HENRY FOXALL
FOUNDRYMAN AND FRIEND OF ASBURY

by Homer L. Calkin

Some Americans who attained positions of leadership during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were known for the universality of their interests. This was certainly true of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Among the less prominent men of the time who were versatile in their interests and of some importance in the development of the United States as a new nation was Henry Foxall.

Foxall was born May 24, 1758 in Monmouthshire, England, the son of an obscure blacksmith. While he was still an infant, the family moved to West Bromwich near Birmingham where Henry's father operated a forge. The elder Foxalls were pious followers of John Wesley and apparently friends of Francis Asbury. Indeed, as a youth Asbury served as an apprentice at the Old Forge in West Bromwich, England, where his immediate superior was a godly man named Foxall.

Henry Foxall himself learned the trade of iron founder and followed it successfully for nearly forty years. But as time passed he also became a businessman, a Methodist lay preacher, and a philanthropist. Among his friends he could count leaders in government, business, and the church.

In 1780 Henry Foxall married Ann Harward of Stourport, Worcestershire, England. To them were born two children, a son who died at about 25 in Georgetown, District of Columbia, and a daughter Mary Ann who married Samuel McKenney of Georgetown. Foxall's wife is credited, along with an itinerant Methodist preacher, with converting her husband. As a result Foxall renounced his worldly pleasures, such as card playing.1

About 1794 Foxall moved to Ireland, residing first in Dublin and later at Carrick-on-Shannon. He became an exhorter and later was licensed as a lay Methodist preacher. He was made foreman of an "extensive iron foundry," achieved success and became widely known. His success was so pronounced that it aroused rivalry and hatred among foremen in other foundries. His pious virtues further provoked his enemies.

One winter night Foxall's house was attacked by a mob while the family slept. Firearms were discharged at the windows. Drunken shouts and curses pierced the midnight air. Foxall's first thought was to protect his wife and children, but he had no weapon. Being a devout person, he probably prayed. Then as a man from the

mob started to climb through a window, Foxall felled him to the ground with one swing of a chair. A second and a third met the same fate. The mob then retired, threatening swift and merciless vengeance.2

Shortly afterward, in 1797, Henry Foxall and his family emigrated to Philadelphia. His wife soon died, and in December, 1799 he married a widow named Margaret Smith.3

In Philadelphia Foxall entered a partnership with Robert Morris, Jr., and started the Eagle Foundry. Soon Henry became “an all-around founder and molder.” Almost at once the foundry began manufacturing guns for the Federal government.4 Evidently a few of the first guns proved faulty. Writing to Joshua Humphreys, the first United States naval constructor, on September 17, 1798, Foxall expressed regret:

I am very sorry to find that from any circumstances there should be any of the guns I sent burst. The Confidence I had in the Mettell I put in them caused me to send them to be proved. . . . About forty Guns was before Proved of the same Mettell without one bursting and I am Confident (that is if a man can be confident of anything he does not see) that severity some way or other has been used. . . . I do not mean to be absent in time of Proving in futuer My self nor do I wish to Prove any without some Person belonging to the Public being Present.5

But apparently the failure of one or two guns made no difference in Foxall’s relations with the government. The next year Benjamin Stoddert, secretary of the navy, contracted with him to deliver to a boring mill on the Schuylkill River a quantity of cannon valued at $23,000. They were to be of such caliber and models as might be determined by the Navy from time to time. Four weeks after the contract was signed on January 4, 1799, Foxall was to deliver an average of four complete guns weekly. Stoddert had already advanced $2,000 and agreed to pay Foxall and his company $6,000 more upon signing the contract.6

Major John Clarke, superintendent of construction for the state of Virginia, visited the Eagle Foundry in 1798 and became acquainted with Foxall. Clarke was favorably impressed with the foundry and its work. The cannon produced there “were much superior to any of the iron guns made at the other foundries he

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2 Evening Express, August 10, 1867.
3 Davis, op. cit., 40.
4 Ibid.; Evening Express, op. cit.
5 Henry Foxall to Joshua Humphreys, Marcusbuck, Sept. 17, 1798, in Joshua Humphrey’s Correspondence, Pennsylvania Historical Society.
6 Navy Dept. Contracts, No. 1, 1794-1811, pp. 53-56, Naval Records Collection, Record Group 45, National Archives. This contract was typical of the many others Foxall was to obtain. Cannon were to be cast and bored accurately. They were to be tested at the expense of the government, by persons appointed by the navy. If any of the guns burst during the testing, Foxall was to pay for the powder. The cannon were to weigh about two hundred pounds for each pound of the cannon ball. If there was any disagreement regarding the contract, Foxall and the Government were each to choose two persons to resolve the difference.
visited.” In a letter to James Monroe, Clarke wrote, “From his great experience, he [Foxall] has made very considerable improvements in the art of making ordnance, and is acknowledged by the best judges to understand that business better than any man in America.”

Foxall signed another contract with Stoddert on October 17, 1800, agreeing to deliver 148 iron cannon at some convenient wharf on tidewater either in Pennsylvania or Maryland. The smallest gun was to be capable of firing no less than a nine-pound ball, the largest not more than a forty-two pound ball. All guns were to be completed in twelve to eighteen months. Later the delivery time was extended to twenty-four months. The government advanced $18,000 as Foxall began the work.

Meanwhile, the Federal government moved from Philadelphia to the newly established city of Washington. According to tradition, Jefferson urged Foxall to establish his foundry near the new Capital. Foxall agreed and on December 4, 1800, purchased land along the Potomac River from Francis Deakins. This tract extended eventually from the river half a mile or more and contained some sixty or seventy acres. The factory was erected above Georgetown (about opposite the Three Sisters Islands) between the Potomac River and the mule path along the Canal.

When Foxall decided to move to Georgetown, it was with the assurance that he would not lack for business. The secretary of war, James McHenry, wrote to Colonel Lewis Tousard, “I have often been told that Mr. Foxall introduced the art of making cannon in its present improved state into our country.” McHenry thought Foxall had not received all that was due him. Tousard therefore promised him future employment as long as he benefited the United States by maintaining his furnace on the Potomac and making cannon “of the best iron.”

Within twenty-three days after he purchased the site in Georgetown, Foxall notified the war department that he had signed his bond. He requested a contract for making cannon and asked for an advance thereon. By February, 1801 he had cannon ready to be tested. These first cannon from the Columbia Foundry (Foxall had changed the name from the Eagle Foundry) were cast for twenty-four pounders but bored as eighteen pounders. However,

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8 Navy Dept. Contracts, No. 1, 93-97.
10 Secretary of War to Col. Lewis Tousard Nov. 21, 1800. War Department, Miscellaneous Letters Sent, I, 36, RG 107, National Archives.
the war department accepted them.\textsuperscript{11} New contracts were frequently made and quickly fulfilled. By June 18, 1801, Foxall had produced twenty-six pieces of ordnance under an army contract. At the same time he made thirty-one twenty-four pounders for the navy.\textsuperscript{12}

Foxall’s reputation was not limited to the Federal government. In 1801 Virginia was planning to start a foundry at Richmond. Major Clarke wrote that he stopped to see Foxall in Georgetown, “relative to the introduction of his improvements into our works. He is willing to come to Richmond for a few days for that purpose. . . .”

The executive council of Virginia instructed Clarke to determine Foxall’s charges for these services. Foxall replied on November 9, 1801, that his work was “sufficient to engross well nigh all my attention. Nevertheless, I would most cheerfully appropriate as much of my time as would be necessary to come down and lay out the works and get for you such hands as should be able with judgment and propriety to carry them on.”

Foxall said several visits to Richmond would be necessary. He requested that his traveling and other expenses be paid. After the iron works were in full operation, he felt “justified in saying my compensation shall be one thousand dollars.” A notation in June, 1809 indicated that the foundry and boring mill were completed and “the first Gun had been made.”\textsuperscript{13}

Apparently Foxall was a perfectionist. Among a group of guns cast, bored and turned, ready for inspection in 1805, there was one he “did not like quite so well (being a little defective to the eye) tho it will prove as good a Gun as can be, I have no doubt.” He decided to cast another. In reporting this, Foxall added, “I should wait on you immediately were it not for my being confined by another accident I have received on my leg in the same place I hurt it some time ago.”\textsuperscript{14} Evidently the occupation of iron founder could be hazardous; neither cannonballs nor cannon were light in weight.

In reply to an inquiry from the war department in July, 1807, Foxall said the Columbia Foundry was ready to make fifty twenty-four pound cannon and fifty thirty-two pounders as soon “as I can get the Flask and patterns in readiness” which might take about one month. Foxall added that he would make as many cannon balls

\textsuperscript{11} Henry Foxall to Secretary of War, Dec. 27, 1800, Register of Letters Received; Secretary of War to Col. Tousard, Feb. 17, 1801, Miscellaneous Letters Sent, I, 37, Records, Office of Secretary of War, RG 107.

\textsuperscript{12} War Department to Col. Tousard, June 22, 1801, War Department Miscellaneous Letters Sent, I, 90, RG 107.

\textsuperscript{13} Major John Clarke to James Monroe, Sept. 1801; Henry Foxall to Virginia Executive Council, Nov. 9, 1801; George M. Smith to Col. E. Carrington, Gen’l John Preston, Major Sam’l Coleman, June 29, 1809. Quoted in Somerville, “Henry Foxall . . . American Foundryman,” Iron Worker, XXV, 2-4.

\textsuperscript{14} Henry Foxall to Jacob Wagner, July 9, 1805. State Department, Miscellaneous Letters Received, RG 59, National Archives.
from time to time as “lays in my power.” The price agreed upon was $50 per ton. A year later he was apparently running short of money. He asked for an advance of $5,000 on the contract.15

In 1807 the government seriously considered the establishment of a national foundry in Washington. Henry Dearborn, secretary of war, requested Foxall to review the proposed site at Greenleaf’s Point (now Fort Leslie J. McNair) and make recommendations. In a candid and forthright letter, Foxall wrote: “When we were on the spot at Greenleaf’s Point, looking at the situation, I saw it was good, and the conveniences for its adoption many. But how the plan could be effected by me, to mutual advantage, I was at a loss to understand: for no sooner was one difficulty overcome, than another presented it to my mind.”

Foxall said he would build a foundry “on as large, or on as small a scale as you may determine” in return for a two-year contract. After the two years, he would gladly continue to rent the plant and manufacture cannon if they were needed. Foxall wrote that his reason for thinking “the works ought to be built at the expense of the public in preference to any individual, is because they will derive much advantage therefrom, by having an establishment to resort to in case of emergency.” Foxall concluded:

> While I have been endeavoring to throw my ideas together on paper, and give my opinion at large on the necessity and utility of a national foundry, I think you will agree with me that I have done it like one that had no establishment of the kind of his own, and not like one who has an establishment of this kind, and has nearly his all invested in it, and this done at the particular request of Government, and at the time they shall withdraw their aid and patronage therefrom, as a manufactory, with all its expensive machinery, become useless and of little value to me its proprietor.16

The plan for a national foundry did not materialize, and Foxall continued to do business with many military establishments. There were unusual demands on his time and talent. He made guns for the arsenal at Harpers Ferry and fifteen guns for Colonel John Williams of North Carolina. In 1809 he was requested to have twelve wheels 4½ feet in size, two Columbiads and a replacement mortar forwarded to Portland, Maine. He furnished dimensions for thirty-two pound cannons and gauges for eighteen, twenty-four, thirty-two and fifty pound balls. The first three gauges were to be completed within three or four days.17

Foxall was engaged in many other businesses in Georgetown in addition to the iron foundry. In 1807 he was one of the stockholders

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17 Foxall to War Dept., March 13, 1806, March 27, 1806, March 23, 1809, War Department, Register of Letters Received; War Department to Foxall, April 25, 1809, June 3, 1809, July 7, 1809, March 21, 1810, War Department, Miscellaneous Letters Sent, RG 107, National Archives.
of the Bank of Columbia in Georgetown. He was a trustee and stockholder of the Georgetown Importing and Exporting Company, and the owner of a large bakery and a number of houses and other property.18

During this period Foxall was interested in education. Congress approved "An Act to incorporate the Trustees of the Georgetown Lancaster School Society" on March 19, 1812. Foxall was one of the twelve trustees of the school which opened in November, 1811. Within a few weeks there were 340 boys and girls attending as tuition-paying students. The legislation of 1812 said that every child should "be provided with all necessary food, clothing, and lodging, and taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, and be placed in the service of, and under the control and management of, some discreet and fit person, competent to instruct and educate the said apprentice, in some trade or employment, which may enable such child . . . to earn a living by honest industry." The school continued for thirty-two years.19

Of average height, Foxall was sturdily built, broad-shouldered and athletic in appearance. Ordinarily his clothes were made of plain dark material. But in the pulpit he wore a suit of rich black velvet with white muslin neckwear, black silk stockings, low shoes and silver buckles.20

A devout man, Foxall had daily family prayers. He enjoyed excellent food and was fond of music. Usually he was stern in appearance until, in the presence of those who knew him, the "mask fell," revealing the charm of his character. He was greatly respected and admired. One of his slaves, Henry Johnson, paid tribute to his kindness: "I belonged to Mr. Henry Foxall, the man who made the first big gun in the United States. He was very good to his slaves; if we had been his children he could hardly have treated us better."21 Foxall was just and honest in his dealings with others. He was involved in a number of different businesses and employed many people, but he owed no man.

The Foxall home was on Frederick (34th) Street between the Canal and Water Street in Georgetown and was said to have been the gathering place of "the wit, beauty and learning of the day." Among the frequent guests were John Quincy Adams, Gouverneur
Morris, Francis Scott Key, James Monroe, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson.\textsuperscript{22}

A warm friendship developed between Foxall and Thomas Jefferson. Both played the violin and frequently accompanied each other. Each was fond of tinkering. They spent many friendly hours together in Jefferson's workshop. When Jefferson developed an airtight stove, Foxall offered to cast it in his foundry, although he doubted that it would function well. Jefferson gave Foxall one of the stoves, and later Foxall's son-in-law, Samuel McKenney, recalled shivering on winter days while standing before the Jeffersonian stove.\textsuperscript{23}

There is another story about Foxall and Jefferson. One day as workmen were building a stone wall around the President's Mansion, Foxall wanted to know of Jefferson why he submitted to such imprisonment. "Prison," the President replied, "it will make the place a paradise! I can walk in the garden without hearing, 'There he is! There he is!'" \textsuperscript{24}

Henry Foxall, from the time of his conversion, was a steadfast and active Methodist layman. When he arrived in Georgetown, he found a small, struggling group of Methodists without a church. The band had started meeting under the leadership of a preacher from Alexandria in a cooper's shop as early as 1794. It was not, however, until 1802 that the Baltimore Annual Conference appointed William Watters to be pastor of the Methodists of Georgetown and Washington City.\textsuperscript{25} By the next year the membership in Georgetown was 109 whites and 47 colored. At a meeting on April 7, 1803, they agreed that their preacher should also serve the Methodists at Greenleaf's Point in return for paying one-third of his salary and one-fourth of his board—a total of $68 a year.\textsuperscript{26}

Foxall was the principal contributor toward the construction of a church for the Georgetown congregation. In addition he gave to two other churches about that time—Mt. Zion, a church for the colored people of Georgetown, and Ebenezer, near the Navy Yard.

As a lay preacher, Foxall frequently filled the pulpit in Georgetown. At the Georgetown Quarterly Conference on February 5, 1814, Foxall asked "that the approaching Annual Conference be requested to ordain him an Elder of the Church." The Baltimore Annual Conference elected him to elder's orders on March 19, 1814.\textsuperscript{27}

Churchmen as well as leaders in government and business visited

\textsuperscript{22 William Ferguson, Methodism in Washington, District of Columbia (Baltimore, 1892), 46-47.}
\textsuperscript{23 Evening Express, August 10, 1867; Ecker, op. cit., 44-45.}
\textsuperscript{24 Evening Express, August 10, 1867.}
\textsuperscript{25 Ecker, op. cit., 49-50; Minutes of the Quarterly Conference, Georgetown Methodist Church, Feb. 5, 1814; Minutes of the Baltimore Annual Conference, March 19, 1814.}
\textsuperscript{26 Evening Express, August 10, 1867.}
\textsuperscript{27 Ecker, op. cit., 49; Evening Express, August 10, 1867.}
the Foxall home. The various preachers stationed in Georgetown and Washington were always welcome. While serving as pastor at Ebenezer in 1811-1812, Beverly Waugh, later bishop, "found genial, social relaxation during these years in the hospitable mansion of Mr. Foxall, whom he regarded as 'a rich man who promises fair to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' "

Bishop Francis Asbury was a frequent visitor. Asbury and his traveling companion, Henry Boehm, stopped there in February, 1813. Boehm wrote, "I was well acquainted with Mr. Foxall, and the bishop and he were like two brothers." This was to be expected in view of Asbury's relationship to the Foxall family while a youth in England. Asbury, as indicated above, was an apprentice at the Old Forge, located near his boyhood home. The master of the forge was a religious and kindly man named Foxall. Asbury wrote in his journal, "I made my choice when about thirteen and a half; during this time I enjoyed great liberty, and in the family was treated more like a son or an equal than an apprentice." 29

Bishop Asbury visited the son of his old master soon after he became established in Philadelphia. While holding a conference in that city in 1799 Asbury wrote that he "retired each night to the Eagleworks, upon Schuylkill, at Henry Foxall's solitary, social retreat." 30

Asbury's mother, Elizabeth, wrote to him on April 29, 1800, saying that Edward Jordan and his wife sent "their love to Mr. Henry Foxall and his wife (if alive). They are very glad to hear of his welfare . . . and would esteem it a singular favor to receive a letter from him soon."

A year later Asbury said he had received no money from the conference in Philadelphia. The New York Conference had sent him $18. "I shall take 30 from Mr. Foxall. If the Society in Baltimore choose they may repay him." Asbury was always welcome in the Foxall home. In 1802, he wrote in his journal, "On Friday [March 26] it snowed most of the day; nevertheless, I rode on seven miles [from Pohick, Virginia] to Henry Foxall's in Georgetown, where I found a shelter from the storm." 31

In 1810 Asbury planned to spend five or six days with Foxall reading "about 1000 pages" of the text of his journal. "I shall be welcome; I shall be retired." It seems likely that he stayed with Foxall each time he stopped in Georgetown on his way to the Baltimore Annual Conference. He mentioned stopping there at least six times, preaching in "our church in Georgetown," and

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29 Henry Boehm, Reminiscences, historical and biographical, of sixty-four years in the ministry (New York, 1866), 195.
30 Ibid., II, 331.
meeting with the society. On his last trip, March 10 to 12, 1815, perhaps in the company of Foxall, he saw "the ruins of Capitol and the President's house; the navy yard we burned ourselves. O war! war!" 32

When the War of 1812 started, the demands on Foxall were great. The ordnance department thought it would be advisable for him to cast five or six tons of large grape shot, one and two pounds in size, for the coast batteries. Likewise, he should make fifty or one hundred tons of ten-inch shells. "It would be better he should cast Six Pounder Field Pieces than Twelve Pounders. I believe we have a full supply of the latter. The Service will require 8 or 10 Six Pounders for one Twelve pounder." 33

During the month of April, 1813, Foxall was to deliver to one McCulloch of Baltimore eighteen pairs of cast iron gun carriage wheels; 150 rounds of six pounder shot to Peter Gough for the militia of St. Mary's County, Maryland; and three hundred shot of twenty-four pounders and thirty of six pounders to Captain Ferdinand Marsteller, commanding Fort Washington.34

It is tradition that guns made by Foxall, hauled over mountains and rivers by oxen to the Great Lakes, were a decisive factor in the Battle of Lake Erie on September 10, 1813. The battle was won by Commodore Oliver H. Perry, it is said, because of his superior guns.35

Foxall's contracts with both the army and the navy were matters of concern for some government officials. The chief of army ordnance wrote: "As I understand Mr. Foxall of Geo.town is busily engaged in casting Cannon for the navy, perhaps there may be a Disappointment in case of a sudden Demand on him for Cannon for the Land Service. I therefore take the liberty of recommending that Instructions be given for completing the number of 10 Inch Mortars of the new Pattern, to 30 at least; of which only 14 have yet been cast. These will be much more formidable to ships than the heaviest cannon and cost not half so much." 36

During the War of 1812 Washington had a population of about 8,000. At that time Georgetown was said to be a city of houses without streets, while Washington was a city of streets without houses. As a matter of fact, there were houses concentrated in three locations—Capitol Hill, near the Navy Yard, and near the President's

32 Ibid., II, 195, 331-2, 776; Elizabeth Asbury to Francis Asbury, April 29, 1800, Ibid., III, 184; Asbury to George Roberts, July 1, 1801, Ibid., III, 214; Asbury to Nelson Reed, April 22, 1810, Ibid., III, 426.
33 Ordnance Department to Secretary of War, December 19, 1812, Ordnance Letters to War Department, 1:23, Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, RG 156, National Archives.
34 Ordnance Department to Foxall, April 16, 1813 and April 19, 1813, Ordnance Department, Letters Sent, 1:165, 166, 168, RG 156.
36 Ordnance Department to John Armstrong, Secretary of War, Feb. 9, 1814, Ordnance Letters to War Department, 1:102.
Mansion and the treasury department. The streets were unpaved, muddy when it rained and dusty during dry weather. Pennsylvania Avenue ran through a swamp and crossed Tiber Creek, bordered with elder bushes. Fourteenth Street was the principal road by which Marylanders reached the center of Washington.

The Methodists in the Capitol Hill and the Navy Yard areas and in Georgetown had churches in which to worship. But there was no Methodist church in the central section of Washington. Two Methodist classes were meeting in the area at the time—one group at the home of Ezekiel Young, merchant and tailor, on F Street between 12th and 13th Streets, the other in the Jefferson Stable School on the southeast corner of 14th and G streets.37

During the War of 1812, Henry Foxall decided to build a new Methodist chapel in the central section of Washington. He may have been thinking of the need for a church in that location for sometime. Foxall’s friend, Joseph Entwisle, wrote that Foxall felt some time before retiring that the Lord had “given him power to get wealth,” and that he should do something more than he had for the Lord and his cause. On March 16, 1814, Foxall purchased lots eight, nine and ten of Square 252 from William H. Dorsey of Montgomery County, Maryland, for $800. As it turned out this was the site of the future Foundry Methodist Church.38 Traditionally, the War of 1812 led Foxall to make his final decision to help build a church in central Washington.

As the war progressed, Foxall became concerned about what might happen. He wrote the secretary of war that he was afraid the enemy would “carry off the cannon belonging to the United States at his furnace.”39

During 1814 the war came ever closer to the nation’s capital. In August the British troops reached the mouth of the Potomac River. For several days they moved leisurely and undisturbed into Maryland. As General Robert Ross approached Washington, the American troops watched but made no effort to attack or delay him.

On August 24, it was learned the British were en route to Bladensburg. In haste the American forces started in that direction. In a short battle, the British were victorious. Resuming their march, the British army camped at nightfall east of the Capitol. Details of soldiers were sent to burn the building. As flames from the Capitol lighted the skies, the President’s Mansion was also burned.

Foxall and many others expected the enemy to continue up the Potomac River to Georgetown. He fully expected his foundry to

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39 Foxall to War Department, March 17, 1813, War Department Register.
be the prime target in that area. His slave, Henry Johnson, later confirmed this. Johnson had been hired out to General Walter Smith who was in command of the American forces at Bladensburg. The Negro was captured during the battle and taken into custody by one Captain Patrick. Johnson was with the British when they burned the President's Mansion and the Capitol, and during that time they tried to get information from him. "If I had said I belonged to Mr. Foxall, they would have carried me off to England, for he was the man they wanted to hurt." 40 Meantime, Foxall, a devout man, is said to have vowed that he would make a thank offering to God if his foundry was spared. Suddenly a violent summer thunderstorm descended on the city, stopping further progress by the British that day.

The next day, while planning to raze other public buildings, a detachment of British sailors and soldiers went to Greenleaf's Point to destroy the naval magazine. For some reason, an unexpected and terrific explosion occurred, killing at least twelve. Leaving campfires burning, the British then withdrew from Washington under cover of darkness.41

Construction of the new church probably did not begin until sometime in 1815. It was dedicated at 11:00 o'clock on September 10 of that year, with Nicholas Snethen delivering the sermon. Snethen, a man of large and commanding appearance, was the logical choice for the dedicatory message. He had served as pastor of the Methodist church in Georgetown and was a close friend of Henry Foxall. Bishop Francis Asbury, who was in Ohio at the time, called Snethen the "silver trumpet." Also, Snethen was well known in Washington, having served as chaplain in the House of Representatives from 1811 to 1812.42

During the first part of 1816 Henry Foxall closed out many of his activities preparatory to making a trip back to England. Apparently the work on the new Methodist chapel was completed during this period so that it could be transferred to the church authorities. On March 28, 1816, Foxall deeded the land and the church at 14th and G Streets to the trustees in return for one dollar. The property was to "for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America (which church or house of


Worship is called and shall be known or distinguished by the name of ‘The Foundary Chapel’

So far as is known, this is the earliest mention of the name “Foundry” in connection with the church. According to some Foxall’s friends suggested that it be called Foxall Chapel. A later account says that the name “Foundry Chapel” was first suggested by a Methodist minister who was having dinner with several other preachers at Foxall’s home. It was proposed because of their host’s foundry by which he had made his reputation and his fortune. “I accept the name,” replied Foxall, “but not in compliment to myself. It shall be called so in honor of the Foundry in London, Wesley’s first church.” Joseph Entwisle wrote at the time of Foxall’s death that it was named for the “Old Foundry.” An early reference to the naming of the church, published in 1838, bears out this claim. In a missionary meeting at Foundry, held on December 19, mention was made of Henry Foxall “who built the church in which this meeting was held, for the infant society, and named it after Mr. Wesley’s first church.” Asbury’s traveling companion, Henry Boehm, in speaking of Foxall’s contribution wrote a number of years later, “He gave it that name for two reasons; first, in remembrance of Mr. Wesley’s first chapel in London, which was so called; and, second, because his own business was that of a founder.”

Without doubt many people considered it inconsistent for a cannon maker to be a church founder. Foxall’s own explanation was, “No doubt you have some reason for thinking I have sinned in turning out all these grim instruments of death; but don’t you think, therefore, that I should do something to save the souls of those who escape?”

February and March, 1816, were months of sorrow and decision for Foxall. On February 10, his wife Margaret died at the age of 57. On March 31, his close friend, Bishop Francis Asbury, passed away in Virginia as he traveled to attend the General Conference in Baltimore. During March, Foxall deeded Foundry Chapel to the trustees. He continued manufacturing guns for the government until he sold his property to Col. John Mason of Analostan (now Roosevelt) Island on March 29, 1816. Mason agreed to complete all unfilled orders for which Foxall had contracted from 1807 to 1814. The total amounted to 338 tons. By the agreement, a warrant was issued in favor of Mason for $20,000, and Foxall was discharged from all further responsibility. Thus ended his career of manufacturing cannon.


Entwisle, op. cit., 507; Boehm, op. cit., 412-3.

Henry Ridgely Evans, Old Georgetown on the Potomac (Washington, D. C., 1933), 61.

Daily Federal Republican, February 14, 1816; Davis, op. cit., XI, 29.
Within a short time Foxall returned to West Bromwich, England, finding a comfortable tavern in which to stay on the edge of town—less than two miles from the iron works where he learned his trade, three miles from Birmingham and five miles from Wednesbury. In each of those places he had many relatives and friends, “all of which it will be easy for me to see at their homes, or they to call on me.” The window in his bedroom at the tavern provided him an extensive view. “I can see from it the theater of my childhood, the places where I often used to spend my sportive childish hours, in various plays.”

Foxall intended to have a rest if he could “get permission from the importunities and solicitations of the minister and membership of the Methodist Society to preach for them.” Since his return to England, he had found that he “must preach here, thither, and yonder.” He felt that he had no excuse for not accepting invitations to preach. He had been in good health during his trip from America. Writing in July 1816, he said, “I have not found the least indisposition of body at any time—I have not taken the least cold—no cough, no symptoms of the asthma, both my legs quite well—I have not the slightest injury to either of them, in traveling by sea or land.”

His daughter wanted him to return to Georgetown in the fall of 1816, and it was his “intention if possible to do so.” However, he was not certain how to “resist the strong solicitation of so many relatives, and connections, joined with some hundreds of friends for my stay, only for one winter.”

Foxall returned to Georgetown sometime in 1817, bringing with him his third wife, Catherine, whom he had married while in England. He did not refrain from all activity after his return. He was elected Mayor of Georgetown on January 4, 1819, and again on January 3, 1820. On January 26, 1818, the “Rev. Henry Foxhall” was elected President of the Georgetown Bible Society, an auxiliary of the District of Columbia Society. He was also one of the managers of the American Colonization Society from 1819 until his death.

In August, 1819, Foxall became a director of the Potomac Company which operated the canal along the Potomac River. He held one share in the company. At a shareholders’ meeting that year, the president and directors were ordered to allow Foxall whatever compensation “they may think right for his attention to the locks at the Little Falls.”

Foxall continued to be involved in philanthropic and church re-

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47 Henry Foxall to Mary Ann McKenney, July 15, 1816, Foxall papers.
lated activities. In 1819 the board of trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church in New Orleans asked for help in building a house of worship. On May 7, the board chairman was notified that $432.66 had been deposited in the United States Bank by Henry Foxall for their use. Foxall had contributed $250 himself.\textsuperscript{50}

The Methodist General Conference appointed John Emory, later bishop, as fraternal delegate to the Methodist Conference of England in 1820. Foxall wrote secretary of state John Quincy Adams on behalf of Emory, “I take the liberty to ask of you a Letter of introduction and recommendation for him to the American Minister at London.”\textsuperscript{51}

Foxall returned to England again in 1823 where he died on December 11, at Handsworth, near Birmingham. Five days before he had taken a carriage ride to show his wife the houses where he and Bishop Asbury had lived. He was buried in the churchyard at West Bromwich.

Foxall’s will provided generously for a number of his Methodist interests. To the trustees of the Charter Fund of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia he left $5,000. He bequeathed a similar sum to the Methodist Missionary Society of the City Road Chapel, London. The Methodist church in Georgetown was given a lot with the dwelling house and improvements thereon for the use and benefit of the resident Methodist minister.\textsuperscript{52}

Foxall’s friend in England, Joseph Entwisle, was with him a fortnight prior to his death. In a Memoir on Foxall, Entwisle wrote that he “was a man of sterling worth,” adding, “his attachment to Methodism was exceeded by no one I know.” A similar compliment was paid by W. M. Ferguson in writing of early Methodism in the District of Columbia, “It seems certain that no other person had so much to do in the early development of Methodism in Washington as Henry Foxall.”\textsuperscript{53}

Perhaps a portion of a letter written by Foxall to his daughter, Mary Ann McKenney, in 1816 is an appropriate epitaph for the foundryman who was a friend of Francis Asbury, “I trust God will direct me in all things for the best—I wish to live for the good of man, and for Glory of God.”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{50} Christian Advocate, October 24, 1867; Minutes of the Quarterly Conference, Georgetown Methodist Church, June 15, 1819.
\textsuperscript{51} Foxall to John Quincy Adams, June 6, 1820, Miscellaneous Letters to the State Department.
\textsuperscript{52} James L. Ewin, Foundry, 1814-1914 (Washington, 1914), 18.
\textsuperscript{54} Foxall to Mary Ann McKenney, July 15, 1816, Foxall Papers, Foundry Church.