Bethel Academy in Kentucky, founded in 1790, was American Methodism's school for the frontier. Short-lived as a denominational institution and less successful than its eastern predecessor, Cokesbury College, Bethel ultimately became a town academy, but it long inspired Methodist efforts in the region. After 1873 denominational leaders set its cornerstone in an engineering wall at Vanderbilt University, and in the 1890s holiness dissidents established Asbury College in Wilmore near its original site. Despite numerous efforts to unravel Bethel's history from denominational squabbles and frontier educational and political ferment, no coherent account exists, although reconstruction is necessary to understand both Methodist education and local endeavors.

Denominational hopes for a school were rooted in the story of the Transylvania endowment. In 1780, six years before Methodists established their Western mission, Virginia's legislature, faced with disposal of escheated Tory lands in its Kentucky County, placed them with trustees for support of a "public school, or seminary of learning," leaving open the question whether the institution should reflect attitudes of a single religious body, enshrine common tenets of all sects, or disregard religion altogether.¹

Three years later the board for Transylvania Seminary was made more representative. New trustees included Willis Green, a Methodist, who was soon active in soliciting subscriptions and raising funds for transporting a library from Virginia. A more important addition was the board's chair, David Rice, a Presbyterian clergyman. Before moving from Virginia, Rice had supported Hampden-Sidney Academy and, along with John Todd, another Presbyterian clergyman and library donor, had lobbied for Transylvania's land—doubtless believing a school acceptable to all sects could result even if Presbyterians led its development. In 1784 Rice's cabin became the seminary's first schoolroom and his son-in-law, John Mitchell, also a Presbyterian clergyman, its first teacher.

Mitchell's school did not last long. Trustees, who had struggled for quorums against poor communication and threat of Indian attack, found

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themselves even more paralyzed because of what Caleb Wallace, a Presbyterian layman writing in the new Kentucky Gazette, called sectarian jealousies—fears that Presbyterians were taking over the enterprise and doubts that Christian schools could exist apart from denominational moorings. Only when Rice resigned in favor of an Episcopalian layman was the board able to move again.

To gain cash income, trustees negotiated with Virginia's legislators for a sixth of surveyors' fees from western counties and played possible sites against each other for subscriptions, selecting Lexington, Kentucky's cultural seat, in 1789. When they chose as master another Presbyterian clergyman, Isaac Wilson, who was organizing a school adjacent to his church, Methodists were brought into the fray, doubtless at the urging of Green, who had given up as a trustee.

In 1786, a little over a year after solving organizational problems, Methodists established a Kentucky mission and challenged Presbyterians for frontier leadership. Sensing opportunity, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, who had been consecrated superintendents or bishops for the Methodist Episcopal Church, deployed James Haw and Benjamin Ogden as missionaries. Haw and Ogden found local preachers and laypersons, such as Green, already active. The next year the bishops doubled western appointments and annually, thereafter, increased circuit riders. Not until 1790 did Asbury inspect the mission although the previous year he held conference on the Yadkin River in North Carolina—close enough for frontier preachers to bring their protest that Presbyterians were cornering Kentucky's educational fund.

Methodists had already inaugurated Cokesbury in a large three-story Georgian building in Abingdon, Maryland, raising funds from subscribers and circuit collections. After a rocky beginning they chose Jacob Hall, a local physician and kinsman of Benjamin Rush, as president in 1788. Hall created a respectable academy with enrollment near 80—more, Asbury would point out, than Presbyterians could muster at Hampden-Sidney or, for that matter, in Kentucky.

If funds could be found for Cokesbury, Kentucky preachers saw no reason the feat could not be repeated for the west, and if they could not block Presbyterian access to Transylvania's endowment, they could at

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2Catholicus [=Wallace] to Editor, Kentucky Gazette, September 1, 1787, 1. See also letters from Pady Moneyman and A Transylvanian, November 10, 1787, 1, and from A Sectarian, December 22, 1787, 1.

3Peter and Peter, Transylvania University, 39-41.


least divide the land to support an Arminian alternative. Their proposal did not, however, secure immediate endorsement because Hall's success still hung in the balance and the unsettled economy strapped denominational resources. According to Coke, the conference agreed to build a western college within a decade if given control of 5,000 acres rather than 3,000 to 4,000 projected by Kentucky preachers.

Kentuckians, however, felt the situation urgent, and when Asbury, true to promise, visited Richard Masterson's station near Lexington the following year, he discovered pledges of "upwards of three hundred pounds, in land and money." Leaders, according to William Burke, were Green, Masterson, John Lewis, Isaac Hite, Thomas J. Hinde, and Francis Poythress, the presiding elder who had been sent west in 1787 to spearhead frontier advance. Lewis offered "one hundred acres... on a good spot for building materials" high above the Kentucky River to the south where the conference agreed to build a school, to be known as Bethel. Asbury, according to Rice Haggard, dreamed of Methodist greatness if Bethel, together with projected schools in Georgia and Virginia, could be established alongside Cokesbury.6

Asbury did not return to Kentucky in 1791, but the next year he found construction underway on an 86' x 35' three-story boarding school and meetinghouse—"Cokesbury in miniature," as he described it. Poythress, according to Hinde, was architect and fundraiser, and he was listed as superintendent when instruction began. Asbury prepared a supporting "address" and changed "the plan of the house, to make it more comfortable to the scholars in cold weather."7

Despite proximity of limestone for the foundation, clay for bricks and hardwoods for framing and finishing, construction did not proceed rapidly. When teaching began in 1794, John Metcalf reported spending two weeks fixing up quarters for his students. Burke says only the first two stories were ever "principally" finished although the building must have been, nonetheless, one of the frontier's finest edifices.8

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8Metcalf to George Nicholas, June 13, 1794, in Bennett H. Young, A History of Jessamine County, Kentucky, from its Earliest Settlements to 1898 (Louisville: Courier-Journal Job Printing Co., 1898), 172. Young, 83–84, also gives the date as January 14, 1794; Anson W. Cummings, The Early Schools of Methodism (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1886), 50,
Bethel was already rising before Transylvania’s trustees’ more than hoped for permanent facilities, but no charter existed before 1798. Methodists preferred to keep institutions under conference direction and were often slow to name trustees. Asbury says trustees were appointed during his visit in 1793—doubtless those Burke listed—but they had no deed to the property until 1797 except for verbal agreements in 1790 and 1794. In 1793 the conference, not trustees, made “sundry regulations”—presumably rules for student conduct similar to those at Cokesbury.9

Although Burke recalled Valentine Cook as Bethel’s first teacher, Cook only came to Kentucky in 1798—four years after Metcalf opened the school to take advantage of Transylvania’s latest crisis. After enrollment declined to five in 1790, the seminary’s principalship passed to James Moore, who was ordained an Episcopalian after being refused admission to Presbyterian ministry. Moore moved his school to new quarters and, soon after Kentucky achieved statehood in 1792, obtained a permanent campus from local developers. Although Presbyterians supported Moore after his defection, Transylvania’s new independence set the stage for selection of an unacceptable principal in 1794.10

The new principal was Harry Toulmin, an English Baptist with Unitarian leanings but, more importantly, a Republican. Division in George Washington’s cabinet between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton over Federal powers also came to involve attitudes toward the French Revolution. Jefferson’s Republicans were its champions; Hamilton’s Federalists fearful of its unrest. When Edmond Génet came to America in 1793 seeking support for his republic, he appealed to the west, already seething with grievances against the whiskey tax and the administration’s inability to prevent Indian raids or keep Spain from blocking commerce on the Mississippi River. Kentucky’s Republicans were seized by French mania, and Presbyterians regarded Toulmin, allegedly recommended by Jefferson, as infected with Deism and other infidelities.

In protest, Presbyterians, led by Rice, withdrew eight miles to Pisgah, obtaining legislative incorporation for a new Kentucky Academy and launching fundraising in their General Assembly and among Federalists in the east. Although their master, Andrew Steele, first confined himself to a 15-pupil English school, the charter required only that the president be a clergyman and recognized scholar and prohibited proselytizing,
reflecting continuing designs on Transylvania's endowment. In addition, Presbyterians successfully blocked Transylvania's trustees from acting without majorities, forcing Toulmin's resignation in 1796 since he had never commanded 13 votes.

To counter Presbyterian initiatives and Transylvania's disarray, Poythress assigned Metcalf, one of two preachers on Lexington Circuit, to open Bethel. If Asbury's comment in 1800 refers back to 1794, trustees guaranteed his salary in return for profits, if any, from $6 annual tuition. Neighbors—presumably the James Crutchers—provided board for £8 a year. Methodists, like Presbyterians, intended to teach classical languages and sciences, but could only match Steele's English curriculum. Although enrollment is unknown, Metcalf's reading, writing and arithmetic sustained Bethel until Cook arrived, despite Methodists' developing educational problems.

Denominational unrest derived from the organization of the Republican Methodist Church by followers of James O'Kelly, former Virginia presiding elder, who had broken with Asbury over his autocratic administration. O'Kelly's controversy came to involve education when Asbury, late in 1789, brought Cokesbury's financial difficulties before his new governing council, allegedly appealing for greater zeal to save him from debtors' prison. Soon thereafter, while returning from Kentucky, Asbury, so O'Kelly charged, agreed to Nathan Davis' offer of 3,000 acres along the James River in Bedford County, Virginia, if Methodists would raise funds for a school.

O'Kelly ended Davis' involvement—the subsequent Ebenezer Academy was located in Brunswick—charging that Asbury had consulted no conference about fundraising. After withdrawing from the denomination in 1792 following defeat of his General Conference motion for peer review of appointments, O'Kelly focused his attacks on Cokesbury, complaining that "a select meeting" was a better school for "a holy simple-hearted people" and accusing Asbury of misappropriating educational as well as publishing profits for himself and English friends. Hall came under fire, and when decline in paying customers forced dismissal of Cokesbury's charity boys, O'Kelly alleged broken promises of "pies and puddings."

11Acts Passed at the First Session of the Third General Assembly for the Commonwealth of Kentucky (Lexington: John Bradford, 1794), 48-50.
Cokesbury’s situation was complicated by a legislative proposal to charter the school with degree-granting authority and equality with Washington and St. John’s colleges in order to facilitate supervision and public support for the institutions. Even loyal Methodists were divided by fears that self-perpetuating trustees and a president from any denomination—provisions practically in effect—would threaten conference control. Coke and Hall favored incorporation and state funding, but Asbury agreed only reluctantly after O’Kellyites forced Cokesbury’s suspension in 1794 although he again consulted no conference. After reorganized trustees announced new fundraising in 1795, Cokesbury was torched and burned to the ground.15

Frontier Methodists wisely put aside thoughts of following Presbyterians’ lead and seeking Bethel’s incorporation in 1794. O’Kellyite sentiment was strong on the frontier, especially among local preachers who felt they had been forced from traveling ministry by Asbury’s ban on marriage and hardships of long western circuits. The Bishop was unable to visit Kentucky between 1793 and 1800 when unrest was at its height, and the brunt of attack fell on Poythress, whose “begging for Bethel,” according to Burke, was felt by preachers to render their compensation “uncertain.” The presiding elder, according to Scott, was already suffering the depression that drove him from ministry in 1800, and Scott attributed to paranoia Poythress’ belief that, first, Green and, then, his preachers were spreading rumors about his misappropriation of Bethel’s funds. Hinde recalled, however, that Poythress was censured “for the ineligibility of the situation, and the expense of the building” with the “most serious consequences.”16

Conference was held at Bethel in 1797 to bolster its fortunes. Ill and unable to travel to the extremes of the connection, Asbury apparently envisioned Poythress as one of three preachers who, in the emergency, might be elected bishops by annual conferences. His hopes were dashed, however, when Kentucky clergy brought disturbing reports across the mountains to east Tennessee, causing him to replace Poythress with John Kobler, whom he exhorted to settle the situation by renewed zeal in making quarterly rounds of circuits. Kobler’s tenure lasted less than a year, however, before Asbury moved him to Ohio, briefly restoring Poythress

to office before bringing Cook to Kentucky as, first, presiding elder and, then, Bethel's instructor.17

Cook's arrival coincided with Presbyterians' renewed attempts to outstrip Transylvania. After Toulmin resigned, trustees offered to merge Kentucky Academy, now enriched from fundraising, with the seminary. They dumped Steele in favor of Moore, who was also elected Transylvania's president, but neither seminary officials nor the Republican legislature seemed disposed to turn the school over to a denomination which had forced Toulmin out and assured Federalist donors that a majority of academy trustees would always be its clergy. When confronted with a choice, Moore elected to remain at Transylvania, leaving Presbyterians to go it alone, first, with Leroy Thompson and, then, a reinstated Steele, who in 1798, in order to compete, added classical and scientific studies to his curriculum.18

Expansion of Kentucky Academy was accompanied by an attempt to settle the state's educational bickering. Legislators proposed giving schools 6,000-acre grants south of the Green River in Christian County. Methodists balked, but then presumably agreed if Bethel were chartered, given its own land and, like Kentucky Academy, allowed to develop as a denominational institution. Accordingly, Bethel was incorporated on February 10, 1798, with a charter no less broad than the Academy's and a new group of trustees—Poythress, Kobler, Metcalf, Masterson, Crutcher, Nathaniel Harris, Barnabas McHenry and James Hord. Two days later Bethel and five other schools received grants, setting off a land rush that led to 20 more charters before year's end.19

Bethel's inadequacies were evident, however, in the face of Steele's new departure, and trustees advertised in the Kentucky Gazette for a qualified instructor to replace Metcalf although none had been found when Cook arrived. Educated at Cokesbury for at least its first year of operation, Cook came to be regarded as the school's pride after he was appointed to Pittsburgh in 1792 and, as Methodists told the tale, routed local Presbyterians in debate. Residence in the Netherlands had acquainted him with European languages, increasing esteem for his scholarship. In 1796 he was named presiding elder for western Pennsylvania and, presumably, connected with the district school in Uniontown, established four years earlier by a predecessor, Charles Conaway. Cook may not have been

17Asbury, Journal and Letters, March 29, 1797; Lee, Short History of the Methodists, 481-482.
18Peter and Peter, Transylvania University, 65-70; Robert Davidson, A History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), 291.
successful as an educator because the school apparently closed when he left, but his scholarly reputation probably informed what Kobler recalled as Asbury's hasty decision to send him west and, then, place him in charge of Bethel even before, according to Scott, he had completed a single round of his circuits. As earlier, Poythress was restored as presiding elder.20

Cook added classical languages, German and sciences to Bethel's curriculum — for upwards of $15 annually, depending on scientific options, as opposed to 40s. for reading, writing and arithmetic. The school also gained a mistress since Cook married Tabitha Slaughter, niece of a future governor, making board available at both Crutchers' and the academy. Stewart's Kentucky Herald announced Cook's term as beginning January 1, 1799. Burke says students increased, giving Cook's institution a "flattering" prospect, but his honeymoon was not long. By fall he found it necessary to assure both Lexington papers that, despite rumors, he planned to continue at Bethel, but with enrollment declining precipitously it is doubtful he finished the year if, indeed, he had enough students to begin the new term.21

Bethel's end, as rooted in the complexities of Kentucky politics as its beginning, may never be entirely understood, but the facts, so far as apparent, are these. Steele's Kentucky Academy proved to be more than a match for Transylvania, and seminary trustees, to save their school from bankruptcy, quickly sought merger, effective the same day Cook began instruction. The legislature chartered the combined institutions as Transylvania University with schools of medicine and law alongside a central college — easily the most impressive institution in the west, especially when staffed with as distinguished a faculty as could be found among Kentucky's intellectuals, although after a year enrollment stood at only 50 and the school was newly engulfed in sectarian strife.22

Visiting Kentucky in 1800, Asbury faced the contrast between abandoned Bethel and the university in bustling Lexington. Lamenting how Methodists' "excellencies" kept turning into defects, the bishop acknowledged that Bethel's bluff appeared "too distant from public places" for success. "Perhaps," he mused, "Brother Poythress and myself were as much overseen with this place as Dr. Coke was with the seat of Cokesbury."

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21Notice in Stewart's Kentucky Herald, December 11, 1798, 3; notice in Kentucky Gazette, November 28, 1799, 3.
22Peter and Peter, Transylvania University, 70–82; John D. Wright, Jr., Transylvania: Tutor to the West (Lexington: Transylvania University, 1975), 31–32; notice in Stewart's Kentucky Herald, March 18, 1800, 3.
Hinde agreed it was "vain" to establish schools outside "a town or settlement, not only of the religious, but of citizens capable of duly appreciating the advantages of such an institution."

Transylvania's supporters attacked Methodist sectarianism—Cook disclaimed proselytizing—but not all Bethel's difficulties stemmed from Lexington. Asbury spoke bitterly of being "blamed by men of slender sense for consequences impossible to foresee—for other people's misconduct" while Burke admitted difficulties "which it would be needless to mention, as all the parties concerned have gone to give an account at a higher tribunal." Although neither spelled out their version of events, Bethel's problems seem to have been intensified by denominational attitudes toward slaveholding and relations with Kentucky's Republican leadership.

The Republican legislative majority, solid enough by fall, 1798, to pass Jefferson's resolutions against the Alien and Sedition Acts, also agreed to a long-debated convention to revise Kentucky's statehood constitution, which, although brokered by their own George Nicholas, had provided for indirect election of both governor and senate. Although Jefferson's friend, Nicholas had allied himself with frontier propertied interests and feared that his party, left to its own devices, might abolish a bicameral legislature or independent judiciary or, else, tamper with slavery, which had produced the greatest debate in 1792. Determined to control elections of delegates, Nicholas called a public meeting at Bryan's Station in Fayette County, the heart of Kentucky's slaveholding region, to pass resolutions restricting constitutional changes and authorize an easily malleable committee to forge a ticket to contest the elections on a defense of slavery. Meetings were repeated in other counties, including Jessamine, which, late in 1798, had been carved out of southern Fayette where Bethel was located, to isolate Kentucky River slaveholders from Lexington's antislavery sentiment. 23

Methodists had been generally antislavery as had other denominations—the seven clergy delegates to the statehood convention, including Charles Kavanaugh, a local preacher, had represented the strongest opposition to Nicholas' desire to legalize slavery—and the 1796 Discipline had restored the provision against slaveholding, first adopted during American organization but laid aside because of difficulties of southern compliance. 24 Although Nicholas had no intention of allowing clergy or even strong-minded laypersons in the new convention, he cynically sought religious participation in his process.

Curious ties bound Metcalf and Nicholas, who, as Transylvania's attorney, opposed Presbyterian efforts to overturn Toulmin and in 1799

became the university's professor of law although he served only until his death in August. Nicholas had represented Metcalf's business partnership in Lexington, and Bethel's instructor sought to cultivate his attorney's goodwill—doubtless an important line of communication in gaining Bethel's land. When Jessamine County was proposed, Metcalf laid out a county seat called Nicholasville, and it may be inferred that Metcalf and others associated with Bethel were willing to cast their lot with Nicholas in electing delegates.25

Cooperation between Bethel's promoters and Nicholas seems to have galvanized antislavery forces, who rallied behind Ogden, the only Kentucky preacher who had traveled the state before Poythress. Like Haw, who lived in Tennessee, he had long since located and, for whatever reason, had kept a low profile—Henry Smith "hoped to see him in heaven though [he] never saw him in Kentucky." Many years later Ogden defended against the charge, but Hinde insisted that he and Haw were both O'Kellyites, as Haw surely was, although Smith explained, "it was not considered a reproach for a local preacher to disapprove of our church government, and even inveigh against it." In any event, Ogden, according to John Daveiss, compiled with the request of "a number of the preachers and members" and preached against "slavery, and the traffic of buying and selling of slaves" at Bethel's church. Poythress' administration, according to McHenry, had by then become "irregular and wild," and the presiding elder either reproved Ogden "with great severity," as Hinde recalled, or hurled him out of the church," as McHenry remembered.26

The result was a year's controversy between Poythress and Kentucky's laity and local preachers. Slavery opponents were distressed, but O'Kellyites were gleeful over proof of denominational hypocrisy as well as autocracy. O'Kelly published his Apology to influence events—tradition has the earliest edition printed in Pittsburgh although the usual imprint is Richmond—and, according to James Gwin, two of O'Kelly's lieutenants, Daniel Stringer and Benjamin Rainey, pulled a wagonload of the books west. Thomas Wilkerson also recalled a circular on slavery, presumably issued during the year, which, according to John B. McFerrin, cost Methodists support of the oldest frontier families.27

25 Metcalf to Nicholas, September 16, 1798, in Young, History of Jessamine County, 84.
26 John Daveiss to Editors, February 27, 1840, as "Contributions to the Western Methodist Historical Society," Western Christian Advocate, VI (1840), 193; McHenry to Hinde, December 7, 1829, in Hinde, "Contributions to the Western Methodist Historical Society," Western Christian Advocate, VII (1840), 13; Smith, Recollections of an Old Itinerant, 51-52.
Caught between slaveholders and emancipators, who found Methodists equally untrustworthy, Bethel, as Smith remembered, soon “fell through, and our dear old father Poythress with it.” Asbury was disturbed enough to recall all western preachers to Baltimore for General Conference in spring, 1800, intending to reassign them to eastern circuits while seeking new recruits for the frontier. He sent Poythress to North Carolina where his mental incapacities soon became evident, forcing him from ministry—ironically, he was returned to Jessamine County as his sister's ward. Forced to choose between his Kentucky wife and traveling ministry, Cook located, taking on another school in Harrodsburg. Metcalf presumably also gave up traveling ministry for marriage and settlement in Jessamine County although the Minutes had not listed him as subject to appointment since 1794. Asbury deployed several new preachers, but unable to find a satisfactory presiding elder—William McKendree was named in the fall—he asked Burke to return to Kentucky and “do the best [he] could for the work,” carrying with him the papers of the “Annual Conference and Bethel Academy.” On circuits, if not at Bethel, Burke’s assignment turned out better than expected since the frontier revival was already restoring Methodist fortunes, bringing Asbury west within the year to see what was going on. 28

After Cook left, Bethel apparently sat vacant until Asbury’s October visit when he gathered the conference there with such “trustees that could be called together.” The coveted acreage turned out to be worthless—Burke, now a trustee, recalled it as only “expense”—because Kentucky’s land market was glutted and the tract otherwise unproductive. The Bishop lamented absence of an endowment with an annual income of $300 to render the school less dependent on tuition. The name of Samuel Jennings, a Methodist preacher then teaching in an Episcopal academy in Virginia, surfaced as a possible principal—“Dr. Jennings was thought of, talked of, and written to”—but Jennings, who later headed Asbury College in Baltimore before becoming a Methodist Protestant, was unwilling to gamble on a troubled school in Transylvania’s shadow.

Metcalf, who reported himself still living at Bethel in 1799 even though he does not seem to have taught after Cook’s arrival, appears to have tried to save the situation. Facts remain elusive. If Metcalf, as Burke recalled, located, married and followed Cook as Bethel’s principal, he and his new wife, Nancy, would have reopened the English school, probably early in 1801, but their stay on the Kentucky River was brief. Continuing to promote Nicholasville until it was established as Jessamine’s seat in 1803, Metcalf built a church there in 1799 after lots were sold and then a house for his family—probably after his survey was officially recognized in 1802.

Harris, who emerged as Bethel's most indefatigable trustee, was left, according to Burke, to take his family to the Kentucky River to keep a neighborhood school.

Harris' efforts were probably doomed from the start, but his competition derived less from Transylvania than Metcalf, who may have begun teaching in his new home but soon erected a school nearby. He likely called his school Bethel because in 1803 the new Western Conference sent Burke, McKendree, Lewis Garrett, and Samuel Douthit to Frankfort to "attend to the business of Bethel Academy . . . [and] to act on their own judgment; and do the best they can," apparently in an effort to secure charter amendments which would safeguard denominational interests. Burke says a new charter was obtained although none is extant. Metcalf, after long responsibility, fancied he controlled Bethel's fortunes. He returned to the Kentucky River and carted off everything not fastened down, presumably to furnish his new facility, leading in 1804 to a year's suspension from ministry by the quarterly meeting for Lexington Circuit. 29

Harris' venture had doubtless folded before Metcalf's raid, and no teaching again occurred on the Kentucky River. In 1805 the Western Conference returned $20, contributed two years earlier to employ a teacher, because none had been found. 30 Ultimately, the building itself was removed to Nicholasville. After Methodists abandoned the school, Lewis' family claimed the property. Around 1820—just after Metcalf's death—they allowed the three-story edifice to be dismantled and reconstructed on a smaller scale to house the new Bethel, which lasted 70 more years before being absorbed into the public schools.

As a denominational institution, Bethel accomplished little—most who were recalled as studying there surely did so in Nicholasville—but Kentucky Methodists remembered their endeavor. Two decades later they joined with the Ohio Conference in founding Augusta College—still one of the earliest educational ventures in the west and ultimately had a go at operating Transylvania. Bethel in Nicholasville remained, in some sense, Methodist—masters seem frequently to have been members—but the school had little more denominational impact, making its contribution by diffusing light to its community until public schools became Kentucky reality.


30 Sweet, ed., Rise of Methodism in the West, 105.