Seventy-five years ago, at the British Methodist Conference held at Birmingham, a group of Wesley enthusiasts met to consider "how to promote the study of the history and literature of Methodism." This was the first meeting of a society which is still pursuing that objective and is now known the world over as "The Wesley Historical Society." Many of those who sat around that table were, or became, household names in Methodism and to their painstaking scholarship we still owe an immense debt of gratitude. Looking down the list, we see the names of these clergymen: Richard Green, C. H. Crookshank, Marmaduke Riggall, W. F. Moulton, John Telford, F. F. Bretherton, and laymen George Stampe, R. Thursfield Smith, and J. G. Wright. Soon to be added to their number were clergymen Nehemiah Curnock, J. S. Simon, F. Luke Wiseman, J. H. Rigg, and laymen W. C. Sheldon, J. T. Lightwood and E. S. Lamplough. To the present generation, many of these are mere names, but to those who continue the work of Wesley studies, they are giants of former times in whose footsteps it is an honor and a responsibility to walk.

They are the men who have given us our Standard works on Wesley and Methodism. In 1896 Richard Green published his Wesley Bibliography, to be followed in 1902 by a similar listing of anti-Methodist literature. Nehemiah Curnock produced the Standard Edition of Wesley's Journal in 8 volumes, a work which involved years of patient study, especially on the mysterious cryptogram of Wesley's personal diary, the clue to which came to Curnock in a dream.

John Telford edited the Standard Edition of Wesley's Letters, also in 8 volumes, but this was only part of his contribution to Methodist historical studies. He revised Jackson's Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers and re-issued them in 7 volumes as Wesley's Veterans. From his pen also came Sayings and Portraits of John Wesley and a companion volume dealing with brother Charles. He also produced many popular studies on Methodist history, including one of the best-selling one-volume Lives of John Wesley. To J. S. Simon, we owe a five-volume study of John Wesley which had to be finished by his son-in-law A. W. Harrison.

It would be invidious to single out for special mention those who, since these indomitable pioneers blazed the trail, have continued the good work, but mention ought to be made of F. F. Bretherton, Wes-
F. F. Swift, and Frank Baker. "F. F. B.", as he was affectionately called, lived to a ripe old age, but Wesley Swift was taken suddenly and unexpectedly as he was beginning a new sphere of usefulness in the newly formed Archives of the British Methodist Church. Frank Baker, fortunately, is still with us in the height of his powers. Neither F. F. Bretherton nor Wesley Swift left behind them monumental volumes, but they were both frequent contributors to the Proceedings, the former specializing in historical notes and the latter on bibliographical articles which are still invaluable for reference. Wesley Swift is still worth reading on The Sunday Service of the Methodists, Minutes of Conference, Conference Handbooks and Admission Tickets, Wesley's Works, The Lectionary, and Women Itinerants. Frank Baker, on the other hand, has placed us all in his debt by a constant flow of articles which shed new light on early Methodism as well as for his larger works, William Grimshaw and Representative Verse of Charles Wesley. He is now on the point of fulfilling the life-long dream of a new and definitive edition of all the works of John Wesley. Already he has compiled a bibliography which is built upon the foundation of, but supersedes that of Richard Green. These are all men of the Wesley Historical Society and the Society itself is proud to bask in any reflected glory derived from their fame.

Mention has been made of the Proceedings, a thrice-yearly journal, with its chaste but attractive cover, which is now mailed to all parts of the world. Its extensive clientele in the United States includes both individual members and libraries. Now in its thirty-seventh volume, it is a treasure-house of information. Articles written as long as seventy years ago are still of value, and recent numbers have garnered the thought and research of modern students. Special articles, some by American contributors, have commemorated such events as the birth of Charles Wesley, the death of Thomas Coke, the Bicentenary of American Methodism, and the opening of Francis Asbury's house at West Bromwich. New light has been shed on the Wesley family—e.g. Frank Baker on "John Wesley's first marriage," Miss Beecham on Samuel Wesley (Sen.), and Robert Walmsley on the chronology of events in the Epworth rectory. Those who are interested in Wesleyan heraldry and the right of John Wesley to use a coat of arms should read an article by Arthur Saunders in Volume xxxv. Deserving of being better known was a very fine series of contributions, written by competent scholars, on Wesley’s ordinations, with special reference to Thomas Coke. These appeared under such titles as "Wesley, King and Coke," "Was Wesley Consistent?" and "Episcopé in Methodism." Another series entitled, "Catchwords of the Conversations" dealt with questions raised
by the Anglican-Methodist Conversations, with a real effort to understand what Wesley meant by some of his most famous sayings.

In the course of its existence, the Wesley Historical Society has produced several occasional publications. The first of the series appeared in 1896 and was a reprint of John Bennet’s Minutes of the early Conferences, and this was followed by Articles of Religion (1897), Mrs. Wesley’s Conference with her daughter (1898), and An Index to Jackson’s Life of Charles Wesley (1899). There were no further issues until Frank Baker produced, in 1958, Handlist of the Writings of John Cennick and, in 1964, a facsimile, with notes, of John Wesley’s First Hymn Book. In addition to these, several “Supplements” to the Proceedings have been issued—An Index to the Life of the Countess of Huntingdon, An Itinerary of John Wesley’s Journeys, An Index to the Memoirs and Local Histories in the Methodist Magazine 1778-1839. How to Write a Local History of Methodism was originally an article by Wesley Swift but, revised and enlarged by Thomas Shaw, it has been published as a pamphlet. In issuing these “Occasional Publications,” the Society has popularized valuable original documents and produced some useful tools for the student of Methodist history. For prices and availability of these publications and also of back numbers of the Proceedings, application should be made to the publishing manager, Mr. Alfred A. Taberer, Bankhead Press, Broxton, Chester, England.

Every year, at the British Conference, either in the Conference town or in some nearby center, the Society holds its Annual General Meeting and Lecture. This is preceded by a tea where friends, old and new, meet in a “fellowship of kindred minds.” Visitors from overseas are always welcome and last year we were delighted to receive Frederick Maser, bringing greetings from the American Association of Methodist Historical Societies. The Annual Lecture has produced some pieces of sound scholarship and the printed versions have been of considerable service to students. The first lecture was given by Henry Bett in 1935 and the title was “The Early Methodist Preachers.” The following would be a fair sample of the subjects dealt with from time to time—Methodism in Scotland (Wesley F. Swift), Charles Wesley as revealed in his Letters (Frank Baker), Methodist Preaching Houses and the Law (E. Benson Perkins), The United Methodist Free Churches (Oliver A. Beckerlegge), The Bible Christians (Thomas Shaw), The Architectural Expression of Methodism (G. Dolbey), The Book Room (Frank Cumbers). There have also been biographical studies of Howell Harris, Adam Clarke, John Fletcher, Thomas Jackson, Jabez Bunting, Thomas Coke, and the Countess of Huntingdon. Some of these lectures are still in print, obtainable from the Epworth Press, London; of some others, a few second-hand copies are available from the Archives, 25-35, City Road, London, E.C.1.
One of the outstanding events in the history of the Society was the opening of its library, with lending facilities for members. It was always the wish of F. F. Bretherton that, after his death, his large collection of books should be left to the Society for the benefit of its members. In 1959 this wish was fulfilled when part of the crypt of Wesley’s Chapel, London, was furnished to house this valuable bequest, and since that date many more volumes have been added.

The Wesley Historical Society works in close association with the Archives Centre which was established in 1961, but long before this date members of the Society were, unofficially, working on and caring for our heritage of precious manuscripts.

It is a sign of health and vigor that the Society has gathered around it eleven regional Branches in England and Wales and one in Ireland. These Branches usually meet twice a year. The spring meeting takes the form of a pilgrimage to a local historical site, and the autumn meeting is devoted to a lecture, again of local or topical interest.

For the present we have just over 900 members, but what better way of celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary than by bringing that number up to a thousand! The annual subscription is only 10s. ($1.75), or £2. ($6.50) for five years, or £10. 10s. Od. ($30.00) for life membership. If any reader of Methodist History is inclined to join the Society, he will be most welcome and for his modest subscription he will receive, in February, June and October, his copy of the Proceedings and also know that he is helping the cause of Methodist historical studies. Enquiries or subscriptions should be addressed to the Rev. Kenneth B. Garlick, 15, Oakley Close, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, England.

For several years to come, the new edition of Wesley’s Works will engage the attention of Wesley scholars and to this the Wesley Historical Society will make no mean contribution. As individuals and as a Society we are proud to be involved in this project. Apart from this, each of us has his own corner of the vineyard to cultivate, and the ground is by no means all worked over. While there are still uncultivated patches, members of the W.H.S. will have work to do. As the events of the nineteenth century recede from memory and take the form of history, they will increasingly engage the attention of scholars.

We conclude this anniversary article by appending a list of the present officers of the Society:

President: The Rev. Dr. Maldwyn L. Edwards, 12, Llwyn-y-Grant Road, Cardiff, CF3 7ET, England.
Treasurer: Mr. Rowland C. Swift, 202, Whyteleafe Road, Caterham, Surrey, England.

Editor and Librarian: The Rev. Dr. John C. Bowmer, Archives & Research Centre, 24-35, City Road, London, E.C.1, England.


Publishing Manager: Mr. A. A. Taberer, Bankhead Press, Broxton, Chester, England.

Exhibitions Secretary: Mr. William Leary, Woodlands, Riseholme Lane, Lincoln, England.

Correspondent in the U.S.A.: The Rev. Dr. Frank Baker, Box 4735, Duke Station, Durham, N.C., U.S.A.