

METHODIST HISTORY

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“TENT LIFE AT OCEAN GROVE”



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THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Cover: 1907 postcard from the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference Archives' "Postcard Collection." Archives located in the United Methodist Archives Center, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. See article by Jenny H. Shaffer on mapping Ocean Grove, an early camp meeting site and still popular seaside location in New Jersey (160-175).

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Alfred T. Day III, Editor

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SAMUEL J. ROGAL, Chair Emeritus of the Division of Humanities and Fine Arts at Illinois Valley Community College, has pursued studies in eighteenth-century British literature, the Wesleys, and eighteenth and nineteenth-century hymnody since the mid-1960s. He has authored books on John Wesley's activities in London, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, as well as *Essays on John Wesley and His Contemporaries* and a ten-volume *Biographical Dictionary of Eighteenth Century Methodism*. Rogal's editorial work includes the twenty-one volume *A New and Critical Edition of George Osborn's The Poetical Works of John Wesley* and the three-volume *A Detailed and Annotated Collection of John Wesley's Book Reviews, Readings and Commentaries*. His four-volume *Commentary, Notes and Introduction to the 1858 Sabbath Hymn Book* earned him the Adele Mellen Prize for distinguished contribution to scholarship.

JENNY H. SHAFFER, whose primary focus is the built environment of early medieval Europe, teaches the history of art and architecture at New York University School of Professional Studies, Division of Applied Undergraduate Studies. She studied art history and history as an undergraduate at William and Mary, and earned her Ph.D. from Columbia University, where she concentrated on the art and architecture of the Middle Ages. As architectural historian for the Historical Society of Ocean Grove from 2012 until 2016 and a member of the Neptune Township [New Jersey] Historic Preservation Commission since 2006, she is involved in research on and the restoration and preservation of Ocean Grove's historic vernacular architecture.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Here at the United Methodist Archives Center in northern New Jersey we have recently been hit with the third nor'easter in ten days. For those not familiar with this meteorological occurrence, it means we were slammed by storms with extremely high velocity northeasterly winds and at this time of year, heavy precipitation in the form of snow.

One nor'easter a season is plenty since their aftermath is nothing but trouble: uprooted trees, wind-sheered branches falling on cars and homes, impassable roads, severed electrical lines and power outages lasting for days. As such, trees not only suffer damage themselves—they are often the cause of even greater widespread damage to the surrounding community.

The trees that stand the firmest are the species with the deepest root systems, ones that have been carefully maintained over the years. The Methodist Archives is located on the campus of Drew University, nicknamed "The Forest." Walking around school grounds or driving from home to get here these last few days I noticed that the oak, maple and hickory trees are still standing tall while the birch are bent and twisted like pretzels and several beech, ash, and sycamore are pulled-up as if a petulant giant had been heedlessly weeding a garden.

This and every edition of *Methodist History* is an exercise in deepening roots and careful conservation, well-grounded in the source stuff of Wesley and Methodist studies and conveying nourishment to the fibers and branches of the traditions it has sprouted. Thanks to the contributors, this issue is more evidence of a well-nourished and cared-for deep, firm root system.

Samuel Rogal's "The Bible Told Them So: A Look at the Wesleys' Reliance on Scripture" focuses on the extent and actual degree to which John and Charles Wesley—their sermons, prose, tracts, correspondence, journals, hymns, and secular verse—both employ and rely on the scriptures as a means of reinforcing their definitions of and commitment to their roles in the eighteenth-century religious awakening in and beyond Britain. The "Bible moth" moniker for early Methodists devouring holy writ like a moth devours cloth is more than exemplified in these seminal leaders of the movement. The Wesleys' extensive reliance on Biblical thought and language underscores the importance of Holy Scripture as text to both religious and academic disciplines concerned with the inception, emergence, and development of Western world religious thought.

Ashley Boggan Dreff's "American Methodism and 'The New Morality'" points to the 1960s Methodist Boards of Education and Social Concerns efforts to remain a relevant and moral authority by adapting the popular situational ethic, "the new morality as a tool for the Methodist to address

the ongoing sexual revolution. At its most basic, the new morality was a situational ethic that allowed well-informed persons to make their own determination of what sexual acts were good or bad. However, instead of providing Methodists a new model for moral decision making, the new morality encouraged self-proclaimed evangelical Methodists to reinforce a rules-based ethic. What began as an innovative lens through which to examine sex education and Christian morality ended up sparking the debate on human sexuality that has plagued Methodists ever since.

Jenny Shaffer's essay delves into the early history and site planning for The Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, a Methodist Episcopal Church camp meeting and Christian seaside resort founded in 1869 and located on the New Jersey coast. The early history of the site as a tentative work-in-progress has been eclipsed by an enduring image of Ocean Grove as a popular late nineteenth and early twentieth-century destination. Three early maps produced by the Association reveal the group's emerging, evolving, and solidifying conception of the site as a contemporary, American Methodist ideal. In these maps, Ocean Grove moves from the uncertain and awkward duality of a project that sought to combine religious revival and recreation to an increasingly controlled and urbanized landscape fixed in time, place, and space through strategic and evocative designations: a landscape in which the Association embedded itself in a promising future.

ALFRED T. DAY III
March 13, 2018