

METHODIST HISTORY

April 2013

Volume LI
Number 3



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METHODIST HISTORY (ISSN 0026-1238) is published quarterly for \$25.00 per year to addresses in the U.S. by the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church (GCAH), 36 Madison Avenue, Madison, NJ 07940. Printed in the U.S.A. Back issues are available.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to METHODIST HISTORY, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940 or email mmerkel@gcah.org.

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Robert J. Williams, Editor

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Methodist History is included in
Religious and Theological Abstracts,
Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life
ATLA Religion Database

Manuscripts submitted for publication and all other correspondence should be addressed to Editor: METHODIST HISTORY, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940. Prospective authors are advised to write for guidelines or visit www.gcah.org.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Anniversaries of past events that are in multiples of twenty-five often get extra attention. Several anniversaries will soon be upon us.

May 24 will be the 275th anniversary of John Wesley's experience at the meeting on Aldersgate Street in London. The scholarly discussion about the significance of this moment in Wesley's life is found in *Aldersgate Reconsidered* edited by Randy Maddox (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1990). I resonate with Wesley's journal entry for that experience in that he went "unwillingly" and he described his experience as his heart being "strangely warmed." The honesty of going when he did not want to and the mystery of something being described as "strangely" has enabled me to reflect on my experiences of spiritual growth and faith development.

November 17 will be the 200th anniversary of the death of Philip William Otterbein. Raised in the German Reformed Church, he was a pastor, church organizer, and bishop in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. This era 200 years ago witnessed the passing of the founding generation of those churches that now form The United Methodist Church. Jacob Albright died in 1808, Otterbein in 1813, and Francis Asbury passed away in 1816.

The 200th anniversary of another significant figure comes in 2014 with the observance of the death of Thomas Coke on May 3 as he was traveling on a ship in the Indian Ocean heading to what was then Ceylon. His advocacy for world mission should not be overlooked and this would be the perfect time to give him renewed attention. Publications about Coke include *The Journals of Dr. Thomas Coke*, edited by John A. Vickers (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2005), and also Vicker's *Thomas Coke Revisited* (United Kingdom: Wesley Historical Society, 2010) and *Thomas Coke: Apostle of Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969).

Finally, 2013 marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of campus ministry with the organization of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Illinois. Rev. Willard Nathan Tobie, and later, Rev. James Chamberlain Baker developed a vital and ground-breaking campus ministry among the Methodist students at the school. In 1909, the Illinois Conference adopted the student enterprise at Trinity Church as a conference-wide responsibility and in 1913 the "Wesley Foundation" was incorporated. Today, thousands of Methodist college students find support, counsel, and fellowship at over 250 Wesley Foundations in the United States and in other countries. The original Wesley Foundation continues its own ministry to over 1,500 students yearly. The General Conference of 2012 called for recognition and celebration of this anniversary and the Wesley Foundation at the University of Illinois is a Heritage Landmark of The United Methodist Church.

Robert J. Williams