The archives are safe but are inaccessible to the archivist and other researchers.

Our mandate is to preserve the official records of the conference so they can be consulted to resolve disputes, prove years of service for pension benefits, and provide boards, commissions, and districts with authoritative records of their past actions. Since the archives are, for all practical purposes, closed, we cannot do an adequate job of receiving and processing records that are being generating now. We are running the risk of creating an unnecessary gap in the historical record.

As this brief historical sketch demonstrates, the record of the Texas Conference in caring for its foundational documents does not match the excellence our conference demonstrates in so many other areas of ministry. The current situation of inaccessibility in rental storage units gives us an opportunity to provide a solution that will honor the saints who have gone before us and will also relieve succeeding generations from having to deal with a similar undesirable situation. That solution is building a facility specifically designed for archival use and owned by the conference itself rather than one of the conference institutions. Chappell Hill UMC has offered a lot for the Heritage Center. The Commission on Archives and History recommends that offer be accepted.

Membership Information

The good works of the TUMHS including the Warnick Award, the Walter Vernon Student Essay Award, the Annual Meeting, the publication of the *Heritage Journal*, and lifting up the UM heritage depend upon the dues and gifts of its members. Your dues and gifts are used exclusively for these programs. We pay no rent, utilities, or insurance. Board members are not reimbursed for travel expenses. The membership benefits are a real bargain. The *Heritage Journal* alone is worth the \$15 annual dues. Please send your dues and gifts to the address below.

Name(s) _____

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Annual Dues _____ **Regular at \$15** _____ **Life at \$200** _____

I wish to support the TUMHS with a donation of _____

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You may use this form to pay your annual dues even if you do not plan to attend the annual meeting.