

# Western Circuit Rider

## Newsletter of the Western Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History

February, 2016



A couple of years ago someone suggested the Commission on Archives and History was the “Rodney Dangerfield” agency of Annual Conferences and the General Conference. “It gets no respect,” they told me. I think I know what they mean. I cannot seem to convince the UMW, which has a rented storage locker full of boxes, that some of those boxes would be better off in climate controlled Archives. Nor have I had any success in getting the Agencies of our Annual Conference to regularly submit minutes and other important documents for safe keeping at the Archives. In the scheme of the Program Agencies of the Annual Conference, Archives does not seem very important.

The General Commission and Fred Day are remedying this miss-information as they have hired a Communication consultant to improve the public profile of the General Commission. Watch for articles which will appear in United Methodist News and on line when you search Google.

I was reminded of this again this week when one of our Commission members, the Conference Videographer, offered to make a 2-3 minute video of the Archives and what it does, to be shown at Seminars of the Archives and at Annual Conference. One of our dilemmas is that we have not tooted our own horn enough. We behave like a second class agency next to Evangelism and Missions and Christian Education, yet our “Ministry of Memory for the United Methodist Church” motto tells us we are an important part of the program ministry of the Church.

Does your conference use Videos during its Annual Session and is there a Conference Videographer who could be asked to put together a 2-3 minute video of your work? You might have to write the script, but that is fine because then you can control the message.

Does your Conference weekly communication vehicle – online newsletter or print media - accept stories about its past? Could you find someone to write two or three or more stories a year to be shared with your Conference? Find ways to make yourself known to your Conference. Highlighting Church Anniversaries and some of the founding events are often interesting subjects. Look in old Journals which have the reports of the many social service agencies that were a part of the Church’s ministry in the 1920’s. They provide many interesting stories. Any Trials of Clergy now deceased in your conference will begin to highlight the Church of yesterday compared to the Church of today. The stories are there and need to be told.

After reading this column you are justified in thinking I have one string on my harp. But I am really writing to

remind myself that I need to do more writing. The topic will change next issue. I will be talking about the 23 different previous Annual Conferences which make up the current California-Pacific Conference. Have you a similar history?

### Thoughts from the President



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### OLD JEFFREY

Don Knepp

Part of a series of stories taken from early Methodism

Old Jeffrey haunted the Epworth rectory for about five months: vigorously from December 1716 to January 1717 and sporadically until around April 1717 when he finally left.

In 1714 John Wesley had been admitted to Charterhouse School, London. When the haunting started in December, 1716, he was away at school. The rest of the household witnessed the mysterious events.

Early in December, 1716, a servant, Robert Brown, and one of the maids heard a groaning sound at the dining room door. The women of the family laughed at the idea. The following evening Holly Wesley was in the dining room reading when she heard the door open and then a rustling like a silk dress.

Soon here were more groans, howls and sounds of bottles being broken. Hetty Wesley said she had seen "Old Jeffery" and said he looked like someone in a long white gown. Her mother thought it looked more like a headless badger.

Soon, several of the family heard strange sounds in various parts of the house. Finally, as the events became more frequent, they told their father, Rev. Samuel Wesley.

Reverend Wesley did not see anything unusual and lectured the children and servants who told him. "If there were any noises, they were undoubtedly caused by the young men who come around in the evening!" This did not set well with the four grown daughters.

Emily Wesley stated in her diary that her father "smiled and gave no answer, but was more careful than usual, from that time, to see us in bed, imagining it to be some of us young women that sat up late and made a noise. His incredulity, especially his imputing it to us, or our lovers, made me, I own, desirous of its continuance till he was convinced."

Early in this adventure Reverend Wesley acquired a mastiff to discourage any nighttime visitors. At first the dog barked violently but soon became silent and more terrified than any of the children.

The Wesleys' at first thought the oldest son, Samuel, who was not at home, had died violently. Later the Wesley family learned the three boys who were not at home were safe and well. From that time on Old Jeffrey attracted more curiosity and amusement than alarm.

It was the custom in the Wesley household to have evening prayers. One of the prayers was for the king. Reverend Wesley supported William of Orange while Susanna supported James II. They had argued about this. When he prayed for William of Orange she would omit the "amen".

When Old Jeffery appeared it became obvious that he favored James II and the Jacobites. The knockings would get louder and all over the room. Prayers for the monarch and monarchy were discontinued. Old Jeffery kept quiet during prayers after that.

Emily Wesley seemed to be the center of the manifestations. She was noticed to tremble strongly in her sleep when the knockings occurred.

The knockings and disturbances became so regular the children stopped being afraid of them. They quickly learned that Old Jeffery was a welcome alternative to the boredom of village life. Soon it became a game of chasing Old Jeffery around the house. One witness saw the bed lifting off the floor while the children sat on it, laughing and screaming in delight. By the end of January, 1717, Old Jeffery stopped his visits. The event started and ended suddenly and left behind one of the most interesting stories of psychic phenomenon.

SOURCES: Rev. Frederick E. Maser, *The Story of John Wesley's Sisters, or Seven Sisters in Search of Love*, [1988, Academy Books, Rutland, VA]

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Lyle Johnston  
Jackson MO.  
Consultant with the Desert Southwest Conference

Most of Nevada has been a part of the California-Nevada Conference since 1917. Nevada is the gambling place and marriage/divorce mecca of the West.

Any couple wanting a religious service usually went to the Methodist church as it was the closest church to the courthouse. Such church marriages came into existence, especially after 1931 when judges could no longer charge fees for weddings as such ceremonies were affecting regular court work, so the state legislature stepped in and passed a law that fees could not longer be charged.

Those couples having their wedding in a nearby church caused ministers to give "proportionately less time for pastoral duties." In Reno during the first four decades of the 20th century the population increased five times while church membership remained in the 200's.

Frederic "Pusher" Busher was First Church, Reno's minister in the early 1940's. In 1942 he "announced that the church would pay his salary — increased from \$1,200 to \$3,600 and that all fees above expenses would go to missionary work in [the] city and [the] state." The plan was named "Meth-Mutual." One of his assistant ministers would perform "all out-of-parish marriages. His salary was the first [line item] on the fund." Reno's church could claim the title "Most Marryingist Church" in America — after New York City's the Little Church Around the Corner. There were times marriages at First church were as high as 1,800 a year. On July 20, 1957, there were 34 weddings performed — the highest for a one-day period.

The Meth-Mutual fund worked for 20 years until 1962 when marriage chapels caused a sharp decline at First Church.

(Source: Leon Loofbourow, *Cross in the Sunset*, Historical Society of the California-Nevada Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, 1966, I:64.)

**Western Jurisdiction  
Commission on  
Archives and History  
The United Methodist Church**

**Letter of Invitation**

June 1, 2016

We of the WJCAH encourage your attendance at the joint meeting of our annual jurisdictional conference and the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church that will be held in Anchorage, Alaska June 26-29, 2017.

We will highlight some of the people, places and events that have historical significance for us within The United Methodist Church. Alaska was first serviced by the Woman's Home Missionary Society in Unga in 1886 and then at the Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska in 1890. The Gold Rush in the late 1890s, fishing industries, the fur industry headed by the Russian merchants brought many people to the District of Alaska and these people needed spiritual guidance along with economic survival. Initially this was accomplished by the Russian Orthodox, then the Catholics, Moravians, and then the others including Methodists.

It is recommended that since you will be coming from such a long distance and at such a great cost that you many want to either come a few days early or stay late a few days extra to see some of the many interesting sites the Anchorage area has to offer. The summer solstice has many special activities and it is prime tourist season and that can present some challenges if you don't make reservations early.

Not only all that, but 2017 is Alaska's Sesquicentennial and celebrations will be happening all year. It will have been 150 years since Alaska was purchased from Russia. This observance will no doubt be a part of our meeting with a brief recognition.

I realize many want to come to Alaska to see its geology and biological beauty as well as our outdoor activities but our conference in 2017 will also add cultural history to the agenda, learning about Methodist activity since 1886, Alaska Native involvement, and many social and economic issues.

We want to promote the informality of Anchorage. Please do not plan on wearing ties or dresses. Make sure to bring good walking shoes. Very casual is the order of the day. Please also be aware that Alaska is one hour earlier than Seattle and four hours earlier than the East Coast so please don't call before noon East Coast time if you wish to connect with businesses which open at 8:00 a.m. Alaska time.

Optional local tours may be arranged for those interested in seeing the Anchorage area at times when the two groups are not meeting, such as Monday morning, and each day either early or late. Remember, we will have about 20 hours of sunlight then. Suggested areas include: Ship Creek salmon watching/hatchery; Alaska Wild Berry Gift/Candy store; Alpenglow ski resort and Nike site; Alaska zoo; Flattop viewpoint; Point Woronzof; curling lanes; railroad snowplow engine etc. These options will be led by local people in local vehicles.

We cannot cover everything in the time allotted so for those coming early or staying late there are many places to visit and things to do. Things are expensive here for many tourist activities. I would highly recommend a trip to Seward and taking a boat out into Prince William Sound for whale and other wildlife watching as well as a tour of the Seward Sea Life Center. About 70 miles south of Anchorage is the Portage Glacier area of the Chugach National Forest, but one needs to take a boat to see the glacier as it has retreated behind rocks, but there are smaller hanging glaciers still visible from the road system. This would be on the route for going to Whittier which you can visit by driving through a very long tunnel. It is an interesting World War II community. Just driving along the Seward Highway south is spectacular and you might even see a bore tide or Dall sheep. Out of Homer you can take a small

airplane on floats and get close and personal with bears who are eating the salmon across Cook Inlet. Another option would be to take a train ride. Another interesting site is the Alaska Botanical Gardens. At the end of this letter of invitation will be web addresses for many of these places.

For those interested in reading the Methodist history books I have written, you can go to the Alaska United Methodist Conference web site ([www.alaskaumc.org](http://www.alaskaumc.org)) go to the "About Us" tab, go to the "History" tab, and hopefully you will see A History of Alaska Methodist University..... and also A History of Chaplains in Alaska and the history of Birchwood Camp where a tour and lunch is planned as part of our meetings. There is also the book that Bea Shepard and Claudia Kelsey wrote which is the only complete documentation of Alaska Methodism up until 1986 Have Gospel Tent Will Travel.

Best regards,

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This article was written by Shirley Knepp for the United Methodist Women Time Line for the 2014 United Methodist Women Assembly held in Louisville, Kentucky.  
Abbie Mills

The person I am honoring is a person I never met – one that lived over 100 years ago. Her name is Abbie Mills. She came into my life because of water damage in the archives. I am the Oregon-Idaho Conference Archivist and after a heavy rain the rainwater flooded the Archive room. The person who discovered the damage set the dripping archive material onto a table. She then called me to come take care of the materials. As I was setting pictures out to dry I came upon this photo.

### **Have photo of Abbie Mills**

I said, "I think the person in this photograph was a deaconess." The photo was signed Abbie Mills.

Discovering who Abbie Mills became an obsession and a series of God given events.

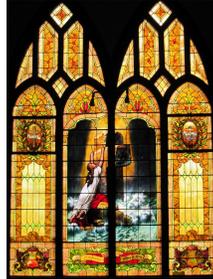
Our archives had two file boxes marked Deaconess. For the 125 birthday of the Deaconesses I pledged that I would explore those boxes and try to piece together the information about the Deaconesses in Oregon. These boxes contained journals of the minutes of the Deaconess movement in Oregon from 1893 until 1945 along with scrapbooks, photo albums and newspaper clippings.

It was in this treasure I found a notation which said Abbie was the first native born Oregonian to become a deaconess. She was born to a prominent pioneer family at Brownsville in Linn County, Oregon on February 25, 1869. She came to the Jane Abrams Deaconess Home, a little cottage, the first home for the deaconesses at the side of the Methodist Hospital in Portland, Oregon. She took her nurses training at the Methodist Hospital. She became a deaconess in 1894 She was commissioned at the same time she graduated from nurses training. She worked in Salem and Hood River.

Abbie Mill's obituary in the Hood River paper tells of the great service she did in the communities that she served. It also tells of the tragic ending year of her life. "Miss Mills came to Hood River in 1904 and was superintendent

of the Cottage Hospital here for some time. She was a well beloved nurse whose life was devoted to the relief of suffering humanity. In 1917, as a result of overwork, she suffered a nervous breakdown from which she never recovered and on May 11, 1918, Abbie Mills died in Hood River

One article said that there was a window in the Hood River United Methodist Church, Hood River, Oregon that was dedicated to Abbie Mills. With the help of some of the members of that church I received a photograph of the large stained glass window. It shows a person holding onto the cross surrounded by a raging sea.



**Abbie Mills has opened my eyes to the dedication, the challenge, the hardships, the caring nature of the early deaconesses and how their Love for serving Christ made it possible for the less fortunate persons were taught, nursed, fed, clothed, prayed over, and loved.**

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#### IMPORTANCE ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Material from the Oregon-Idaho Conference archives was used in Dale E. Soden's newly published book, **Outsiders in the Land of Promise: Religious Activists in the Pacific Northwest**.

Laura Arksey, a retired librarian and archivist, a volunteer at the Oregon Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church has had an article on David E. Blaine published in **Methodist History**, Vol. 53 (July, 2015).

She has contributed articles to *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* and *Columbia*.

She just has had an article accepted by the **Pacific Northwest Quarterly**. It will be published soon. We were given permission to print the article in our publication.

#### **Oregon Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church**

From their beginnings in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century England, the Methodists have always been diligent record keepers. The national headquarters for American Methodist records, which go back to the colonial period, is the United Methodist Archives and History Center, at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. This repository contains 9,000 cubic feet of archival source material, over 250,000 photographs, and a vast collection of books, pamphlets, doctoral dissertations, and periodicals related to Methodism and Methodist-affiliated churches.

The United Methodist Archives and History Center also oversees a network of regional archives. The branch serving Oregon, the Oregon Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, is one of these. Located in Salem, it occupies part of a handsome old building that was once an Elks lodge, now owned by the historic First United Methodist Church next door. Before being transferred to the Oregon Archive, the original home of Oregon Methodist materials was Willamette University, which was founded in 1842 by Methodist missionaries.

The regional archives are responsible for collecting official church publications, such as published minutes of annual conferences and the national general conferences, which are held every four years, as well as position papers and resolutions of the church governing bodies. They also collect diaries, memoirs, letters, books, pamphlets and periodicals related to Methodism in their areas. In addition, these regional archives are charged with receiving and processing the records of closed churches within the jurisdiction of their annual conferences. In the case of Oregon, many of these churches were founded in the nineteenth century and were once pillars of their communities. These closed church collections usually contain not only the articles of incorporation and other founding documents, but also such historically useful materials as board minutes, annual reports, financial records, Sunday School rosters, and the annals of the women's societies. They also include considerable information on clergy and members, including marriages, baptisms and funerals. The regional archives also maintain separate clergy files containing biographies, newspaper clippings, photographs, and obituaries. Needless to say, all such items are used for genealogy.

The regional archives hold many important historic primary and secondary sources, some going back to the earliest days of the Methodist presence in a particular area. In Oregon, it began in 1834 with the arrival in the Willamette Valley of Jason Lee and his small cadre of missionaries. During the next decade, Methodists arriving over the Oregon Trail began establishing communities, churches, and schools. Many of these newcomers would become leaders in education, government, and civic life. In fact, the influence of early Methodists in Oregon far exceeded their sheer numbers. The Oregon Archives holds original letters and diaries, many of which have been transcribed, of these early Methodist missionaries, clergy and settlers. Among such treasures is a small diary kept in 1862. The diarist was obviously a circuit rider who traveled by horseback in all kinds of weather to serve scattered congregations in the Willamette Valley of western Oregon. The small, light-weight book is typical of the pocket diaries produced during the period, its compact size making it ideal for the saddle bags of a circuit rider.

Until recently the identity of the diarist was unknown. To archivist Shirley Knepp, the diary seemed well worth transcribing, and she enlisted my services as a new volunteer. Our hope was that in the process of transcription, the diarist's identity would emerge. It did. The first clue was a reference to taking "Mrs. B" in the buggy. Because all the other Methodists are referred to in the diary as "Brother" or "Sister," it seemed likely that Mrs. B would be the wife of the diarist. Then a definitive clue leaped out from an entry made on April 27, 1862: "Got up about 5 o'clock AM & in about an hour Blain *minimus natura* was introduced to the light of this world." This terse note recording the birth of a baby provides the first appearance in the diary of the name Blain. The 1862 *Minutes of the Oregon Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (as the church was then called) list as residing in Lebanon, Oregon, a D. E. Blain, who had been ordained deacon in the East Genesee Conference of New York State in 1853 and was currently serving as a preacher and presiding elder in Oregon.

As serendipity would have it, I had recently moved to Salem, Oregon, from Washington State, where I had long been interested in regional history. Immediately I began to wonder if D. E. Blain could be the same person as the Rev. David E. Blaine, a renowned founder of early Seattle who arrived with his wife Catharine in 1853. Despite the difference in spelling, church and census records proved this to be the case. The couple's years in Seattle are well known. David established the first church and Catharine was the town's first teacher. A church, school and street bear the name Blaine in their honor, and their published letters are a major source for the study of Seattle history. It is unclear why and when the name changed from Blain to Blaine.

Less well known are the four years David and Catharine Blaine later spent in Oregon. Yet even without this positive identification, the diary would be important for the glimpse it provides of a Methodist circuit rider's life and ministry. Fortunately, the brief often mundane diary entries are amplified by the Blaines's much more detailed published letters, held in the Oregon Archives as well as other libraries. Many of these letters to family in New York were sent from Oregon. When used in conjunction with David Blaine's diary, they provide a valuable resource for studying events, people, agriculture, family, religious, civic and social life in early Oregon. The very candid letters reveal the attitudes of David and Catharine Blaine.

Of particular interest in both the diary and the letters are the accounts of camp meetings, a tradition the Oregon Methodists had brought with them from their home states. Once every summer, widely scattered frontier families would converge in wagons laden with tents, bedding and food to enjoy a week of preaching, hymn singing and socializing. Of

course, camp meetings were a major means of gaining new converts as well as reviving the zeal of the faithful. The Oregon Archives holds other firsthand accounts of Willamette Valley camp meetings.

Two additional items attributable to David E. Blaine are held by the archives. One is an accounting ledger for his circuits. The other is a record book for Santiam Academy, a Methodist school at Lebanon, Oregon, where he was briefly the principal, then a trustee. It contains names of students, subjects studied, textbooks used, and fees paid.

The Oregon Archives also maintains files on issues that have affected or been affected by Methodism historically. Of particular interest to recent researchers have been collections relating to Native Americans and to Japanese Americans. For example, Dale E. Soden used as a resource for his *Outsiders in a Promised Land: Religious Activists in Pacific Northwest History* a file on the courageous opposition of a Methodist minister, Sherman Burgoyne of Hood River, Oregon, to Japanese American internment during World War II. Currently Duane Medicine Crow is investigating the checkered relations of Methodist missionaries and settlers with Oregon's original inhabitants.

The Oregon Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, 680 State Street, Salem OR 97301, is open to the public by appointment with the archivist Shirley Knepp, who can be reached by mail, by phone at (503) 949-1180, or by email at [smkmikie@comcast.net](mailto:smkmikie@comcast.net). Through a collaboration between the Oregon Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and Willamette University, David Blaine's diary has been scanned and is available online at Willamette University Archives.

<http://libmedia.willamette.edu/cview/archives.html#!doc:page:manuscripts/4766/>

Laura Arksey, a retired librarian and archivist, volunteers at the Oregon Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. She has contributed articles to *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* and *Columbia*. Her recent article on David E. Blaine appeared in *Methodist History*, Vol. 53 (July, 2015). It is also available online at <http://hdl.handle.net/10516/9759>

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**This newsletter can not continue without contributions.**

We hope to publish 4 issues per year:., winter, spring, summer and , fall.

This is the winter edition

News for the spring issue should be to Don and Shirley by May 20

News for the summer issue should be to Don and Shirley by August 20

News for the fall issue should be to Don and Shirley by November 20

**New Communications Director**

Madison, N.J.: The General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH) announced today that James (Jay) Rollins of New York City has been named Director of Communications, effective July 29. Jay was enthusiastically welcomed by the Commission at their annual meeting.

"GCAH is extremely pleased and very fortunate to have someone of Jay's excellent experience in the field of communications join our team of historians and archivists," said Fred Day, General Secretary. "As keepers of the United Methodist Church's DNA, we are excited about the ways Jay will assist in pulling history off the stacks and shelves and into the hearts, minds, and souls of United Methodists everywhere. This will continue to inspire and build-up the identity and ethos of the Church. "

Rollins comes with more than 8 years of experience in communications and marketing with the General Board of Global Ministries and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). He was responsible for managing branding, marketing, advertising, social media and communications strategy. With UMCOR, he witnessed the work of the church in more than 20 developing countries—from the border of Syria to the youngest country of South Sudan.

"It is an honor to join the General Commission on Archives and History and share the stories of the rich heritage of the UMC," said Rollins. "I look forward to working with the team at the United Methodist Archives and History Center as we learn the lessons from our past to guide our future."

Rollins is a graduate of Rutgers University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is currently pursuing a Masters of Journalism and Mass Communication with Kent State University.

### **Media Contact**

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Photo caption: Rollins, on a trip with the United Methodist Committee on Relief, visits with a young beneficiary from the Old Mutare orphanage in 2012.

Photo credit: UMCOR staff

### **2016 Historical Society of The United Methodist Church Annual Meeting**

May 23 - May 26, 2016  
*Dover, Delaware*

The HSUMC Annual Meeting hosted by the Northeastern Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History will be held at Whatcoat United Methodist Church. Special presentations will focus on the history of Bishop Levi Scott. More details will be posted as they become available.

It will explore the theological themes of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and to apply insights to the challenges of ministry and mission today. To receive full information as it becomes available please send email or home address to the Rev. Dr. Lynn Pries at [Lynn@pries.ws](mailto:Lynn@pries.ws) or call 630-697-1942.

### **Welcoming the Stranger**

United Methodism has a long history of welcoming strangers into our churches and communities. John Wesley set the welcoming tone for his preachers and societies through field preaching and what we call today social gospel works. British Methodist preachers help to start a Strangers' Friend Society late in Wesley's lifetime to reach out to help those who needed it the most. The aim of the Society was to help anyone who had need regardless of religious belief or ethnicity. The Society's ecumenical nature allowed Methodists to work with other religious bodies to meet these social and economic needs while providing spiritual guidance. Wesley fully endorsed the work of the Strangers' Friend Society and promoted it when possible.

Both the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association/Church welcomed strangers into their fellowships which included non-German speaking groups once the German language was no longer the primary communication vehicle for church life. A case in point would be the Evangelical Church's intentional work with Italian immigrants in the 20th century. The other gift these two churches gave to United Methodism were orphanages. Churches in Germany established denominational-based orphanages long before they made their debut in the United States. It was only natural that German speaking churches would start orphanages here in America.

Welcoming the stranger is part of United Methodism's DNA. But the telling of the story has long been neglected. Let us recapture this story based on Biblical injunctions this Heritage Sunday and actualize it every day in our ministry to the community!