

METHODIST HISTORY

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MARY ANN MOBLEY, MISS AMERICA 1959



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Cover: Photograph of Mary Ann Mobley, Miss America 1959, an active Methodist from Brandon Methodist Church, Mississippi. See Christopher J. Anderson's essay, "Miss American Methodist: Twentieth-Century Beauty Pageants as Christian Mission" (69-83). The photo appears on the cover of the *Mississippi Methodist Advocate*, September 10, 1958.

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Alfred T. Day III, Editor

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This month marks the beginning of a jubilee year for the United Methodist side of Wesleyan and Methodist history and heritage.

Fifty years ago, Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Bishop Rueben H. Mueller and Methodist Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke joined hands over a table laden with symbols: the Bible, hymnals, books of *Discipline* and a 307-page "Plan of Union." 1,300 delegates and 10,000 visitors met in Dallas, Texas, on April 23, 1968, proclaiming the formation of the newly constituted United Methodist Church. 10,300,000 Methodists and 750,000 members of the EUB Church merged to form one of the largest Protestant denominations in the world. Flags from fifty-three countries testified to the new reality.

That same year, the United Methodist Council of Bishops signed a concordat with the British Methodist Conference committing to an ongoing dialogue and more shared experiences between the two churches saying "members of the same family belong together and British and American Methodists are the same family."

This issue of *Methodist History* is not devoted to these specific anniversaries—that will come in a special double-issue later this year. Instead, its contents hold the stuff that has continually formed and shaped Methodist identity and impact within the context of religion and culture, race and nationalism.

Christopher Anderson's essay introduces the multiple ways in which twentieth-century beauty contests functioned as carefully-crafted venues promoting certain interpretations of attractiveness alongside the winner's Christian faith. The essay explores the origins of the Miss America pageant and highlights three specific competitions where American Methodists shaped and marketed contests to showcase Methodist women who were physically appealing, vibrant in their Christian faith and active within their local Methodist church. Women were not only selected and promoted as beautiful; they were also commissioned to represent the Methodist Church in its various forms to American audiences.

Patricia J. Thompson's "The Rev. George S. Brown: Fiery Holiness Preacher, Missionary to Liberia and Renowned Stonemason" chronicles the life and ministry of Rev. George S. Brown, who was born a free man in Rhode Island in 1801 and died in Glens Falls, New York, in 1886. He was the first African-American pastor in the former Troy Annual Conference and a very successful missionary to the colony of Liberia until he came into conflict with the white leaders of the mission. Rev. Brown is the only Methodist African American in the United States currently known to have organized a white congregation and then supervised the construction of their church

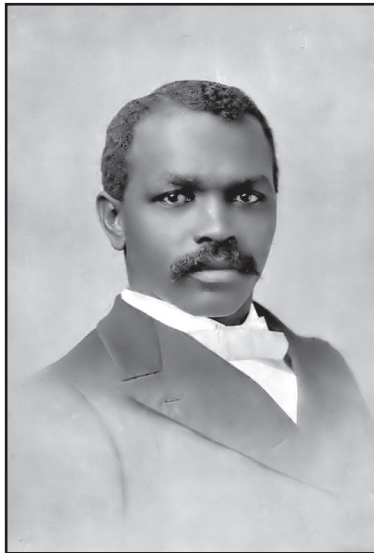
building.

Samuel Alonzo Dodge's "The Collisions Between Us and Them': Methodism's Internal Divisions on the Canadian Border During the War of 1812" uses American religious culture as a window to examine the political and cultural nationalism that grew out of the War of 1812. In the years leading up to the conflict, thousands of people joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, with western New York and upper Canada showing particularly striking growth. Those same regions were at the center of the military conflict. The article explores the fluidity of political and national identities prior to the war and the solidification of identities afterward. Methodism, as an international denomination, straddled the American and Canadian border before the war with adherents placing their common denominational connections above national and political allegiances. The War of 1812 ushered in a rise of nationalist sentiments in Western New York, Canada, and Britain which introduced fissures into Methodism that took years to repair.

Alfred T. Day III

ERRATA

The October issue of *Methodist History* cover image intended to picture The Rev. Dr. W. E. Bower, Sr. (1855-1933) below and erroneously used an image of Bishop John W. E. Bowen, Jr. instead. We regret this error. The corrected unabridged online version of this issue can be accessed for free at <http://archives.gcah.org/handle/10516/9965>.



John W. E. Bowen, Sr., college and university educator, and one of the first African Americans to earn a Ph.D. degree in the United States. He, among others, provided crucial Black leadership in the MEC. Photo is circa 1880s.