FROM PRESIDING ELDER TO DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OFFICE IN
EPISCOPAL METHODISM FROM 1792 TO 1908

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Americans, like Bedouins, were on the move after the American Revo­
lution. This was a spacious republic. The land seemed unlimited. It was a
nation growing while it discovered itself. It was a land of expanding fron­
tiers.¹

The rise of the office of presiding elder was a way by which Methodism
sought to keep pace with the expanding frontier and its demands.² As new
settlements were established, the circuit rider followed. This led to a grow­
ing church. From 1784 to 1800 the number of preachers increased from 83
to 287, the circuits from 46 to 163, and the membership from 14,988 to
64,894. The oversight of this growing church, in which new preachers were
being added constantly, was largely in the hands of one person, Francis
Asbury. This task was too large for one individual; “Hence, the necessity for
the new official, the presiding elder.”³

The office of presiding elder was not officially recognized, and its
duties defined, until the General Conference of 1792. The title was used ear­
erlier in the plan for a Council that Asbury laid before the Conferences of
1789. In this plan the term presiding elder occured for the first time. The
plan stated: “Our bishops and presiding elders shall be members of this
Council….”⁴ The title is also used in the Minutes of 1789. This may have
been an attempt to conform the language of the Minutes with the plan for
the Council.⁵ The title disappeared from the Minutes the following year, per­
haps corresponding to the displeasure with and eventual demise of the
Council. It did not reappear in the Minutes until 1792.

Although the office of presiding elder did not become official until
1792, Frederick Norwood maintains that it, “began at the Christmas Con­

¹See Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience (New York: Random House,
1966) for information about this period of American history, especially Part Five.
²William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier 1783–1840: The Methodists, A
³Sweet, 40.
⁴Jno. J. Tigert, A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism, 6th ed. (Nashville:
Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1916), 243.
⁵Tigert, 244.
ference [in 1784] when a small group of elders were ordained to visit around in the quarterly meetings and administer the sacraments.” Jesse Lee believed that the office of presiding elder was present from 1785 onward. In 1785 certain elders were directed to take oversight over several circuits. Richard Ivy presided over three circuits served by five pastors. Richard Whatcoat had two circuits with four pastors, and Reuben Ellis presided over six circuits with nine pastors. Jesse Lee described the beginning of the office of presiding elder in terms of how appointments of the preachers were listed in the Minutes for 1785.

The form of the minutes of the conference was changed this year [1785], and all the Elders, who were directed to take oversight of several circuits were set to the right hand of a bracket, which enclosed all the circuits and preachers of which he was to take charge.

This may be considered as the beginning of the presiding elder office; although it was not known by that name at that time; yet in the absence of a Superintendent, this Elder has the directing of all the preachers that were enclosed in the bracket against which his name was set.

The presiding elder, later to be called the district superintendent, has had a long history in American Methodism. In what follows this office will be scrutinized in two periods, the years around 1800 and the years around 1900, to see how the office developed.

I

1792 was the year that the office of presiding elder became official. The Discipline of 1792 stated the following duties of the presiding elder:

1. To travel through his appointed district.
2. In the absence of a Bishop, to take charge of all the Elders, Deacons, Travelling and Local Preachers, and Exhorters in his District.
3. To change, receive, or suspend Preachers in his District during the intervals of the Conferences, and in the absence of the Bishop.
4. In the absence of a Bishop, to preside in the Conferences of his District.
5. To be present, as far as practicable, at all the Quarterly Meetings; and to call together at each Quarterly Meeting all the Travelling and Local Preachers, Exhorters, Stewards and Leaders of the Circuit, to hear complaints, and to receive Appeals.
6. To oversee the spiritual and temporal beliefs of the Societies in his District.
7. To take care that every part of our Discipline be enforced in his District.
8. To attend the Bishop when present in his District; and to give him when absent all necessary information by letter of the state if his District.


Jesse Lee, A Short History of the Methodists (Baltimore: Magil and Cline, 1810), 119, 120.

Discipline, 1792, Section V, 18, 19.
The 1792 *Discipline* was clear that the presiding elders were to be chosen and stationed by the bishop, for a term not exceeding four years successively. There was some fine tuning of the section pertaining to the presiding elders in the 1804 *Discipline* that reflected a changing situation brought about by a growing church. However, in the years around 1800 the duties of the presiding elder and the role of the bishop in their selection and stationing remained basically the same as in 1792.

Certain conclusions can be reached as to the function of the presiding elder from the disciplinary provisions of this period. (1) Presiding elders functioned, in these early years, as "an extension of episcopal presence." As such, they could assume duties that were the prerogative of the bishop when the bishop was unable to be present. For example, in the absence of a bishop, the *Discipline* of 1792 is quite clear that the presiding elder can "change, receive, or suspend Preachers," as well as preside at conferences. These were episcopal duties. As the personal representative of the bishop on the district, the presiding elder became a middle manager who, on the one hand, represented the bishop and took "care that every part of our *Discipline* be enforced in his District." On the other hand, all "necessary information" concerning the district was to be given to the bishop by the presiding elder. Because Asbury saw the presiding elder as the representative of the bishop, an extension of episcopal presence, he was insistent that the bishop choose, station, and change these leaders. As far back as 1796, Asbury strongly opposed those who sought to change the *Discipline* by having presiding elders chosen by vote of the preachers at Conference rather than be a bishop's appointment. Such a change would have made the presiding elder a representative of the body of ministers and not an executive officer of the bishop. All motions to effect a change were defeated.

(2) Presiding elders functioned, in these early years, as elders. They were elders who superintended the work of other elders and preachers in a

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9 *Discipline, 1792, Section V, 18, 19.*

10 "The *Discipline* of 1804 added a procedure to determine who will preside at a conference, in the absence of a bishop, when there may be more than one presiding elder in the conference. It also determined that "the quarterly meeting conference shall appoint a secretary to take down the proceedings of the quarterly meeting...."


12 See duties 3. and 4. under "What are the duties of the Presiding Elder" in the *Discipline, 1792, 18."

13 See duties 7. and 8. under "What are the duties of the Presiding Elder" in the *Discipline, 1792, 19."


15 The arguments concerning the appointment or the election of presiding elders is ably summarized by Nathan Bangs. See Frederick Norwood, *Sourcebook of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 223–228.
given area. As with all elders, they were appointed by a bishop, responsible to an Annual Conference, and administered the sacraments.

Only a small number of the circuit preachers were ordained in this early period of American Methodism. “Of the 266 preachers in 1792, only 78 were fully ordained and qualified to administer the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.” This meant that a recognized function of the presiding elders, because they were elders, was to administer the sacraments when they made their rounds of the quarterly meetings.

(3) Presiding elders also functioned, in these early years, as the fulcrum of the Methodist system. The vignettes that follow illustrate that they were “the primary load-bearing points of the system.”

We had at this early day, no course of study prescribed... but William M’Kendree, afterward bishop, but then my presiding elder, directed me to a proper course of reading and study. He selected books for me, both literary and theological; and every quarterly visit he made, he examined into my progress, and corrected my errors, if I had fallen into any. He delighted to instruct me in grammar.

In 1800 the general conference passed the ruling that every presiding elder was to see that his district was fully supplied with books, and it also stated that every preacher was to see that his circuit was daily supplied. In 1817, 1,203 books were sent to James B. Finley, the presiding elder of the Ohio District, to be sold on his district...

I was then in no Society, but thought I would go & join the Methodist[s], I did so and applied to the [Presiding] Elder for License to preach which he refused telling me in a very Cool tone of Voice that I was too recently a Member to Preach.

In the course of this year my father died, and left me to settle his little estate, which owing to the forms of law, took me several months, which was the longest time I have ever had from my regular work of a traveling preacher in fifty years; but upon a proper presentation of the case to my presiding elder, he gave me liberty to go and attend to this business.

In 1805 two settlements had been formed on the east branch of [the Ohio River]....Among the settlers in both settlements were Methodists who were anxious to have regular preaching. A petition was sent to John Sale, the presiding elder of the Ohio District....In response to the petition Sale sent Joseph Oglesby....

Sat Aug 2. Rose a few minutes after sun up....Rode to smoth Rock....Preached at one p.m. from Matt. XXII.39 with some liberty, after which I held Q.M. conference. The business was conducted with satisfaction. Br. Church Preached at 1/2 past 5 after which held a short prayer meeting....spent the evening in conversation till 10.

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16Sweet, 40.
17Kirby, Richey, and Rowe, 10.
19Sweet, 70.
20This is from a letter by Enos Scarbrough. See Sweet, 194, 195.
21Cartwright, 84.
22Sweet, 56.
Sund Aug. 3 Attended love feast...after which I administered the ordinance of baptism to 7 adults....Br. Samuel Bibbens preached....After which we administered the sacrament to perhaps 40 communicants. At 5 p.m. Br. Church preached a short discourse. After he had finished I preached through an interpreter to the Indians. Thus closed our QM...23

The presiding elders, in fulfilling the duties given them in the Disciplines of this period, were indeed the fulcrum or load-bearing point of the Methodist system. The above quotes indicate that they mentored and supported the preachers, were religious book salesmen for the general church, recruited and licensed preachers, established preaching stations, and conducted the business of the quarterly meetings where they gained a sense of the players and the playing fields of the circuits.

In fulfilling these tasks, presiding elders were constantly on the move. They were part of the “travelling line.”24 Their stay on a district was not to exceed four years successively. They were “movable at the pleasure of the [bishop] whenever he may find it necessary for the good of the cause....”25 They were also moving around their districts.

At our Conference, in the fall of 1828, Galena Charge was added to the Illinois District; so that my district reached nearly from the mouth of the Ohio River to Galena, the extreme northwest corner of the state, altogether six hundred miles long. This was a tremendous field of travel and labor. Around this district I had to travel four times in the year, and I had many rapid streams to cross, mostly without bridges or ferry-boats.26

Districts stretched hundreds of miles in these early years. To cover the district demanded extensive travel. It was a hard life. There were swollen streams to forge, swamps to traverse, dangers about, as well as uncertain financial support. Cartwright wrote, “I was frequently four or five weeks from home at a time.”27 Even with constant traveling, there were times when presiding elders did not complete four rounds of quarterly meetings.

Bishop Asbury was disappointed that James Jenkins had made only three rounds of his district and not four. Jenkins told the Bishop, “If I had been quartered, and each part made to travel, then I might have done it.” When you listen to his normal routine you can understand why it was so difficult to make four rounds a year. “My rule was, to visit every part of the district, to travel, preach, meet the societies and churches, nearly every day.”28

23This is taken from the journal of James Gilbreth, a presiding elder. Though this was written in 1834, it is not dissimilar to the quarterly meeting schedule around 1800. See Sweet, 371, 372.
24This is a quotation from the “Notes on the Discipline” issued in 1796. See Brannan, 11.
26Cartwright, 200.
27Cartwright, 216.
28Fred Price, Role of the Presiding Elder in the Growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1784–1832 (Madison, NJ: Drew University Microfilm Library, 1988), 144.
Though the life of a presiding elder in the earlier years was anything but a life of padded jolts and cushioned shocks, easy travel and leisure abundant, it had its rewards. Peter Cartwright gives us a glimpse of the rewarding side of the presiding elder's life.

Three times this day I swam my horse across swollen streams, and made the cabin I was aiming for. Here lived a kind Methodist family, who gave me a hearty welcome; gave me good meat and bread, and a strong cup of coffee, and I was much happier than many of the kings of the earth. I arrived safe at my quarterly meeting. All the surrounding citizens had turned out, twenty-seven in number. We had five conversions; seven joined the Church; and we were nearly all happy together.29

The hospitality of a Methodist family, people being converted, and a church that was growing made the difficulty of crossing swollen streams and the hardship of hours on horseback seem unimportant to Cartwright. He could still describe his life as "much happier than many of the kings of the earth."

II

It was on May 6, 1908 that the "twenty-fifth delegated" General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was convened. It gathered in a world that was quite different from the one Francis Asbury knew in the years around 1800. In 1908 the nation spanned two oceans. By 1900 twelve states had been carved from a geographical area that fifty years earlier was viewed as unfit for human habitation.30 "The railroad mileage of the nation increased by 650 per cent between 1860 and 1900. In the same period the output of coal multiplied almost twenty-five times, crude iron and steel almost thirty times, and petroleum more than six hundred times."31 The nation was becoming industrialized.32

With industrialization came the growth of cities. "Only eleven American cities could count more than a hundred thousand inhabitants in 1860. The total in 1900 stood at forty-five."33 With industrialization came consumerism. R. H. Macy advertised in 1867, "Goods suitable for the millionaire at prices in reach of millions."34 Industrialization bred a new kind of hero. Americans in earlier times "found their heroes in the statesman-farmer, soldier-patriot, and the frontiersman." By the time the 1908 Methodist Episcopal General Conference was convened, the industrial magnate and the flush financier had become American heroes.35

29Cartwright, 201.
31Morrow, 587.
32The census of 1890 revealed that for the first time in the nation's history the value of manufactured commodities exceeded that of agriculture. See Morrow, 587.
33Morrow, 589.
35The celebration of these "heroes" and the "Gilded Age" they personified fell far short of unanimity. With justification they were called "Robber Barons." See Morrow, 587, 588.
The Methodist Episcopal Church was a flourishing church in a prospering nation in 1908. In Asbury’s day there were no church periodicals. “In 1880 there were twenty periodicals published under the authority of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, besides many other periodicals published in the interests of the church.” 36 The one hundred years leading to 1908 were years of spectacular church growth.

In 1816 there were 11 Annual Conferences and a total membership of 224,853; in 1880 there were in the Methodist Episcopal Church alone 89 Annual Conferences in the United States, besides 7 Mission Conferences and 15 Missions, with a total membership of 1,742,922; in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, there were 39 Annual Conferences in the United States, and 4 Mission Conferences, with a total membership of 832,175; in the Methodist Protestant Church there were 44 Conferences with a membership of 130,000; while in the three large Negro Methodist Episcopal Churches there were at least 600,000 members, or a total of nearly 4,000,000 Methodists in the United States alone. 37

It was in such an era, a time when the church was growing and the nation was prospering, that the General Conference of 1908 was convened in Baltimore, Maryland. A number of persons presented memorials to the General Conference of 1908 recommending that the title of Presiding Elder be changed to District Superintendent. These memorials were assigned to the Committee on Revision. It was the ninth day of the conference, May 15th. Bishop Bashford was presiding. The call for the presentation of reports by standing committees was made. E. P. Robertson of North Dakota, the chairperson of the Committee on Revision, stood to report. The third report he presented Report 5, read:

Your Committee on Revision having carefully considered the memorial of Robert Forbes and others to change in the Discipline the title of Presiding Elder wherever it occurs, to District Superintendent, report against any change, and the prayers of the petitioners be not granted. 38

A lengthy debate ensued. There was a snarl of motions, counter-motions, points of order, and questions of privilege that seemed “to out-do Babel.” At one point, “Fifty men at once vociferated ‘Mr. Chairman!’ while the ivory gavel played its tattoo on the chairman’s block unheeded.” 39 Those who favored the committee’s report of no change did so for these reasons. (1) The title of presiding elder is historic and has a clear meaning among the people. (2) A change of name will neither enlarge nor lessen the sphere of the office. (3) In losing the term “elder” it is conceivable that a lay person could fill the office. 40

37 Sweet, Methodism in American History, 334.
38 The Daily Christian Advocate, Saturday, May 16, 1908, 3.
39 The Christian Advocate, May 21, 1908, 7.
40 The Daily Christian Advocate, Saturday, May 16, 1908, 3.
R. A. Chase of Colorado spoke in opposition to the report of the Committee of Revision. He argued that the duty of the office

...is as the Bishop’s assistant, not in administering sacraments, but in the great business of administering every interest and province of the church on his district. A superintendent carries not only to Methodists this meaning but carries it to everybody. Superintendent is a well defined and definite term. Presiding Eldership is not known in its essential character and up-to-date meaning with our own people, for they emphasize sacrament, and we must emphasize administration.\footnote{\textit{The Daily Christian Advocate}, Saturday, May 16, 1908, 3.}

Chase went on to argue that presiding elder referred to a time when circuit riders traveled four times a year to quarterly meetings where they administered the sacraments and preached. But, argued Chase, this is not the present emphasis of the office. It is the pastor of a church or circuit, he declared, who presently provides the sacraments, while it is administration, caring for the interest of the business of the church on the district, that has become the emphasis of the office whose name he would change. This emphasis, he argued, is best described by calling those who hold this office district superintendents.

Finally a vote was taken. The motion to adopt the report of the Committee on Revision did not prevail.\footnote{\textit{Journal of the General Conference, 1908}, ed. Rev. Joseph B. Hingeley, D.D. (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1908), 314.} There was to be no change of names as yet, though it was evident that the sentiment in the conference (one fourth of whose members were presiding elders) was powerful enough to bring about a change at the first opportunity.\footnote{\textit{The Christian Advocate}, May 21, 1908, 7.} On Saturday, May 16, “P. H. Swift, Chairman of the Committee on Itinerancy, stated that, since the session yesterday, there had been placed in his hands certain memorials concerning the substitution of the term ‘District Superintendent’ for that of ‘Presiding Elder’...”\footnote{\textit{Journal of the General Conference, 1908}, 314.} He asked for instruction as to the disposition of these memorials. Amid the discussion E. P. Robertson, Chairman of the Committee on Revision, reported that his “committee had seen a great light and could be trusted to bring in a different report.”\footnote{\textit{The Daily Christian Advocate}, Monday, May 18, 1908, 1.} The Committee on Revision was given the responsibility for handling the memorials. On the twenty-fourth day of the General Conference, the Committee on Revision presented Report 16. It read: “The Committee on Revision respectfully ask that the title ‘District Superintendent’ be substituted for that of ‘Presiding Elder,’ and that the Discipline be revised in accordance with this change.”\footnote{\textit{Journal of the General Conference, 1908}, 519, 520.} The report was adopted.

As the ripening of red-tinged leaves heralds a change in seasons, so changing the name presiding elder to district superintendent heralded the
metamorphosis that had taken place in this office. It reflected that the office had changed since its official inception in 1792.

In 1800, Enoch George, a presiding elder, had nine appointments over which he presided, with thirteen preachers assigned to these appointments.47 There were other presiding elders in 1800 who had larger areas of supervision. Francis Poythress had fifteen appointments with twenty-two preachers. But Joseph Jewell had four appointments over which he presided with six preachers. In contrast, the four districts of the Philadelphia Conference in 1901 averaged seventy-seven appointments per district was seventy-eight preachers per district.48 There were other conferences that covered areas with less density of population, where the presiding elder in the years around 1900 had a smaller number of appointments to supervise than the Philadelphia Conference. The four districts of the Colorado Conference in 1900 averaged thirty-five appointments per district.49 Even these smaller districts, however, had a far larger number of appointments and preachers to be supervised than was the case in 1800 when the average number of appointments over which a presiding elder had responsibility was nine.50 By 1900, presiding elders had a four hundred to nine hundred percent increase in the number of appointments and preachers to supervise than in 1800.

This change in the size of districts, precipitated by a growing and flourishing church, had its effects upon how presiding elders functioned. In 1800, quarterly meetings were two-day festivals in which there was preaching, the administering of sacraments, and a time to conduct business. With districts much larger one hundred years later, two-day quarterly meetings became less possible. If a presiding elder had fifty churches to supervise, which was not unlikely in 1900, a two-day meeting done quarterly would require four hundred days, an impossible task in a year. Thus it was that such extended quarterly meetings were no longer the norm by 1900. In fact, it became less likely for the presiding elder to meet with a church on a quarterly basis. The General Conference of 1908, acting on a memorial presented by E. M. Holmes and eight others which asked for “a modification of the duties of the presiding elders as to the second and third Quarterly Conferences,”51 made the following change in the Discipline: the District Superintendent “may either combine the second and third [Quarterly Conferences] or may omit

47 For information about the stationing of preachers in 1800 see the “Minutes for 1800,” Minutes of the Methodist Conferences Annually Held in America; From 1773 to 1813 inclusive, vol. 1 (New York: Daniel Hitt and Thomas Ware, 1813), 243–248.
48 Information about the stationing of preachers in the Philadelphia Conference in 1901 can be found in the Official Journal and Year Book of the Philadelphia Conference (Philadelphia: Methodist Episcopal Book Room, 1901), 286, 287.
49 See Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conferences, 1900 (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900), 286, 287.
50 See the “Minutes for 1800,” 243–248.
them, as may seem best after consultation with the pastor." Larger districts helped effectuate the movement from two-day quarterly meetings to evening conferences that took place two or three times a year.

With larger districts the sense of closeness that Peter Cartwright had with his presiding elder, William McKendree, was no longer possible. There was not time for a presiding elder in 1900 to tutor a preacher in grammar or to direct him personally in a course of study. That was something that could be done when the presiding elder had nine appointments with thirteen preachers to supervise, but not possible when he had seventy-seven appointments with as many preachers. The intimacy through which a leader could inspire and mentor was being drained away.

Not only did the presiding elder in the years around 1900 supervise more churches and preachers than did his forebearers, his duties were also expanded. In 1792, the year that the office of presiding elder became official, the *Discipline* assigned presiding elders eight duties. In 1908, the year that the name was changed, twenty duties were assigned. It took one hundred and fifty-eight words to list the duties in 1792. In 1908 six hundred and eleven words were required. A sampling of the expanded duties follows:

To see that all Charters, Deeds, and other conveyances of Church property... conform strictly to the laws....

To see that all Church property is well insured.

To promote...the interests of Foreign Missions, Home Missions and Church Extension,...Sunday Schools, Conference Claimants' Connectional Funds,... Epworth Leagues, Freemen's Aid Society, Methodist Brotherhoods, and Ladies' Aid Societies...

To inquire carefully in every charge whether the apportionment for the Episcopal Fund...for the expenses of the General Conference and other general expenses of the Church have been paid.

To decide all Questions of Law involved in proceedings pending in a District or Quarterly Conference....

To direct the attention of candidates for the Ministry to the advantages of a thorough training in the literary and theological schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church....

The original eight duties of the presiding elder found in the *Discipline* of 1792 are maintained in the *Discipline* of 1908, and yet the office was decidedly different. What made it different was that all of the added duties emphasized the administrative and managerial particulars of the office.

This emphasis upon the administrative can be seen in reports of presiding elders to their Annual Conferences. In 1902 Joseph Taylor Gray, the Presiding Elder for the North District of the Philadelphia Conference, gave a six-page report to the Annual Conference. All but one page emphasized the

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52 *Journal of the General Conference, 1908, 493.
53 See *Discipline, 1792, Section V, 18, 19 and Discipline, 1908, Chap. VIII, 133–135.
54 *Discipline, 1908, Chap. VIII, 133–135.
thank offering gifts of the churches for the payment of indebtedness on church and parsonage properties. The preponderance of the report shared the following type of information:

With a determination and perseverance deserving commendation, and with liberality deserving imitation, the church at Pen Argyl, C. W. Green, pastor, has paid $1,200 on its indebtedness. Thus, year by year, the load is lessened, and the time is not far in the future when this splendid church will be free from debt. Norris Square, T. W. Davis, pastor, has had a year of remarkable success. The debt, which three years ago was $20,000, has been reduced to $12,000, and has been refunded at a lower rate, so that the interest burden of the church has been reduced from $1,000 to $480 per year. In the midst of strenuous financial effort the Spirit of God has wrought mightily in the salvation of people.

Near the end of his North District report, J. T. Gray listed those churches reporting ten or more conversions. Even with this the temporal was present. He reported: “At East Allegheny Avenue, where debt-paying and church improvement have gone together, there have been 110 conversions.” It is obvious from the statistical section on conversions in this report of 1902, that the presiding elder was no longer a circuit riding evangelist who wrote in his journal: “Held a watch Night in town. I preached...Six [were] converted. Glory be to God and [Christ].” The presiding elder by 1902 had become a connectional officer who among other things promoted evangelism by reporting conversions.

The role of the presiding elder went through a profound metamorphosis from 1792, the year of the official beginning of the office, to 1908, the year of the name change. This metamorphosis was fueled by a growing and flourishing church that required supervision and by an industrial age culture that exalted administration. William Warren Sweet in *Methodism in American History* wrote:

The change of the title “presiding elder,” in spite of its long and honorable use in the church, to that of “district superintendent” in 1908 indicates the changing functions of the official from those of an inspirational leader to those of a business and administrative officer.

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56 *Journal of the Philadelphia Annual Conference, 1902*, 52.
57 *Journal of the Philadelphia Annual Conference, 1902*, 54.
58 This is taken from the journal of Richard Whatcoat that covers the period from August 1, 1789 to December 31, 1790. At that time Whatcoat was the presiding elder of circuits on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay. See Sweet, *The Methodists*, 79.