BOOK REVIEWS


In Seven Sisters in Search of Love Frederick Maser has written a captivating account of the Wesley family. He found it replete with "all the different kinds of frustrations, heartaches, poverty, despair, happiness, triumphs and defeats characteristic of the television soap operas today." It is a great story of a great family and it is beautifully told. It is written without the customary haloes so that we meet very human people. The principal recreational activities of the Wesley's were card-playing, dancing, and reading. That is the first time this reviewer has read anything that made him feel comfortable with the Wesleys. It is the author's contention that, while the family was remarkable in many ways, the one thing it lacked was love. That is a difficult thesis to defend, but, by the record, if love was there, it came second after law as principle was preferred above persons again and again. The story of the fourth daughter, Methetebel (Hetty), beautiful, gifted and bereft of love, is as sad a story as can be told. In the epilogue, Dr. Maser reminds us that Christianity centers upon love and the willingness to forgive. Piety and obedience were there in full proportion but the two centralities were missing. Seven Sisters in Search of Love touches the emotions and educates both the mind and the heart. This book ought to be read in every United Methodist parsonage.

JOHN B. WARMAN
Friendship, MD


Wesleyan Grove on Martha's Vineyard is one of the most well-known Methodist camp meetings. Its story, along with that of its neighbor, the community of Oak Bluffs, is told here by an architectural historian, who provides a fascinating perspective from which to view the history of this 19th century phenomenon.

Wesleyan Grove was founded in 1835, and by the 1860s had grown from a group of large tents to a town of cottages arranged in
Methodist History

neighborhoods and marked by their fanciful, distinctive building styles. The small gingerbread cottages were clustered close together under the trees, fostering a communal spirit that was an antidote to the perceived individualism and isolation of the Victorian age. Weary urban Methodists found at Wesleyan Grove an almost utopian respite from their cares, while historians see in its romantic atmosphere a reflection of Methodism's emphasis on a religion of the heart.

Weiss also discusses Oak Bluffs, one of the earliest planned subdivisions, built next to the camp meeting in the late 1860s. Oak Bluffs was consciously modelled after Wesleyan Grove's physical design, and imbied much of its spirit as well. The author uses Oak Bluffs as an example of how Wesleyan Grove and other similarly designed camp meetings influenced later planned communities, providing "the sense of otherworldly dislocation necessary for religious experience, and thereby creat(ing) a form that was almost the American romantic suburb as it would later develop."

The volume includes a number of photographs and architectural drawings, as well as footnotes, a bibliographic essay, a bibliography, and an index. The reader without any background in architectural history will occasionally stumble over terminology, but by and large the author clearly explains what she means. Anyone interested in the social history and ethos of the 19th century camp meeting will value Weiss' contribution to the literature.

Susan M. Eltscher
Madison, NJ
Abingdon Press announces new Kingswood Books

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**ROBERT E. CUSHMAN is emeritus professor of systematic theology and former dean at the Divinity School, Duke University.**

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