Methodist Historical Notes and Comments

With this issue of *Methodist History* we begin the practice of publishing brief historical items under the above heading. We recognize that for varying reasons some important accounts are brief and pointed, and though these are of historical significance, they do not merit full length articles. Following are some historical notes of the kind we have in mind.

**Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Francis Asbury to the Rev. Dr. Coke**

This is a newly found Asbury letter. It was discovered by the Rev. John A. Vicleers, Manuscript Journal Secretary of the Wesley Historical Society of England. It was printed in the Methodist Magazine (London) of 1807. Mr. Vicleers thinks that it was the only Asbury letter translated and published in Welsh. It was included in a small pamphlet of missionary letters published by Dr. Coke. It was written from Charleston (not Charlestown), South Carolina. Asbury is giving Coke some report of the work in America. This letter makes 61 letters which have come to light since the publication of the Letters of Francis Asbury.

Charlestown (S.C.), Nov. 4, 1806

My dear Brother,

Great grace attend you! I am lately returned from the West. Great heat, with my age, (having entered my 62d year,) the unevenness of the roads, and the like, made my journey unpleasant. But harmony among the Preachers and people, and an increase of about 1400 members and twelve Ministers, (at the Southern Conference) compensated for all my toil.

We have made efforts to establish a mission among the French in Canada. Our Mississippi Missionaries are in health, pushing on South-west, towards the Pacific Ocean.* Capt. Lewis's late discoveries give an account of an extent of country of about 3000 miles, that may probably be interspersed with inhabitants in 50 years time. That part of the continent which is under the influence of the United States, may extend, perhaps, 4000 miles in length and breadth.—It is only when I am in the cities that I can write to you. Here I am presented with official letters, and hold Conferences. You may be sure I am kept steady and constant in my work, being obliged to ride 5000 miles in nine months. I must now commend you to God

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*Colonel Meriwether Lewis of the famous Lewis and Clark expedition to the Northwest. Asbury refers in the *Journal* to seeing Col. Lewis on the Ohio on September 7, 1803, and again refers to Col. Lewis in the letter of November 7, 1806, to Thornton Fleming. Asbury was looking forward to sending missionaries to the Northwest when it should be peopled.
in prayer, with all my friends in Europe, America, and the whole world. Your friend,

F. Asbury.


Llythyrau a anfonwyd at Dr. Coke ao eraill; yn dywedyd am Lwyddiant yr Efengyl yn nhlith y Wesleaid yn America a llysfydd eraill yn a flwyddyn ddiwaechaf.

Thomas Coke's Fifth Visit to the West Indies

In his article on Thomas Coke and the West Indies (Methodist History, October, 1964), W. Thomas Smith reaches the tentative conclusion that Coke probably paid a fifth visit to the West Indies on his way to attend the General Conference of 1800 at Baltimore. That this was his intention is clear from his letter to Ezekiel Cooper, dated December 18, 1798, quoted by Smith. But there is little doubt that this plan was never executed, and that, in spite of the various assertions of his biographers, Coke paid no further visits to the Caribbean after his fourth tour in 1792-3.

No doubt through the pressure of his other commitments, Coke did not leave England for America until February 1800. From the heading of a letter written to Henry Dundas on February 10th of that year, we learn that he was at that time aboard ship and waiting to sail from Falmouth Roads.* This corrects the statement of Frank Baker in a footnote to the Letters of Francis Asbury, p. 185 (based on Drew's Life of Coke, 1817, p. 305), that Coke set out in 1799. In the absence of any journal of this voyage, we are unable to construct a detailed itinerary, but we know that Coke was in America before the end of April and was in Baltimore for the General Conference which opened on May 6th (not May 20th, as stated by Smith.† This scarcely leaves time for even a fleeting visit to the West Indies under 18th century conditions of travel. The fact that Coke makes no mention of any fifth visit in his three-volume History of the West Indies, 1808-11, is virtually decisive.

—John A. Vickers

A Note on Nathan Bangs

All too often when our fathers in the faith wrote they suppressed names and places by the use of initials or by leaving blanks. How many times have we wished that they had been specific!

In 1808, Nathan Bangs visited his brother, Joseph, in Stamford, Delaware County, New York. He is quoted by Abel Stevens as having said in connection with this visit:

* Original at Methodist Archives Centre, London.
† Journal of Francis Asbury, II, 231.
In no instance was I badly treated, except once on the west branch of the Delaware, where, after attending a quarterly meeting in Delhi, I came to the Protestant Episcopal Church, a few miles above, at which an appointment had been given out for me; but on my arrival I found the church closed against me. As, however, the people had assembled, I stood in a wagon and delivered my message; some opposers attempting meanwhile to drown my voice by ringing the bell, a useless attempt against any itinerant whose voice had been toned amid the storms of Canada.

The only Protestant Episcopal Church in 1808 above Delhi on the west branch of the Delaware was St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church, located in what is today the village of Hobart, a church erected in 1801 as a mission and still in use and enjoying this same status. Although the resemblance is not close, there is at least a rough parallel between this incident and John Wesley's preaching while perched on his father's tombstone outside the church at Epworth.

—William R. Phinney, Pastor
Stamford Methodist Church
Stamford, New York

John Street Church

On December 12, 1964 a landmark plaque was placed on John Street Church, Designating this as a historic landmark of the City of New York. It was given by the New York Community Trust, the organization which is marking the historic landmarks of New York City. The plaque reads as follows:

Landmarks of New York. John Street Methodist Church, the oldest Methodist Society in America, organized in 1766 by Philip Embury and Barbara Heck. Constructed here in 1768 'Wesley Chapel,' the first Methodist Meeting House in America. The present Church, the third on this site, was completed in 1841.
The Northeastern Jurisdictional Association of Methodist Historical Societies held its annual meeting at Barratt’s Chapel, Frederica, Delaware, April 27-29. The Chapel is one of the twelve officially designated shrines of American Methodism and is now the property of the Historical Society of the Peninsula Conference, which hosted the April meeting. During the past year a museum and curator’s residence was erected adjacent to the Chapel at a cost of $50,000, and was dedicated by Bishop John Wesley Lord on October 25, 1964.

During the three-day meeting papers were read by Professor Robert J. Bull of Drew University, Delaware State Archivist Dr. Leon DeValinger, and Dr. William C. Jason, lay leader and historical society president of the former Delaware Annual Conference. A Communion Service the first evening of the meeting commemorated the first Communion at Barratt’s Chapel, and a dramatization centering about early Methodist personalities was presented.

The Northeastern Jurisdictional Association began in March, 1965 the publication of The Northeastern Methodist Historical Bulletin. This bulletin is designed as a medium of information and communication between the historical societies of the twenty annual conferences of the Northeastern Jurisdiction. It is available to any interested persons who will request it from the Editor, Dr. W. Guy Smeltzer, R.D. 1, Box 316A, Apollo, Pennsylvania 15613.

WESLEY WORKS EDITORIAL PROJECT

The second report on financial support given by the Annual Conference Historical Societies to the Wesley Works Editorial Project went out the first of May. It is encouraging to note that more Annual Conference Societies are making pledges and contributions. Payments from Louisville Conference, Missouri West Conference, Southern Illinois Conference, and the World Methodist Council, which were not included in the May report, bring the total contributed in cash to $7,150.00.

Dean Robert E. Cushman of Duke Divinity School, Chairman of the Editorial Board, has the following to say about the progress of the work on this significant undertaking:

"I am able to report encouraging progress in the Wesley Works Editorial Project. After extended study the rules of procedure and stylistic canons have been firmly established and the work of editing has now been largely allocated to the unit editors or editorial teams. Bibliographical researches which will result in an exhaustive and definitive
bibliography of John Wesley's work is in the last stages of completion under the vigorous direction and tireless researches of Professor Frank Baker. Three literary editors representing the Editorial Board have been appointed to discharge the principal supervisory editorial work. They are Professors Frank Baker, John Lawson, and Albert C. Outler. We are still hoping to see publication of Wesley's sermons and the bibliography within two years."

THE BARBARA HECK HOUSE

A group of interested ministers in the United Church of Canada have formed "The Barbara Heck House Committee" and plan to rebuild the edifice for use as both a retreat house and a summer tourist attraction.

The house is believed to have been built in 1799 when the Hecks (Barbara, son Samuel and his wife Lois Wright) moved to Prescott from the homestead in Augusta Township, Ontario, where they had settled in 1785. It was a fine rubble stone Georgian home of two stories, three fireplaces, and floor to ceiling pine paneling partitions. It was here that Barbara died, her big English Bible having slipped from her lap, in 1804.

The house has survived these many years, though during the last 70 years or so it has been out of the hands of the Heck family. DuPont of Canada bought up the property about 1956, along with adjoining acres, for a new plant; and in 1963, after offering the house to the United Church, it was torn down. The Church had no particular interest in the house if it was to be removed from the site.

The Committee is now considering a site about 35 miles west of the original location where a tract of some 80 acres has been purchased for a retreat center. The restored house will still look out upon the St. Lawrence River, which it has faced for over a century and a half.

Contributions will be appreciated. Persons interested in helping with the project, or in securing further information, should address the Rev. J. William Lamb, R.R. 1, Cataraqui, Ontario, Canada.

HISTORICAL WORKSHOP

The South Central Jurisdiction Association of Methodist Historical Societies has announced plans for a Historical Workshop to be held at Mt. Sequoyah, Fayetteville, Arkansas, August 16-17, 1965.

Three areas of interest will be covered in the Workshop. First, "The Care and Feeding of Local Church Committees on Records." Second, "The Why and How of Historical Societies," with special reference to the Annual Conference—producing conference histories, preserving records, and emphasizing sites and shrines within the conference. Third, "Annual Conference and Jurisdictional Depositories and Archives."

Persons within and without the South Central Jurisdiction in-
interested in Methodist history are invited to attend. Outstanding leaders have been secured for the Workshop. Additional information may be secured from Dr. Virgil Morris, 2400 N.W. 23rd Street, Oklahoma City, or Dr. John Hoon, Box 147, Newton, Kansas.

GERMAN-AMERICAN METHODIST ARCHIVES

The Zwingli F. Meyer Collection of German-American Methodism was established in February, 1963 at Iowa Wesleyan College. A spacious room in the college library was allocated to the collection, and Dr. Louis A. Haselmayer was named curator. There is a growing interest in the collection, many additional gifts have been received.

The Minute Book of the Trustees of Mount Pleasant German College (1873-1900) is being translated by Dr. Haselmayer, and two college students are undertaking the translation of the two great historical publications of German Methodism in the middle west, the Jublaumsbuch of the St. Louis German Conference and the Souvenir of the West German Conference. These projects will provide a vast amount of detailed history on churches and communities as well as biographical information.

It is hoped that the Meyer Collection will become a focal point for historical studies in German-American Methodism. Inquiries and suggestions should be addressed to Dr. Haselmayer, Iowa Wesleyan College, Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

CHURCH UNION AND CHURCH HISTORY

Representatives of The Methodist and the Evangelical United Brethren churches are busily engaged in the preparation of a proposed Discipline which will be considered by the General Conferences of the two denominations at the meeting in Chicago in November, 1966.

In April, Bishop T. Otto Nall and Albea Godbold, president and executive secretary respectively, of the Association of Methodist Historical Societies, were called to meet with their opposite numbers, if we may use the colloquialism, from the Evangelical United Brethren Church—Dr. Alfred Thomas, president, and the Rev. John H. Ness, Jr., secretary and curator. The group elected Dr. Paul Washburn, executive director of the Commission on Church Union of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, to preside over the meeting.

During a session that ran for an afternoon and into the evening, the group hammered out, so to speak, the outlines of a historical and archival organization for the united church, if the two denominations vote to merge. In due time the draft which was compiled will be formalized and sent to the executive committees of the
two historical organizations for consideration and approval. Following the action of these two bodies, the paper will go to Committee No. 16 set up by the Commission on Church Union. Ultimately it will go through all necessary channels, to use a bureaucratic phrase, and finally become a part of the proposed Discipline to be considered at Chicago in 1966.

It is not appropriate to discuss here the details of the document which is still in progress. However, it is not amiss to say that if the paper is adopted by the historical organizations, and if the denominations unite, it will be adequate for the archival and historical work of the church.

BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Plans for the Bicentennial celebration in 1966 continue to develop.

1. The Council of Bishops has issued a call to the great meeting to be held in Baltimore, April 21-24, 1966.

2. We are assured that the historical booklet of about 112 pages, *The Drama of Early American Methodism*, will come from the press by October 1, 1965. It will be sent free to every pastor who orders it, and it can be bought singly or in quantity at small cost for use in the churches. The Commission on Promotion and Cultivation will send out order blanks and other material on the Bicentennial to the pastors this fall.

3. Work is progressing on the historical filmstrip, and it should be ready for distribution in due time.

4. Essay and hymn contests have been announced.

5. The program at Baltimore, April 21-24, 1966, will consist of outstanding addresses, a panel discussion on great issues, a dialogue by high ranking churchmen, historical papers, historical tours, the burial of a time capsule in Mount Olivet Cemetery, a dramatic presentation, and the welcoming of a Methodist preacher who will ride horseback from Old McKendree Chapel, Methodism’s shrine near Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to Baltimore. As this is written more than fifty preachers have applied for the assignment as the rider for this project which has been designated “Saddlebags East.” More detailed information about the program in Baltimore, including data on hotel reservations, will be sent out to delegates and others this fall.

6. The bishops have been asked to name ten to twenty persons from each annual conference as official delegates to the Baltimore meeting next April. Delegates may be preachers or laymen, men or women. Persons interested in being appointed as delegates should communicate with their bishop or the president of the conference historical society. Delegates will pay their own way to Baltimore.