URIAH HEATH: SCHOLARLY CIRCUIT RIDER, SUCCESSFUL FUND RAISER

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Early 19th century circuit riders have had the reputation of being an unlettered, emotional group antagonistic to serious scholarship. Uriah Heath (1809–1862) does not fit that popular impression. He is rarely mentioned in books and articles about 19th century Methodism. Yet in his remarkable preaching career and his work as fund-raising agent for schools, universities, religious journals, and tract societies, he traveled continuously across Ohio and was especially productive in increasing benevolent giving.

He was born on April 9, 1809, the third child of Ann Loyd Heath. His father, Tinsley, a Virginia anti-slavery Methodist, freed his slaves and moved to Ohio in 1805. Uriah was well educated and married Mary Ann Perkins, in 1831. He went into business with his brother-in-law in Xenia. He was converted the following year in a revival and decided to become a minister.1

Beginning in 1835, he was assigned to the Granville circuit. In subsequent years he served the Marion, Worthington, Zanesville, Newark, Springfield, and Marietta circuits. The circuits at that time covered extensive distances. In 1849 he wrote, "in the last eleven days I have preached eleven times and rode about one hundred and eighty miles beside other labours."2 He was appointed agent for the Worthington Female Seminary in 1847 although he had been associated with that school since its beginning in 1836. He was the minister in Worthington in 1848 where membership increased by twenty percent. He was appointed presiding elder of the Marietta district in 1849 and of the Columbus district in 1852. In 1855 he was agent for the Conference Tract Society and the following year raised money for the Town Street Church in Columbus. He was presiding elder of the Portsmouth district in 1857 and named agent for Wilberforce University in 1859. His last assignment was to the 7th Street Church in Zanesville in 1861.

Heath kept a journal from 1845 to 1852, a seven-year account with over 2,500 entries. He daily recorded his travels, the books he read, his comments on them, and the results of his efforts to raise money for various organizations.

1Union Neighborhood, Greene County, Ohio Historical Notes (Xenia: Harvey W. Elam, 1940): 347–350.
2Heath to Finley, January 1, 1845. Finley Papers, United Methodist Archives Center, Beeghly Library, Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio. In conducting research for this article, I am particularly grateful for the assistance of Susan Cohen, Archives Curator.
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He included the amounts he received and sometimes evaluated his own efforts. He was representative of his colleagues in the Old Northwest having been a Whig, an ardent temperance supporter, and an opponent of slavery. He frequently wrote about current events and revealed much about himself in his entries.3

His routine as a circuit rider began at four in the morning when he woke to read until breakfast. He took the instructions of the Discipline seriously and frequently continued his reading while traveling on horseback.4 In addition to his ministerial duties as a Methodist preacher, he was a strong believer in the value of education for both sexes and was one of the men instrumental in the establishment of the Worthington Female Seminary, the first Methodist-supported school for girls west of the Allegheny Mountains.

He and his presiding elder, Jacob Young, became interested in establishing a school for girls in Worthington in 1836. They met some residents who encouraged them and Young called a meeting to describe the project. He received enthusiastic support. After he enlisted a Principal, Sarepta Marsh in Chillicothe, a woman he described as “pious, intellectual, and learned,” they decided to attempt the experiment.5 Worthington residents pledged $1,500. Four acres of land adjacent to High Street and a “pretty little house” were purchased.6 The school opened November 1836 with eleven pupils. At the 1837 Annual Conference in Xenia, they persuaded their colleagues to “receive the Female Seminary of Worthington” under its patronage.7

A committee visited the school and made a report the following year recommending financial support. Young and Heath were named to a committee to appoint trustees for the seminary.8 The school had 62 pupils in 1837 including 35 from Worthington and five from Columbus. The school year consisted of two 22-week terms. Tuition was $3.00 for the first class, $4.00 for the junior class, and $5.00 for the senior class. Drawing instruction cost $4.00, French instruction $5.00 and music lessons, including use of the piano, $10.00. There were four instructors including the principal.

The 1838 “Annual Circular” described the school’s policy: “No laws, but those of reason, conscience and the Bible, are enforced; no punishments, but the expressed sorrow of the teachers. . . . They are taught that the highly gifted

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3 The Heath Journal is in the Ohio Historical Society Archives/Library, Columbus, Ohio.
4 “We advise you, 1. As often as possible to rise at four. 2. From four to five in the morning, and from five to six in the evening, to meditate, pray, and read the Scriptures with notes, and the closely practical parts of what Mr. Wesley has published. 3. From six in the morning till twelve. (allowing an hour for breakfast,) read, with much prayer, some of our best religious tracts. . . . Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employment, and at least five hours in the four and twenty.” The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Cincinnati: Swormstedt & Poe, 1848), 65, 66.
5 Jacob Young, Autobiography of a Pioneer (Cincinnati: Swormstedt and Poe, 1857), 442.
7 “Minutes of the Ohio Annual Conference, September 27, 1837.”
8 “Minutes of the Ohio Annual Conference, September 27, 1838.”
and intellectual woman is a being too noble to waste her time and energies on the fripperies of fashion and follies of amusement.” In 1839 there were 111 students and Uriah Heath was Secretary of the Board of Trustees. The Principal’s report contained lofty sentiments of idealism.

Our aim is to store the minds of our pupils, not merely with words, but with ideas; to improve the heart as well as the intellect. . . . Every branch of study, as far as the ability of the teacher will allow, is made practical; the pupils are taught to think, to reason, and to apply rules and principles to the common purposes of life.

The educational purposes were well articulated: “A highly cultivated intellect is particularly desirable for woman on account of her peculiar situation in life.” Additional rules were printed in 1841 perhaps as a result of parental pressure or Methodist persuasion.

The young ladies boarding in the Seminary will not be allowed on any occasion to accept an invitation to visit in the neighborhood, before consulting the Principal, nor to leave the Seminary premises without express permission. They will never be allowed to receive the visits of young gentlemen at the Institution, nor to associate with them in walking or riding, except in company with one of the teachers. A strict observance of the Christian Sabbath will be required of all pupils.

Over 1500 persons attended the 1842 dedication of the three-story school building. The young school struggled financially throughout its existence. A Columbus businessman, Joel Buttles, whose daughter was a student, became a trustee and after a board meeting in 1843 he recorded the following about Heath in his diary:

[He] especially has shown extraordinary diligence, persevering in the act of begging for this institution most effectively. During the past year, hard as the times have been, he has procured donations to the amount of about $1300. But it has been principally in kind. I recollect his report which stated that he obtained in various places 13 head of cattle, many articles of merchandise—books, farming utensils, boots, shoes, notes of hand, provisions, and all and every thing people were disposed or willing to give. And converting them all as many as he could to the discharge of the debt.

During the few days Heath was home, he taught his seven children, five of whom reached adulthood. He even taught them Greek and tested them on their knowledge of the Greek Testament. His journal also reveals his observations of the society in which he lived and provides another window into early Ohio history and culture. He frequently read 100–150 pages a day.

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9 Worthington Female Seminary, Circular for 1838, 8.
11 Worthington Female Seminary, Circular for 1839, 7.
12 Worthington Female Seminary, Circular for 1840.
13 Worthington Female Seminary, Circular for 1841.
15 Joel Buttles Diary, August 8, 1843, Trinity Episcopal Church, Columbus, Ohio.
His reading ranged widely across many fields and the authors and titles he mentions indicate the depth and extent of his intellectual and theological interests. The majority of books listed in his journal were, of course, religious in nature. He was impressed with the major 18th century English authors who contributed to the shaping of Methodism or who provided challenging biblical or theological information. On October 30, 1851 he wrote “I find profit in reading these old works. In Allene [sic], Baxter, Wesley, Fletcher and these old writers there is a directness, a point, an honesty and faithfulness seldom equaled by the writers of our own day.”


The issue of slavery and its elimination concerned him throughout his career. Although he did not consider himself an abolitionist, he looked on slave-holding as a sin and prayed for its eventual disappearance. Initially, he and many northern clergy believed that it was unlawful to work actively to eliminate slavery when it was embodied in the United States Constitution and assumed that it would be abolished by the providence of God. He recorded reading “Clarkson’s history of the slave trade” (probably *History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament*, 2 vols. (1808, new edition in 1839) and Charles Elliott, *Sinfulness of American Slavery* (1850). After the 1844 division of the Methodist Episcopal Church over the issue of slavery, he wrote James B. Finley, “The action of the present General Conference will exert a powerful influence upon the destinies of this nation.” The following year, after the for-

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*Joseph Alleine, An Alarm to the Unconverted* (1672).
mation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at the Ohio Annual Conference in September, he seconded Jacob Young’s motion calling on Bishop Joshua Soule not to chair the meeting because of his southern sympathies. 

He then became more active in criticizing slavery and slaveholders.

In some cases, Heath’s criticism of the books he read reveal a studious, wide-ranging mind. After finishing a book on Methodist missions in Oregon (Daniel Lee and J. H. Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 1844) he wrote, “The hope of the church has failed in part with respect to the indian tribes west of the rocky mountains” (November 24, 1845). Other typical entries were:

June 8, 1848 Arose early. Read about fifty pages in ‘Clark’s Mental Discipline’ and found it a most timely and excellent work. I truly felt the importance of the proper discipline of the mind, of estimating correctly my own powers, of setting an estimate upon the different branches of study from a view of their bearing of applying the mind with energy and attention. . . . July 10, 1848 [In commenting on the second volume of Gisborne’s “duties of men,” Heath wrote] his views of the Gospel Ministry are sound and clear in the main.

March 22, 1849 Read perhaps thirty pages of Pearson on the creed treating of the sonship of Christ and preexistence of his nature. This old work is still an excellent text book.

April 23, 1849 finished the reading of Dendy’s Philosophy of mystery which is certainly a work of much information respecting the errors which have afflicted and tormented man’s life. The statements must however be taken with some exception.

May 31, 1849 Read about one hundred pages in McCaulys [sic] history of England [probably one of the cheap, pirated volumes the year it was published] . . .

August 8, 1849 Read about 25 pages in Wesley’s address to men of reason and religion—Wonderful man! . . .

January 4, 1850 [He has been reading] a work on infidelity by Dr. Nelson a very spirited and appropriate work and as the Dr. was for many years an infidel and perfectly acquainted with their views he was well prepared to write on the subject.

January 12, 1850 [Heath preached and was presented with a copy of Montesquieu’s *Spirit of Laws.*] this present I highly prize for I had wished to have an examination of this work.

June 17, 1850 on my way home finishing the reading of the life of Father Gurley. This is a most deeply interesting book and ought to be generally read.

November 8, 1850 Rode from Harmar to Pennsville reading 140 pages of Bishop Hopkins on the ten Commandments. This is a work of much excellence and this was a profitable day’s reading to me . . .

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17 Heath to Finley, June 4, 1844, James B. Finley Papers.
18 “Minutes of the Ohio Annual Conference, 1845.”
19 Perhaps Adam Clarke (1762?-1832) English Wesleyan preacher who wrote eight volumes of commentary on the Scriptures.
22 Walter C. Dendy, an English surgeon, wrote *Philosophy of Mystery* in 1841.
26 Probably John Henry Hopkins, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Vermont (1792–1868) author of many books including *Christianity Vindicated* (1833) and *The Primitive Creed* (1834).
November 26, 1850 On my way I read in the well written work of Dr. Moore called Man and his Motives.\textsuperscript{27} The manner and matter of this work are worthy of strong praise.\ldots March 18, 1851 Read during the day principally in Elliott’s work on slavery by the way a most powerful and unanswerable work.\textsuperscript{28} I would to God it was circulated generally throughout the slave states.\ldots November 28, 1851 [in Athens] Before starting this morning I finished the reading of Baxter’s Reformed Pastor—an old book but ever new to the one who is fully set on the business of the Christian minister.\textsuperscript{29} \ldots Finishing the reading of the lives of the Apostles by Dr. Peck.\textsuperscript{30} This is truly an excellent work.

His heavy workload of preaching, traveling, and fund raising frequently affected his health. Entries on this subject include:

August 15, 1845 Read, wrote, and attended to business at home—felt much worn down by continued labors.\ldots January 14, 1846 I feel exceedingly tired and worn in my breast—labored through the day and had preaching at night.\ldots July 6, 1849 very unwell feeling much of the effect of cholera atmosphere although there has been no case of cholera in our town. [Worthington] The reports are fearful from the different places in the country. At Cincinnati more than one hundred a day by cholera. At Columbus the spread is rapid.\ldots September 9, 1850 [Heath has been sick for several days and thinks he has cholera] when I mounted my horse, and though scarcely able to sit I ride to Coolville being under a hard diarrhoea [sic] all the day. At the house of Bro. Reston I was sick indeed. I suppose very near collapse state of the cholera—took active remedies and committed myself to God.

Heath used his journal to record fund raising activities. He was a conscientious, persistent fund-raiser for many organizations and churches. He seemed to use every opportunity to ask for “subscriptions,” pledges, and money for the causes he was championing. He used a variety of tactics. In his journal for November 22, 1850 he recorded some of his techniques:

riding through Logan and gave the trustees the subscription paper upon which there was about $2370.00. These subscriptions had been gathered from the Church and the world. I fear that I may have pressed harder upon the feelings of some of the members who love the world than they think duty would demand but in this I have a good conscience. In one case I plead for the house and the brother for family—the old house, and for time to think—when I saw danger of hurting feeling I proposed prayer to God. This I think had some good effect as the next day I rec’d a subscription of $50.00 with a partial promise of more.

The following are representative of the many references to collecting gifts:

August 18, 1845 obtained a number of subscriptions for our university.\ldots October 7, 1845 obtained ten subscriptions for the Sabbath School Advocate.\ldots November 14, 1845 passed a considerable portion of the day in soliciting for the High School obtained perhaps a subscription of $15.00.\ldots

\textsuperscript{27} Probably Henry Moore (1751–1844) English Wesleyan minister and biographer.
\textsuperscript{28} Charles Elliott, \textit{The Sinfulness of American Slavery} (1850).
\textsuperscript{29} Richard Baxter, 17th century English Presbyterian, who wrote \textit{Gildar Salvianus; on the Reformed Pastor} (1656).
January 18, 1846 Sabbath [at end of sermon] we raised a subscription of $116.40 enough to pay the debt and to put a neat fence around the house, to paint the chapel and to furnish a table, set of chairs and Bible and Hymn Book. . . .

March 21, 1846 collected money for the High School assisted the workmen in improving the building by making conveniences for the students. . . .

March 22, 1846 Sabbath raised subscriptions [about $70] for circulation of the Bible. . . .

December 27, 1846 [raised $198 to remove church’s debt] so we blessed God for our success. . . .

January 21, 1847 [raised $75] Walked diligently . . . pleading the cause of the distressed brethren of Charleston . . .

June 17, 1847 On last evening I received a letter from Bro. James B. Finley, the chaplain to the Penitentiary requesting me to wait on the citizens of Marietta and Harmar and solicit books for the Prison library and feeling that it was my duty I engaged actively in the work. [He collected 93 volumes that day and collected more on June 19 and 22. He sent 417 volumes plus many pamphlets and tracts.] . . .

August 15, 1847 [He took up a collection of $15.00 for superannuated preachers] . . .

August 16, 1847 visited families and collected missionary subscriptions during the day. . . .

September 11, 1847 [He visited friends in Zanesville and solicited for the seminary.] . . .

October 2, 1847 Occupied a part of this day in soliciting in Worthington for the seminary [$80] The prospect seems to be rather dark. . . .

October 26, 27, 28, 29, 1847 [Heath solicited in Columbus and collected $104 in the four days.] . . .

November 19, 1847 Rode out to Grove port and found a truly pleasant welcome among my former friends. Obtained about one hundred and seventy five dollars in subscriptions. . . .

December 8, 1847 Walked through the city [Cincinnati] but found there was no prospect of doing any thing toward the liquidation of our debt. . . .

December 13, 1847 This morning amidst a continued storm of snow I bade farewell to Cincinnati amidst reflections of a somewhat gloomy character. I felt that I had been treated with all the kindness which I had every right to expect in a great and crowded city. But my cause had not been honored as I thought it deserved. [$25 of the $35 collected came from preachers.] I was leaving a great City but a most corrupt one. I thank God that [it] is not my lot to live in the midst of so much unholy excitement . . . Cincinnati ought be a blessing to the whole land. But with an increase of wealth there is an increase of sin. . . .

March 17, 1848 In company with Father J. B. Finley I rode on to Groveport where we obtained thirty one volumes for the Ohio Penitentiary Library. . . .

May 1, 1848 Moved through the neighborhood praying with six families and obtaining a subscription from almost every man whom I approached making a little over $40.00 during the day. . . .

June 26, 1848 I walked incessantly so that I was exceedingly tired. I succeeded in obtaining some fine paintings for our Seminary and a few dollars beside. . . .

September 28, 1848 [Heath was elected Treasurer of the Missionary Society at the Annual Conference] entered immediately on the duties of my office [and arranged collections of more than $9,000]. . . .

June 4, 1850 Passed the day in assisting Bro. Dustin in presenting the claims of the Ohio Wesleyan University. [In 1843, Heath and Frederick Merrick were appointed agents to raise money and sell scholarships for the university. In two years they raised $30,000 and secured donations of land worth $15,000.] . . 31

February 2, 1852 I spent an hour with father Daniel Steward making a plea before him in favor of those young men who desire to board themselves at Delaware. [at Ohio Wesleyan University] I asked him for one thousand dollars to erect a row of cottages to bear the name of Steward Cottage. I have some hope of succeeding.

He not only raised money for the Worthington Female Seminary but also, as trustee, worked to improve its physical condition and participated in the annual examinations of the students. He worked on the grounds and became involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. At the trustee meeting on July 23, 1851, Heath was elected President.

When Heath became agent for the Tract Society in 1855 he decided to make his home in Worthington and bought William Bishop’s house at 721 High Street for $2,500.32 He was still president of the seminary board of trustees but the school’s enrollment was falling. In 1856, in order to attract more students, the Ohio Annual Conference approved changing the seminary to a college. The name change made little difference because the institution could not compete with Ohio Wesleyan in Delaware. The school could not get additional financial support from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The 1861 Annual Conference pledged “sympathy... and cordial support” and requested the trustees to reorganize the school “as soon as they can secure a suitable President and Faculty.” The school closed in 1867.

Heath’s interest in the seminary may have waned as he became more involved in raising money for other educational institutions. In the academic year 1845–46 he was appointed to the Board of Visitors for Ohio Wesleyan University and began in 1853. He was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1856 and continued on the Board through 1861.

His intellectual activities were wide-ranging:

December 4, 1845 formed an association for mutual advantage in theological study. We agreed to meet once a week to pass examination on theological reading and discuss difficult points. . . . June 11, 1847 Read, and wrote an article for the Western Christian Advocate on the necessity of letting the book concern remain as it is now.

The July 2 issue contained his strong support for continuing to apply the profits for retired ministers. The June 4 issue contained his article on missionary contributions in the Marietta district. He criticized the increased materialism represented by “gold watches, gold chains, gold rings, costly apparel” and urged readers to increase their efforts on behalf of missions. His report as chairman of the Committee on Sabbath Schools in which he called for an adequate supply of books and greater support for children in German missions was printed in the September 24, 1847 issue.

His most insightful recordings include:

July 21, 1849 Read at home perhaps one hundred pages and gathered some materials for a paper on the intermediate state [the condition of souls between death and resurrection] designed for the ministerial association of the district. I transcribed about ten pages of manuscript. . . .

August 10, 1849 Read such authors as would throw light on the doctrines of the intermediate state . . . and spent some time in writing. Lectured in the evening. . . .

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December 13, 1849 [Heath visited the Ohio University library] to see if any thing could find a place there in the shape of theology but old Calvinism. I saw Calvin’s works in splendid parchment binding in five large folios purchased doubtless with public funds but no Arminian Theology but a few small old volumes given by some friend and placed rather obscurely.

Heath occasionally commented on political events and on the reform movements in which he was involved.

March 31, 1846 [went to Columbus] attended a meeting of the citizens at the Methodist Church to express the sense of the late outrage committed on the dignity of the law and on the liberty of a fellow being by two ruffians in kidnapping a colored man and bearing him away. The feeling was intense. The indignation of the whole people arose. Money was subscribed. . . .

April 13, 1846 [Heath walked into town and sought subscriptions for the Western Christian Advocate. He then commented on the burning of this paper in Parkersburg, Virginia by those objecting to its anti-slavery views:] by their ungodly and wicked enactments as they have declared it a penitiary [sic] offense to read or receive the W. C. Advocate. . . .

June 1, 1846 Much excitement today beating up for volunteers for the army in Texas much wickedness shown among the people. [War against Mexico had been declared May 13]. . . .

August 19, 1846 This day I heard Rev. Samuel Lewis deliver a lecture on the subject of slavery. [Heath raised $10 from him for the school] I felt duty resting upon us to do much more for the removal of slavery than formerly. . . .

September 18, 1846 [on the Ohio River en route to Marietta] We had an old methodist local preacher on board from the South who talked much of the Holy Ghost but who is the holder of slaves. I told him that in the Ohio Conference the general belief was that the spirit of slavery never could go into Heaven. . . .

May 10, 1847 This morning we heard the news of another great battle in Mexico in which it is said that our Army has been victorious, and taken six thousand persons beside a great number being slain. May the Lord terminate this war to His Glory claiming the right to bring good out of evil. . . .

August 3, 1849 This was the National fast day appointed by the President of the United States on account of the Asiatic cholera which has been raging for some months in our land. It was properly observed in our town and through the bounds of the circuit. Labour was laid aside—the different denominations met in their respective churches and much prayer was offered up to God that the national sins might be pardoned and health restored. [Heath spoke three times.] . . .

January 8, 1850 This morning heard idle and vain men firing a canon in memory of the Battle of New Orleans. [January 8th continued to be a day of celebration for the Democratic party.] . . .

February 9, 1850 [at Quarterly Meeting] I brought before the Official Members of the Church a number of Resolutions contemplating a change in our General rules so that after the next General Conference no slaveholder shall come into membership in the M E Church. After some debate they passed 14 for 8 against. I hope this will be the first general action of this district. . . .

March 30 1850 [third quarterly meeting at Marietta] But the resolutions which went to being the subject of making freedom from slavery a test of membership failed. . . .

April 6, 1850 the resolutions failed through the influence of some violent spirits. . . .

July 3, 1850 Studied diligently but was annoyed by the reports of guns in anticipation of the fourth. . . .

July 4, 1850 The morning was ushered in by all the noisy and foolish demonstrations which could be expected to mark a people less enlightened than this nation. I kept princi­pally within doors. . . .
December 25, 1850 This day which according to custom should remind us of the Savior's birth is often employed as a day of peculiar confusion and sin. It was an unprofitable day to the most of the population of Marietta & Harmar.

October 28, 1851 Read and visited. Made some effort in the circulation of a temperance petition directed to the legislature of Ohio. The church feels like taking the lead in this good work. The temperance societies are making effort but this does not excuse the church. [Reformers failed to get the sale of liquor prohibited in the Ohio Constitution of 1851 but a popular vote on the issue of licensing was added when the vote on ratification of the Constitution was held.]

His own sense of his inadequacy often crept into the pages.

April 11, 1846 I am this day thirty seven years old and feel that I ought to be humbled in the dust before God in view of His goodness and my own unworthiness.

April 11, 1849 [On his 40th birthday, he wrote] I have made so poor a return to the Lord for all his mercy.

July 25, 1849 [After reading parts of six books plus the Bible] I taught my children. God grant that they will arise to improve their time more sacredly than I have done mine.

August 9, 1850 This morning on starting for our home I felt unusually cast down. I thought of my family of my unfitness for any responsible station and rode on to my next Q. Meeting in the rain weeping as I rode.

April 11, 1851 [42 years old] I ought before this time to have been nearer the standards for a christian. I am ashamed that I am no better at age when I should have been strong in the Lord and the power of his might. May God help me to live this year better than in any former year.

Heath remained very active until the end of his life. He was extremely ill the weekend before his death but preached twice on Sunday. On Monday he traveled twelve miles, preached a funeral sermon, and attended a meeting at his church. He died December 2, 1862.

Uriah Heath's journal provides us with a clearer picture of the mid-19th century Methodist circuit rider. He contributed to the tradition of studious energetic, persevering ministers as interested in furthering the education of men and women as well as saving their souls. He also set high standards for encouraging benevolence for a wide variety of non-profit institutions and became a model for generations of ministers who must be effective fundraisers. Although he may have been more scholarly than his colleagues, he certainly was representative in taking seriously the dictates of the Discipline in studying and improving his knowledge. The record of his wide reading, especially the major 18th and early 19th century religious works, suggests that Methodist circuit riders of his day were far more learned than has been their reputation.