

TEXAS UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Editor's Letter by Wm. C. Hardt

You will find information about the 2018 Annual Meeting elsewhere in this *Newsletter*. We will be meeting in El Paso April 5-7. Our theme will be *Methodism on the Border*. A complete schedule and registration materials will be included in our next issue, but please save the date on your calendars now, because you won't want to miss this meeting, our first one held within the bounds of the New Mexico Conference.

When Texans say "Border," there is no mistake about what they mean. It's the border with Mexico. As you know, the Borderlands (to use the term popular in scholarly circles) can be considered a threat or an opportunity, and our continuing political debate revolves around those two poles---our "hopes and fears."

At least some of my attitude about borderlands was shaped by my first formal training in history. My mentor at Southwestern University, Dr. William B. Jones, introduced budding historians to the work of William McNeill. McNeill's thesis in his most important work, *The Rise of the West*, was that interactions between cultures were the driving force behind innovation, invention, and progress. Borderlands were sites of vitality. The advance of humankind depended upon the interaction of peoples across borders. The result of isolation was stagnation and decline. McNeill celebrated the vitality of border cultures from which creative synthesis often occurred.

Our 19th Century Texas Methodist predecessors ignored the border with Mexico when it was the Sabine and later when it was the Rio Grande. Texas Methodism began as bi-national endeavor. Henry Stephenson, who served a circuit in western Louisiana, was instructed by his Presiding Elder to spend half his time west of the Sabine River. The circuits in northeastern Texas were part of the Arkansas Conference when serving those circuits meant crossing an international boundary. Early Texas Methodists ignored those borders and obeyed the command to preach the Gospel in all the lands.

Later, when the border was fixed at the Rio Grande, Methodists organized circuits, districts, and even conferences that spanned both sides of the border. Schools such as Holding Institute and Lydia Patterson Institute were sited so they could serve a bi-national student body. The fervor they felt to preach and teach the Gospel message of salvation could not be restricted by lines diplomats drew on maps.

Tim Binkley and Will Steinsiek are putting the finishing touches on a program that shows how that fervor to spread the Gospel in the Borderlands has played out in history. Put the dates on your calendar. See you in El Paso.

SU SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Jason Dean of Southwestern University's Smith Library Center Special Collections Department recently informed us of a digital exhibition that will be of much interest to readers of this *Newsletter*.

Emily Higgs has curated

[For God and Texas: Southwestern and the Methodist Mission for Higher Education](#)

This link takes one to documents by Henry Matthews, F. A. Mood, O. A. Fisher, Chauncey Richardson, B. T. Kavanaugh, and other pioneers in Texas Methodist education.

In addition to the digital exhibit, you will find many other items of interest at Jason's site.

<https://specialcollections.southwestern.edu/>

News from Perkins

Perkins School of Theology is offering a new Hybrid Course in Methodist history, theology, and polity Jan. 3-5. Our own TUMHS friend Ted Campbell will teach the history portion. Other instructors include Rebekah Miles and Bishop Max Whitfield.

More information including syllabus and registration information can be found at

<http://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/UM-Studies-Course>

Rio Texas Conference Archives

Bonnie Saenz has informed us that the remodeling of the Rio Texas Archives is complete. She has prepared a Power Point presentation to show what it looks like now. View it at <https://riotexas.org/archives-blog>

Texas Conference Archives Volunteers

As you remember, the Texas Conference moved into its own building in February. On October 17-20 a group of archivists worked to help set up the materials. Jean Traster and Frances Long led the way, and were assisted by Bill Hardt, Wallace Shook, Cynthia Kethley, Donna Dean Hutcherson, and Barbara Hughhins. Here are few shots from the process:



This magnificent church building is First Methodist Church of Hubbard in Hill County. The church dates to 1882. This building dates from 1911 and replaced an earlier simple frame structure.

It is one of several historic churches of the era designed by the Dallas architectural firm of Flanders and Flanders. Others include Pittsburg UMC; Stamford, St. John's UMC; Royce City; and Dallas Trinity (destroyed by fire in 1985).

Flanders was influenced by the Prairie School made famous by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. A careful examination of the churches shows that the Prairie School influence is mainly in the ornamentation rather than structure. The firm also designed the Navarro County Courthouse.

Here is the next historic church for you to identify.



Historic Church Pictures

Each issue contains the picture of some historic church and asks readers to identify it. Here is the picture from the Summer 2017 issue. (photo credit: Kevin Walters)

2018 Meeting

Host Will Steinsiek has posted 2018 Annual Meeting Information on the NM Conference website. It may be accessed at

<http://www.nmconfum.com/about-us/archives-history/>

Note: to get the discounted room rate at the Doubletree Hotel, you must register by March 23. The entire program will be printed in the Feb. 1 Newsletter, but you can go to the New Mexico Conference website to get a preview.

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We do not send annual membership renewal statements. Our not doing so means that many of us neglect to send our annual dues. If you can't remember the last time you sent dues, it's probably time to send them again. Please print this page and send your dues and gifts to

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