

RESPONSE TO “ASBURY AND THE FOXALLS,” BY JOHN VICKERS, *METHODIST HISTORY* 42:3 (APRIL 2004), 178-179.

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I am honored that John Vickers would compliment my article on Henry Foxall published in the July 2003 issue of *Methodist History*. Dr. Vickers takes exception to two sentences in the article, however, and I wish to respond to his concerns.

First, I wrote that, “Some sources suggest that [Francis] Asbury was for a time apprenticed to Foxall’s father.” Some do. Dr. Vickers acknowledges as much in his essay, but argues that the Asbury-Foxall apprenticeship story is a myth that can be traced to an 1847 Asbury biography by F. W. Briggs.

Dr. Vickers relies on the reminiscences of Asbury’s cousin to John Emory in 1820 and village lore collected by Joseph Reeves in 1834 to prove that Asbury was never apprenticed to Thomas Foxall. At present, Emory and Reeves are probably the best sources available, but their sources were reporting second-hand information about events that occurred more than six decades earlier. To my knowledge, no definitive primary source for Asbury’s apprenticeship has yet been discovered. I did not think it appropriate to enter into a thorough discussion of this matter in an article that mentioned Asbury only in passing.

Second, Dr. Vickers objects to my assertion that “Foxall’s parents and Asbury’s parents had been close friends and fellow Methodists” in England’s West Midlands. He would put this statement, too, in the realm of myth, but I have located a previously-untapped source that supports this statement. It turns out that Henry Foxall left a few words on the subject, in a journal still held by the Foxall family who have not yet made it available to the public. The family has graciously permitted me to draw on the journal for my current research, which, with their permission, I hope to make available in the near future.