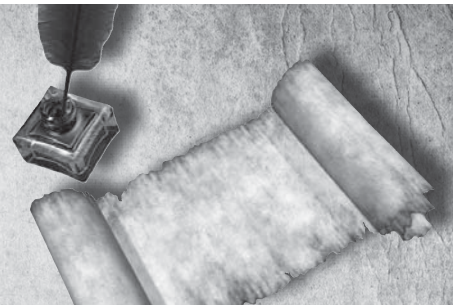


HISTORIAN'S DIGEST



Volume 56, Number 2

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Peninsula-Delaware Conference Hosts Annual Meetings for The Northeastern Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History and The Historical Society of the United Methodist Church

On Tuesday morning, May 24, nearly 100 people met in the sanctuary of the Whatcoat United Methodist church in Dover, DE, to begin the 2016 NEJCAH/HSUMC annual meeting with a worship service on Aldersgate Day. After a welcome by the Whatcoat UMC pastor, Dr. Elmer Davis, and an opening hymn, Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison, President of the HSUMC, led the call to worship. The opening prayer was led by the Rev. Matthew Loyer, NEJCAH President. The morning message was given by the Peninsula-Delaware Conference Bishop, Peggy A. Johnson, entitled, "Keep the Faith." Bishop Johnson said, "Faith is putting all your eggs in one basket and that basket is God." She lifted up some of our mothers in the faith, such as Susannah Wesley, Anna Howard Shaw, and her own mother and grandmother, as well, emphasizing that we are to teach our faith to our children. She then told the story of the faith of a deaf man, who went to a private school, survived a diphtheria epidemic which took the remaining members of his family and who subsequently experienced a call to the ministry. The Methodists took him in and ordained him, but didn't give him much support financially. He slept in the back of the church but managed to convert a whole congregation of deaf people, always keeping the emphasis on future generations. His story nurtured her in her faith by "fanning the fire of the flame of God."



Dan Swinson in his "shad belly" coat

Priscilla Pope-Levison then convened the opening plenary and introduced Dan Swinson wearing a "shad belly" coat. Dan explained that in the early days circuit riders were not considered to be properly dressed if they did not wear the appropriate outerwear – were, in fact, oftentimes considered to be appearing in their underwear. He then used this as

a segue to suggest that those who were not currently members were not appropriately dressed – perhaps appearing in their underwear. Chris Shoemaker then presented a more contemporary appeal sharing how much his Historical Society participation had meant to his life and understanding of Methodism over the past few years.



Dr. Delores Finger Wright

Following a short break, Dr. Delores Finger Wright, a member of the Whatcoat UMC and a professor from Delaware State University, originally known as the State College for Colored Students when organized in Dover in 1891, presented the history of the Whatcoat UMC in the form of a family tree for the church which she developed as a part of a lay speaker's course. African Americans had been present in Dover since 1786 and originally worshipped at Wesley church. A meeting house was finally built in 1852 and was named Whatcoat MEC in honor of Bishop Whatcoat. In 1863 when the Delaware Black Conference was organized, Whatcoat became one of the few founding charges of the Conference.

A new building on Slaughter Street was dedicated in 1872 and the old meeting house became their

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Message from the President

Several weeks ago at the joint meeting of the HSUMC and the NEJCAH, we visited Old Union Methodist Church in Townsend, Delaware. We sat for a while in the pews and listened to the church's history from its organization in 1789, to its current building finished in 1847. We had already heard a lecture by Joe DiPaolo on one of Old Union's leading lights, Bishop Levi Scott, who is buried in the graveyard. During the Q & A following the brief presentation at Old Union, the man next to me stood up to tell us about a part of the church's history that seemed to be not as well known. The story he relayed is that Lee's Chapel, an African American Methodist church just down the road, opened their worship service to members of Old Union while the church was being renovated. His point was to underscore this occasion when blacks and whites worshipped together under one roof.

His words reminded me of another little known story of a prophetic witness by individuals and organizations within the UMC that came together to act subversively to combat systemic, racial injustice. Josephine Beckwith (1908-2008), an African American staff member for UMW, gained a vision for racial transformation while growing up in an integrated neighborhood in Kansas City, Kansas, and later as a college student, when she was active in the Methodist Student Movement's interracial meetings in the 1930s. With the combined support of blacks and whites—her Methodist Church, the largest black Methodist church in Kansas City, Kansas, and Thelma Stevens, head of the Woman's Division of the Methodist Church—Beckwith broke the color barrier in 1939 to enroll as a graduate student at the National College for Christian Workers, a training institute for women pursuing religious vocations that was run by the Women's Home Missionary Society. Beckwith's home church supplied her with a scholarship to pay the school's fees, while Thelma Stevens challenged the Missouri state law that prevented blacks from enrolling at the school. The decision handed down by the state created another barrier by allowing Beckwith to enroll but not to live on campus. White students at National College, however, devised ways to circumvent the law by inviting her to stay overnight in their rooms in order for her to attend an evening or early morning class.

These stories of interracial cooperation among whites and blacks, local churches and the UMW leadership, inspire those of us who hear the stories today to join forces, not only to protest systemic injustice but also to work around it en route to dismantling it bit by bit, opportunity by opportunity, like the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, who confounded an Egyptian pharaoh in Exodus 1:15-22. These little known stories of Lee's Chapel and of Josephine Beckwith—and the company of saints who collaborated with them in the cause of liberation—represent the best of United Methodist history and promise the best for our future.



Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison

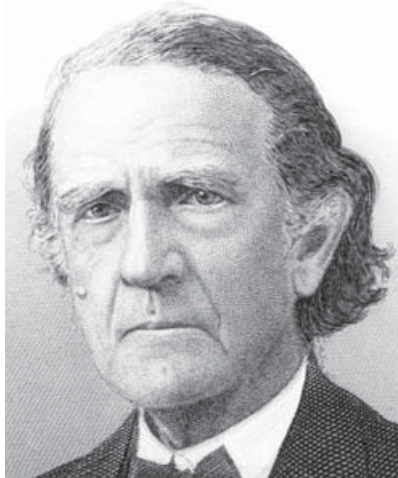
— Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison

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first parsonage. The church continued to grow and develop until 1953 when Dr. Wright reported that the congregation began to experience many struggles which continued over the next 20 years. However, they were “determined not to let the church die, and that faith and hope would be the victors.” The Lowan Pitts Day Care Center was established in 1969 and in 1970 construction began on the Whatcoat Apartments – a complex of 78 units for low-income families funded by HUD. In 1976 a dream for a new building was realized when new construction took place at the current Saulsbury Road site. Since that time the church has developed the Ruth N. Dorsey Relief Shelter, initiated the Bessie McDowell Scholarship program, started a food pantry, clothes closet and soup kitchen, created Whatcoat Social Services to assist the homeless and developed a summer day camp for children of the community, among a number of other programs. Dr. Wright ended her history with the words, “After 163 years Whatcoat’s rich history in service to God and humankind is the reason why ‘All Roads Lead to Whatcoat.’”

Following lunch the Rev. Joseph DiPaolo, the newly elected President of the NEJCAH, presented a paper entitled, “Wide Views and a Loving Heart,” *The Life and Ministry of Bishop Levi Scott* (the first native Delawarean to be elected Bishop). DiPaolo began by pointing out that because Bishop Scott was a contemporary of Bishop Matthew Simpson, who had become the dominant figure in Methodism for the mid-19th century, Scott has, in fact, been all but ignored by Methodist historians. “Apart from a biography published by his son-in-law three years after his death, and a few contemporary sketches and tributes, there has been not a single serious article or book written to explore Scott’s life and ministry during the last one hundred and thirty years.” Yet, DiPaolo argues, Scott deserves a place alongside Simpson for helping to shape Methodism during this period, especially as it struggled with the empowerment of African American preachers and churches.

Levi Scott was born in 1802 in Odessa, DE, the youngest of three children. He grew up on a farm



Bishop Levi Scott

and his father became a Methodist preacher, though he died an early death, barely a month into his first appointment in the Philadelphia Conference - when Levi was but 8 months old.

Growing up without a father, Levi’s mother, Anne, became the principal spiritual influence on his life, singing a hymn, saying a prayer and reciting the Lord’s Prayer every evening when she put her three young sons to bed. And Sunday morning worship at the Union Chapel in Odessa was non-negotiable.

Scott experienced his true spiritual awakening, however, in 1822 under the influence of a Presbyterian preacher named Ogden, who came to town to hold weeknight preaching services at the local schoolhouse.

Although this led to a change in his ways as he began earnestly seeking after a saving faith, it was not until October of that same year that a real breakthrough came when he attended a prayer meeting at the home of Isaac and Betty Carter, a free black couple who lived about two miles from Scott’s home in a neighborhood known as Fieldsborough. During this time it was not unusual for blacks and whites to worship together and even participate in integrated class meetings. The Carters, at the time, were also members of the Union church.

Betty Carter was leading the meeting and after visualizing the story of the woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ robe and found healing, Scott imagined himself reaching out and doing the same. Scott then immersed himself in the Methodist faith, joining the Union church and participating in the Fieldsborough class meeting.

Experiencing a call to preach, Scott received his exhorter’s license in 1823 and a license to preach in 1825. He became a full-time itinerant preacher in the Philadelphia Conference in 1826, was admitted into full membership in 1828, and ordained elder in 1830.

While serving his first full-time appointment as preacher-in-charge, at West Chester and Marshallton in Chester County, PA, one of his converts in Marshallton was John Inskip, who would later become a prominent Methodist minister and a well-known leader in the post-Civil War Holiness Movement. A book of Scott’s sermon briefs at Barratt’s Chapel reveal Scott “to be thoroughly Wesleyan, emphasizing the need to respond to the gospel with saving faith and to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

While serving in Philadelphia, Scott married Sarah Ann Smith on November 22, 1830. They had seven children, five of whom pre-deceased them, and Sarah Ann herself was plagued with chronic health problems.



Rev. Joe DiPaolo at Sarah Scott's grave at Old Union Methodist church.

In 1834 at age 31, Scott was appointed as Presiding Elder of the Delaware District, then served churches in Newark, NJ, and Philadelphia.

In 1840, however, he left the pastoral ministry to serve as teacher and administrator at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, as well as becoming the principal of Dickinson's grammar school, then a preparatory institution for those seeking admission to the college.

He then returned to the pastoral ministry in 1843 to serve Union MEC in Philadelphia, the largest congregation

in the conference. Two years later he was appointed as Presiding Elder for the South Philadelphia District. He became particularly interested in the John Wesley MEC, the only black congregation on his district, which had split a few years before with a number of the members leaving to become a part of the AMEC. The existing members were left with an unfinished building and a \$2,000 debt. Scott, as a result, issued an appeal in the New York based *Christian Advocate*, asking for assistance for the church. This church eventually evolved into today's Tindley Temple in Philadelphia.

At the 1848 General Conference Scott was elected Assistant Book Agent for the MEC, along with George Lane, who was the Book Agent.

Finally in 1852 Scott was elected Bishop on the first ballot held on Tuesday, May 25 with 113 votes, along with Matthew Simpson (110), Osmond C. Baker (90 votes) and Edward P. Ames (89). During this time he would undergo the rigors of travel from one end of the country to the other and even to another continent, as bishops at this time were not assigned to geographic areas. This would result in an exacerbation of his previous health problems which had plagued him from an early age. Despite contracting what was

probably malaria while in Liberia, he still managed to function successfully until his retirement in 1880.

The issue of slavery, of course, was facing the entire nation at that time and had already split the church. Of the four bishops consecrated in 1852 Scott was the only one raised in a slave state – yet slavery in Delaware had evolved somewhat differently there than in other states, and it was already withering even in Scott's youth. In the Delaware that Levi Scott knew growing up blacks and whites, slaves and free, worked and lived and worshipped in close proximity, developing complex, even intimate relationships across lines of race, as Scott's conversion story demonstrates. Scott's experience growing up gave him great empathy for the slaves, yet he did not embrace "modern abolitionism," at least in the terms of those aligned with William Lloyd Garrison and his movement.

In the meantime the American Colonization Society had been founded in 1816 and between 1820 and 1860, some 10,000 African Americans relocated to Liberia. For many anti-slavery whites colonization offered a way to demonstrate the capacity of African Americans for self-government and the obligations of full citizenship, free from the fetters of slavery and discrimination so endemic in America. Bishop Scott was a strong supporter of the movement.

DiPaolo stated, "However we evaluate Scott's support of colonization, there can be no question of his concern for and commitment to the men and women of color who emigrated to Africa."

One of Scott's first challenges as a newly elected bishop was a transatlantic trip to Liberia in order to superintend the church's mission conference there, becoming the first American bishop to visit Liberia. As a result of his strong advocacy the 1856 General Conference created Missionary Bishops to allow the Liberian Conference to elect its own episcopal leader rather than continue to be under the leadership of white men from America. Thus, in 1858, the Rev. Francis Burns was elected the first African American bishop in the MEC.

On August 5, 1857, Bishop Scott convened a "Conference of Local Colored Preachers," at Zoar MEC in Philadelphia with 19 black preachers present for the two day conference, the first such conference ever held. Seven years later, in 1864, after General Conference finally authorized the organization of mission conferences for their African American members, Bishop Scott convened the first official session of the Washington Conference on October 27 at the Sharp Street MEC in Baltimore, MD. This would be the first time that black preachers would be welcomed



Bishop Francis Burns

as members of an annual conference in a former slave state. (The Delaware Conference had been organized prior to this in July but in Philadelphia.)

Bishop Scott continued to support the newly developed Black Conference, presiding over many of the sessions of both the Washington and Delaware Conferences. On

Christmas Day, 1867, he organized the Centenary Biblical Institute in Baltimore for the education of colored ministers, which eventually developed into Morgan State University, the largest historically Black university in Maryland.

Bishop Scott's wife, Sarah Ann, died in 1879 and he retired at General Conference the following year, suffering a stroke on his way back home. He died at his home in Delaware on July 13, 1882.

This is just a brief summary of DiPaolo's outstanding presentation on Bishop Scott which goes a long way towards establishing his well-deserved place in American Methodist history. Watch future issues of *Methodist History* for an expanded version of Rev. DiPaolo's presentation.

Following dinner the HSUMC Awards were presented. Pat Thompson presented the 2016 Ministry of Memory awardee, the Rev. Philip Lawton from the Peninsula-Delaware Conference. Phil has been a member of the Peninsula-Delaware CAH for more than 30 years, including serving as the chairperson. He co-authored with Barbara Duffin a history of the conference entitled, *Cultivating the Methodist Garden*. He is currently the conference Historian and has been a long-time volunteer at Barratt's Chapel.

Phil served as the Vice-President of the NEJCAH from 1996-2000, then as President from 2000-2004. In his capacity as President he became a member of GCAH and served on that commission for eight years. During that time he also became active with the HSUMC, serving as their first webmaster, then membership secretary, and currently is a member of the Program Committee. Phil is a great example of an individual who has been involved in the United Methodist historical community for many years at the conference, jurisdiction and general church levels.

Linda Schramm, the chairperson of the Saddlebag Selection Committee, then announced the winner of the 2016 Saddlebag Selection - *Methodism in the American Forest* by former HSUMC President, Dr. Russell E. Richey. Richey is Dean Emeritus of Candler School of Theology and William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History Emeritus, Emory University,

Richey began by pointing out how the hymns in early Methodist hymn books focus on everyday events in the life of the people but also point to the world beyond.



Phil Lawton receives Ministry of Memory Award from HSUMC President, Priscilla Pope-Levison



President Priscilla Pope-Levison and Chairperson Linda Schramm present the Saddlebag Selection Award to Dr. Russell Richey

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He asked us to read together the words of one of those hymns in which he had highlighted some of the words: sky/peace/earth/creatures/kingdom/flesh/nature/year/world/prince/nations/servants/peaceable/reign/alarum/war/sound/trumpet. He noted that this was typical of the hymns which appeared in the *Pocket Hymn-Book* which many Methodists would have carried with them. "The hymn's verses reverberate with creation and nature words BUT point beyond this world to that to come. 'Nature,' employed twenty-eight times, referenced divine, human and world reality but even in the latter instances typically pointed to the world to come." These words speak of not just living through but seeing beyond nature – not just sanctification but glorification.

Richey noted how research has changed with the dawn of the electronic age and how his book came out of an electronic word search. It is one thing to get the book out of the library and see it in its original format, but is also amazing what you can find through an electronic word search – sometimes the allusions are buried and hard to find.

He then went on to describe how the Methodists were really ahead of their time with a three-fold sense of the "forest:"

1) As a woodland preaching place under the trees. When British Methodist preachers arrived and started preaching "in the field," they soon realized that folks couldn't tolerate the hot, bright sun and moved into a stately cathedraled forest or under an oak's embracing branches.

2) As a place where preachers went to read and study and pray – in part, because they often boarded with families which provided little in the way of privacy and solitude.

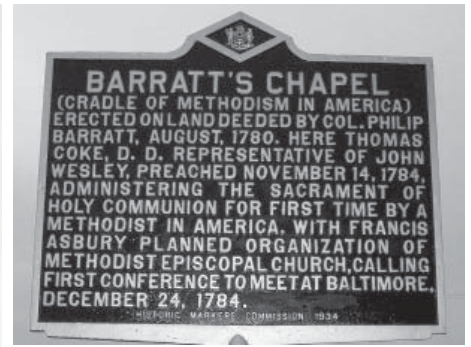
3) Finally, as the "wilderness" full of dangers, some life-threatening, some a challenge.

Camp meetings became an obvious living out of this Methodist spirituality. Often held in a grove of some kind, and focusing on the world at hand and the wellbeing of the church but also living now for the days to come – seeing through the trees to the heavenly beyond. Richey's book can be purchased from Cokesbury or Amazon.

Wednesday was our tour day and the weather was beautiful, the hospitality was gracious and the food, delicious. We began the day with a driving tour of Methodist related sites in Dover, including Wesley College, Wesley UMC, and the cemetery containing the gravestone of Bishop Richard Whatcoat and the building which housed the first Whatcoat church. Leaving Dover, we made our way to Barratt's Chapel,



Bishop Richard Whatcoat's Grave



where devotions were led by the Revs. Alice Hutchins and Genevieve Brown. There was then an opportunity to explore the museum located at the Chapel and the adjacent cemetery. Barratt's is the oldest surviving building originally built for use as a Methodist church.

We then boarded the buses for Odessa and Old Union Church, the home church of Bishop Levi Scott, where he and his wife are buried.

Historian Michael McGrath gave a brief overview of the church. At the 2015 Peninsula-Delaware Conference the church was approved as an official historic site of The United Methodist Church. The Rev. Fred Day, General Secretary of GCAH, presented the official historic marker #512 to members of the Old Union Church Society. Moving out side Rev. Day then laid a wreath at the grave of Bishop Scott.



Fred Day and Members of the Old Union Church Society with Historic Marker

Lunch was served at Ebenezer UMC in Delaware City after which we made our way to the entrance of Fort Delaware where we boarded a ferry that took us out to the Fort. Once there we were met by Rev. Isaac W.K. Handy, D.D. (aka the Rev. Fred Seyfert,



Chaplain Isaac Handy
(aka Rev. Fred Seyfert)



retired member of the P-D annual conference) a Presbyterian minister who was arrested and kept a prisoner because he refused to sign an oath of allegiance to the Union, as were many preachers from “border states,” who refused to do

the same. Chaplain Handy kept a diary and smuggled pages of the diary out of the Fort through friendly guards. He also spoke of the Rev. Elon Jones Way, Post Chaplain, who had twice been pastor at Delaware City

MEC and enrolled in the War as a chaplain. 33,000 men were held prisoner here; 3,000 died and were buried at Finn’s Point in New Jersey due to the high water table on the island.

Following Chaplain Handy’s presentation we had the opportunity to explore the Fort and its many exhibits.

Dinner was served at historic Asbury UMC in Symrna [Duck Creek] and we returned to Dover well fed in many ways.

A summary of the HSUMC annual meeting and our annual budget will be presented in the summer issue of *Historian’s Digest*.

Report from our General Secretary Re: Actions Taken at General Conference

GCAH Members and Friends:

The final gavel has come down on the 2016 General Conference. I am pleased to report GCAH is in great shape for moving forward. All the legislation the Commission put forth or in other petitions which named GCAH came out just as we would have hoped!

1. **Plan UMC Revised**, the restructure proposal that would have aligned GCAH with GCFA was defeated in committee. Other attempts to structural overhaul, realigning GCAH elsewhere and consolidating GCORR and COSROW, were referred to the Connectional Table, Standing Committee on Central Conferences, and GCFA for report to the 2020 General Conference.
2. **GCFA’s attempts to move responsibility for collection** of the majority of archive materials now sent to GCAH to individual agencies was defeated in committee.
3. **Legislation allowing permissiveness to annual conference Commission on Archives and History** (from “shall” to “may”) was defeated in committee
4. **GCAH sponsored legislation adding three new Heritage Landmarks:** Gulfside Assembly, Pearl River sites (Mississippi) and The United Methodist Building in Washington, DC was approved on the Consent Calendar.

5. **GCAH sponsored legislation insuring the Discipline is in harmony with itself as to Central Conference membership** on the Commission was approved on the Consent Calendar.
6. **GCAH contributed a revised Historical Statement to the 2016 *Book of Discipline*** reflecting the growth of the UMC as a global Church. Thanks to Drs. Scott Kisker, Beauty Maezanise and Ulrike Schuler for their contributions

GCAH's Facebook page carried a digest of General Conference events and actions as well as the day in pictures. GCAH's vital presence was in the AME 200th anniversary recognition, the Sand Creek Massacre report, the Francis Asbury 200th anniversary, and the Commission's presence via engaging display in the convention area offered a great testimony to the significance of our work among the boards, agencies, commission, caucuses, et. al. of our Church. Having a Director of Communications has proved to be an immensely valuable addition to our work.

Kudos to our entire GCAH team: Jay Rollins and Dale Patterson for spending time and energy with me in Portland and Michelle, Mark and Frances who both responded to research requests from here as well as kept things working at home.

Last but not least, kudos to GCAH's friends across the UMC – Annual Conference Commissions on Archives and History, The Historical Society of the UMC, Jurisdictional Commissions on Archives and History and more. Your advocacy for GCAH in these days towards General Conference made ALL the difference in the world. Your messages of support were heard. Thank you!

— Fred Day

Editor's Note: The General Secretary's further thoughts on the 2016 General Conference will be shared in the Summer issue.

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