

TEXAS UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Editor's Letter by Wm. C. Hardt

One of the continuing fascinating aspects of Methodist history is the wealth of connections that bind us to brothers and sisters across both time and space. At the conclusion of Sunday morning worship recently I noticed a man whom I did not recognize. I offered the "right hand of Christian fellowship" as is our custom when greeting visitors. As we chatted, I learned that our visitor was originally from Liberia. He was orphaned in the 1980 coup d'état but made his way to a refugee camp in the Ivory Coast and eventually to the United States as a refugee. How he came to FUMC Brenham is a longer story.

As we talked, my thoughts naturally turned to the historic ties Texas Methodism has to both Liberian and Ivorian Methodism. Liberia and Texas were Methodist mission fields during the same era. Some of the pioneer missionaries who came to Texas considered other overseas missions before coming to Texas. Both Texas and Liberia were known for mosquito-borne disease, and the soil of both contains the bones of missionaries who succumbed to those diseases.

In the more modern era, we are still inspired by the work of Texans, U. S. and Vivienne Newton Gray who built Gbarnga Methodist Mission into a transformative institution. Aren't we all proud that the President of the Republic of Liberia and Nobel laureate, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, is a Methodist? We also remember our Texas connection to the Ivory Coast as just a few years ago the Texas Annual Conference was blessed with a seventy person Ivorian Methodist choir. There are more than 1,000,000 Methodist in the Ivory Coast. The population is about 22,000,000.

One of the Liberian connections is close to home. At the time of 1980 coup, the Liberian Vice President was United Methodist Bishop Bennie Warner. His life was spared in the massacres that followed because he was in Indianapolis attending the UM General Conference. Unable to return to his homeland, my father, who in 1980 was assigned the Oklahoma Episcopal Area, invited Bishop Warner to a pastorate there. Bishop Warner accepted and brought his considerable gifts for ministry to Oklahoma.

When U. S. Gray died in 2009, I was determined that his *Journal* memoir do justice to the life of a great man. I turned to Bishop Warner and requested that he write the memoir. He was well qualified, having lived with the Gray family at Gbarnga. The bishop was happy to supply the memoir.

I mentioned Bishop Warner's name to our new Liberian friend at church. He said, "Oh, I went to school with Bishop Warner's nephew."

Is there any doubt that we continue to be blessed by our Methodist connections across time and space?

2016 is finally here! The NWTX Conference Convocation Planning TEAM is in the midst of scheduling adventures and happenings for the **8th SCJ CONVOCATION of Archivists**. Once again the **TUMHS** will be an adjunct to our 3-4 day event. The purpose of our gathering is Methodist fellowship, learning about Methodist heritage in NWTX, and to discuss common issues and varied challenges. Hopefully, we will find creative solutions as we reconnect and meet new folks interested in preserving our Methodist legacy.

SAVE THESE DATES: Tuesday, October 4-Friday, October 7, 2016!

On **Tuesday afternoon** there will be a **pre-Convocation workshop** for the SCJ Archivists as designated by their Conference, facilitated by L. Dale Patterson, Archivist-Records Administrator, General Commission of Archives and History at Drew University, Madison, NJ. On **Tuesday, October 4**, there will be a late afternoon **RECEPTION** sponsored by the NWTX Conference Commission on Archives & History at **The OVERTON HOTEL & Conference Center**. **Wednesday, October 5**, The Convocation will begin with a tour of *FUMC-LBB (The Cathedral of the West)*, speaker, and lunch; the afternoon will be at *TTU...tour of SW Collection* and presentations by Monte Monroe & staff; then a bus tour of campus public art. Entertainment Wednesday will conclude at an all Convocation banquet at **The OVERTON HOTEL** with Andy Wilkinson, TTU Artist-in-Residence, as our entertainment.

Thursday, October 6, begins with a tour and presentation about ranch life at *The American Wind Power Center*; next we will travel to the *National Ranching Heritage Center* for a guided tour, a chuck wagon lunch, and presentation by author, rancher, and Methodist, John Erickson; our tour day continues at the *Buddy Holly Center* before an evening banquet to recognize memorable Methodists in NWTX, with special recognition of Pat Williamson, Archivist Emeritus.

Friday, October 7, begins with a Breakfast Buffet, then the annual TUMHS meeting at 9AM, to include general business, recognition of the Kate Warnick Award and Walter Vernon Essay Award winners; following the meeting, and box lunch, there will be a Workshop for Local Church Historians with L. Dale Patterson, facilitating, TOPIC: Celebrating Church History, and Q&A throughout the workshop.

We are delighted to introduce you to Lubbock the HUB of the South Plains and NWTX. Registration forms and more information about the October 2016 Convocation will be mailed soon!



News From SMU

Current Exhibition:

The Bridwell Library exhibition *Frances Asbury (1745-1816)* is open through May 14 in the Bridwell Library Entry Hall. It can also be viewed online at <http://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/Asbury>.

Upcoming exhibition:

Recuerdos de Alfredo Náñez y Clotilde Falcón de Náñez / Remembering Alfredo Náñez and Clotilde Falcón de Náñez

May 20–August 7 in the Bridwell Library Entry Hall

All Bridwell Library exhibitions are open to the public free of charge during library operating hours (<http://blog.smu.edu/bridwell/hours/>).

Report from the TUMHS Archives

Jean Traster shared the following update on the TUMHS Archives.

As with the construction of a building, work with every set of archival records begins with "invisible" hours of time expended by the archivist.

"Growing up Methodist" helps. Having a "bent" for meticulous details helps. Loving to "put things in order" helps. But, in the

end, when the boxes and boxes of unorganized records are placed in one's hands, the dream of how the records can be used now, and in the future, drives the nitty-gritty of the task.

The archival records of the TUMHS begin in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the dream of establishing such a group was envisioned by Walter Vernon and Rob Sledge. Both men, being primarily historians, were also the preservers of records relating to the beginnings of TUMHS.

The records have resided for the most part in the individual hands of various officers of the TUMHS across the past 40 years. with a small Bridwell-housed collection belonging to Roger Loyd, who was then the Kate Warnick awards officer and the Methodist Collections librarian at Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, SMU.

The systematic "round-up" of TUMHS records for an archive began in 2010. Bridwell Library is the permanent home for the collection. Easily-accessible space for the records has been provided, thanks to Roberta Schaafsma, Bridwell Library director, and Tim Binkley, Bridwell Library archivist.

A recent acquisition to the collection was a large container from Bill Bryan, present Kate Warnick competition chair. Included are Bill's records relating to the competition, correspondence with persons who submitted entries and with winners of the competition, and wonderful notes related to the stories from the various histories.

It is no accident that history and historical records inform our daily lives and inspire our tomorrows.

TUMHS, and its archives, are an asset to many hundreds of persons now, and will be into the years ahead.

Jean H. Traster, archivist

Historic Church Pictures

Each issue of the Newsletter has an image of one of our historic churches.

Here is last issue's image.



It is Alexander UMC in Bryan in the Texas Conference.

This church was founded by Robert Alexander in an old log school house in 1854. Alexander was serving as Presiding Elder of the Huntsville District at the time.

In 1856 Elizabeth Boatwright and John Singleton deeded the land to trustees for the church. This building was built in 1938 during the pastorate of Willard Smith.

Did you ever wonder about the process of founding a church in the 1850s? It went something like this. The circuit rider would arrive at a neighborhood, find a friendly family. Most of the time the family had Methodist roots “back in the United States.” The circuit rider would announce a time he would preach, usually in a home, sometimes in a school. After the preaching the circuit rider would organize a “class” and appoint a “class leader.” He would then announce a future date when he would return. It was then up to the class leader to keep the group together until the next visit.

Scores of Methodist churches in Texas share this origin story—a testament to the faithful efforts of both circuit riders and lay class leaders.

Here is the next church for you to identify.



Methodist History Publishes Sledge Article

We are always happy to hear of TUMHS members who contribute to the body of historical scholarship. In that vein I would like to draw your attention to Dr. Rob Sledge's essay in the October 2015 issue of *Methodist History*, "A Step Back or a Step Forward?: The Creation of the Central Jurisdiction"

Readers of this *Newsletter* are familiar with the creation of the Central Jurisdiction at the Uniting Conference of 1939. The Central Jurisdiction included the former African American annual conferences of the MEC, including the Texas and West Texas.

The Central Jurisdiction continued until actions of the 1968 General Conference created a process by which it was dissolved, and the African American churches were merged into the annual conferences of the regional jurisdictions.

Methodist History is available on line at the General Commission site. While you are there reading Rob's article, you might want to explore other digitized sources.

<http://archives.gcah.org/xmlui/handle/10516/30>

Important Acquisition Announced

Frances Long, Archivist for the North Texas Conference recently informed us of an

important acquisition of documents related to the history of Methodism in Dallas.

As church historian and archivist sometimes you receive gifts that are very exciting. North Texas Conference Archives has recently received gifts that have added a lot of substance to the collection.

Rev. Robert H. Ridley was the last pastor at Trinity UMC, located at McKinney and Pearl in Dallas. It closed in 1974. Rev. Ridley was given records and even some of the furniture. Rev. Ridley's son, who lives in Colorado Springs, was cleaning out his house and came across several boxes of records. Included in those records are abstracts of University Park and the SMU property, Rev. Ridley's sermons. Membership and baptism records from not only Trinity but from the Tabernacle Church and also some Swedish records. Mr. Ridley also told me that some of the furniture was sent to Colorado and is a part of the Navigator organization in Colorado Springs. (Trinity burned down in the 1970's after it had become a part of FUMC Dallas.)

Another gift I received was from Gladys and Paul Cardwell. His father Rev. Cardwell was the publisher of "The Round Table" Published by the Board of Education of the NTX Conference. He had saved the whole collection, two copies each. NTX had a Hikers group at one time and I was sent some of the daily journals of some of their trips.

It is a good feeling to look at a collection and know it more than just pieces of paper, but stories of lives and events that were very important to the life of this conference. (It is a challenge to read the handwriting and now I need to find someone that can read Swedish and German.)

Submitted by Frances Long North Texas Conference Archivist

We share your excitement!

Dues Are Due

Mr. Caffey, our treasurer, reminds us that another page on the calendar has turned. That means it's time to send in your dues for 2016. Scroll down and print the final page of this *Newsletter* as your dues form.

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Membership/Registration Information

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 Mr. Caffey's address shown above.

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\$20 _____

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