



DISCOVERY

Edited By
JOHN LENTON

More information on Richard Boardman

Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore were the two first Methodist preachers sent by John Wesley to America in Autumn 1769. While much is known about Pilmore, who left a valuable journal, the American parts of which were published by the Historical Society of the Philadelphia Conference for the Bicentenary in 1969, little has been discovered about his companion Boardman, who died relatively early in 1782 in Ireland. Of the four years they were in charge in America, Boardman appears as the senior and in charge for much of three years (1769, 1771, 1772) to Pilmore's one (1770). Wakeley in 1858 (*Lost Chapters Recovered from the Early History of American Methodism*), based largely on New York records, gave him a chapter of nine pages, partly because Boardman spent much of his time in America in New York, but strangely didn't print his signature, though he printed many less significant. Lednum in 1859 (*The Rise of Methodism in America*) has a few references, but most are dependent on Boardman's own letters to Wesley. The one biography is that by the British Wesleyan minister J. P. Lockwood, *The Western Pioneers*, in 1881. Lockwood, who knew the North Riding from which Pilmore came, did much research there and there is much more on Pilmore, partly because of his longevity and the material available from his old age in America. I hope to return to Pilmore in later articles.

Boardman is known to have married before he went to America. His wife and new-born child died in tragic circumstances while he was in Barnard Castle, the headquarters of the large Dales Circuit to which he had been appointed. This had several interesting results. First, without wife and family, he had gone to the Leeds Conference, volunteered for America, and been accepted by Wesley. Second, on his journey from the Leeds Conference over the Derbyshire hills towards Bristol he had come to the tiny village of Monyash. There he preached to the small Methodist society about Jabez,

because of the melancholic (for him) links to the story of Jabez in I Chronicles 4:9, with its reference to the pains of childbirth. This sermon was memorable to the Methodist girl Ann Redfern. Was it because it was an unusual text? Was it because she saw him as a hero disappearing into the sunset to go to a far-away land? Whatever the reason, when later she had a son, she named him Jabez. The son was to become the leading Wesleyan minister Jabez Bunting.

The Barnard Castle Parish Registers confirm the story about Boardman's tragic loss, listing Olive Boardman as having died January 27, 1769. She died as a result of childbirth. The baby, christened Mary, was baptized on January 19 and buried three days later. Olive is not a common name in the 18th century, so this should help in tracing Boardman's marriage.

The first question is where was he born? All agree, on the basis of his age of 44 at his death in 1782 which makes his birth 1737 or 1738. Lockwood said he was born at Gillamoor, close to where Pilmore was born in the North Riding. However, there is no corroboration of this, nor trace in the baptismal registers there and I have come to the conclusion that this was Lockwood confusing Boardman with Pilmore. Lockwood makes other mistakes about Boardman. A Richard Boardman, the son of John and Alice Boardman was baptized at Warrington on February 19, 1738. As we shall see from later evidence, there is much to support the judgment that this is our Richard Boardman. I found a marriage of Richard Boardman, I think this man from Warrington, on March 13, 1758 at St George's Liverpool to an Olive Wetherby. The Boardman marriage has to be this one. Their daughter Ann was baptized at Warrington on January 19, 1759. We know nothing more of Ann, but she must have died by 1769 when Boardman volunteered for America.

Warrington was a small town in Lancashire in the 18th century halfway between Liverpool and Manchester. It is not surprising that the young Boardman should go to the growing port of Liverpool to find work, nor that he should find his wife there. It was very common for the first child to be baptized, at a place other than where the parents were living, such as the original home of one of the parents, in this case Warrington, so the grandparents could bask in the reflected glory. The crowning proof came when I discovered a letter at Drew University, New Jersey, written by Boardman to his friend Mrs. Mary Thorn in Philadelphia, immediately after his return to Britain in March 1774. It was headed "Warrington." Where else should he go on his return after four and a half years in America, never really expecting to come back, except his home?

Richard Boardman first appears in Methodist records as a shoemaker who was a band member of the growing Liverpool society, living on Cross Street, Liverpool in 1759. This society was part of the Chester or Manchester circuit which covered most of Cheshire and South Lancashire as well as bits of Shropshire and Derbyshire. Thomas Olivers, who wrote the hymn, "The God of Abraham Praise," was another shoemaker who became a Methodist preacher. There were at least three other shoemakers among Wesley's preachers. Shoemakers were often linked to Methodism and to Nonconformity. They

were easily mobile because their skills were transferable to wherever there was sufficient demand. It was easy for the young Boardman to move to Liverpool, to marry there, and set up his home. In the process he had become a Methodist band member. By 1763 he had progressed far enough in Methodism to become a traveling preacher, despite his wife and young family, though Ann may already have died. He must have been a local preacher within that wide Cheshire/Lancashire circuit, but there is no record of this. Local preachers received nothing from the circuit. Even as a traveling preacher there was little maintenance for a wife in those days, but presumably Boardman thought that his shoemaking skills could earn him a little more money to keep the family going. We do not know where Wesley sent them the first year. In 1764 he was in the Staffordshire circuit. In 1765 Wesley had made him Assistant, the senior preacher in the North Lincolnshire circuit which appeared in the Minutes as Grimsby. The following two years he was at York, again as Assistant; then in 1768 he was sent to the Dales. Wesley complained in 1768 that he had failed to raise enough money from wealthy members at York to pay off the debt on the preaching-house.

Like many other travelling preachers he had suffered from periodic ill health. In America he went first to Philadelphia and then New York (1769). He insisted that he should exchange with Pilmore every few months so that one or the other was in Philadelphia or New York. Pilmore was reluctant but acquiesced. Boardman was most impressed by the black converts in New York. He was, however, less forceful and able than Pilmore. The work in New York suffered because of the movement of Embury and the Palatines out of the city and upstate. He did not try to follow them. He was willing to preach in new areas, but less able to enforce Methodist practices, just as Wesley had already noted about reducing the debt previously in York. Frank Baker suggested he was still affected by his family tragedy before he left. Boardman did attempt a preaching foray into Maryland. But he did not try to impose his authority over the other preachers, Robert Williams, Thomas Webb or John King, let alone Robert Strawbridge who was to defy both Rankin and Asbury. With Pilmore he asked Wesley for more help. When it arrived in the form of Asbury in 1771, Asbury found him "weak in body," so perhaps his health was the real reason for his relative ineffectiveness. Asbury also complained about the lack of discipline over the question of membership and threw many out of the Methodist society in New York, so perhaps Boardman was too lax there as well. In March 1772 Boardman went on a visit to New England, reaching Boston and making him the first to introduce Methodism into New England. Though he succeeded in forming a society in Boston, it was short-lived.

In October 1772 Asbury was made Assistant over both Boardman and Pilmore. Thomas Rankin, sent by Wesley in 1773 to add rigor to the Methodist administration in America, told Boardman "to return to England" in July 1773, a month after Rankin's arrival. However, Boardman did not leave America until January 1774. The letter he wrote from Warrington is dated March 1774.

Having returned, unlike his fellow traveler Pilmore, he was welcomed by Wesley and resumed itinerating in the British Isles. He was sent to Ireland. There he began at Londonderry for two years, 1774 and 1775. He was then sent to Cork for two years, 1776 and 1777. However, early in the second one, that is the autumn of 1777, Boardman was sent from Cork to Dublin to pacify quarrels by exchanging with Bradburn, when he and the other preachers had quarreled with most of the leaders of the society. In 1778 he was stationed at Athlone. In 1779 the Minutes say he was at Limerick for the year. However, John Prickard says Boardman was at Dublin a month before the Irish Conference in 1780 and then went to England to go to the Conference there. Wesley that year kept him at his side in London and early in 1781 he was sent by Wesley to visit the preacher in Dover. At Conference in 1781 Wesley sent him back again to Ireland, first to Limerick and then to Cork. He must have returned to Dublin by September 3, 1781, when he married as his second wife, Constantia Edmonston, whom he had presumably met in 1777 or 1780 in Dublin, at St Peter's, Dublin.

Boardman had only been in Cork eleven days and was walking to a friend's house for a meal when he was struck blind. Someone led him to his destination. He sat down to dinner and then lost consciousness. He was brought home in a carriage and died at 9:00 that evening in the arms of his fellow preachers. He was buried by St Finbarr's Cathedral. His unfortunate widow died soon after in 1782 leaving an only son. We know nothing more about the son and must assume that like Boardman's other children, he too died young.

Boardman was described as having "good sense" and "greatly beloved." Wesley thought highly of him, as he did of many of his preachers. He trusted him perhaps in situations which were too difficult for him. On the other hand, he preached many converting sermons, converting for example John Mann, later an important preacher in Nova Scotia. In Ireland and elsewhere he was useful to Wesley as someone he could trust to be a reconciler where there had been problems. Perhaps America shows that he was not really fit for the early mission work, but was more a builder of the society and faithful pastor at a later stage of their spiritual development.

The Boardman letters which survive at Drew are all connected with Mrs Mary Thorn. Most are addressed to her. She was a young widow in Philadelphia, who became one of the first Methodists there, and was appointed by Pilmore as the first class leader there in 1770. In early 1778, as the pressure on Methodists from the Republicans became more intense, she accepted a proposal of marriage from a Local preacher and English sea-captain, Samuel Parker, married him there on the February 12, and went to England to live with him in London. Boardman would see her in 1780 and his last letter is dated January 9, 1782 and is addressed to Captain Parker in London. Captain Parker eventually retired to Scarborough in Yorkshire, dying in 1827.

**MINUTES OF THE 2005 ANNUAL MEETING
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
APRIL 21, 2005
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, FORT WORTH, TEXAS**

Texas United Methodist Historical Society president, Ken Goodell, welcomed everyone to Fort Worth for the 2005 Annual Meeting of the HSUMC. Worship was led by Rev. Connally Cutter.

Goodell introduced HSUMC President Pat Thompson who presented the meeting agenda. The HSUMC Board was introduced. The afternoon programs' leaders were introduced: Mary Bakeman, Thelma Boeder, Michael Peterlin, and Dan Swinson.

The 2004 minutes were distributed. Charles Finney offered the motion, Bill Bakeman a second, that the minutes be approved. Passed.

The 2005-2006 budget was reviewed. Mary Bakeman offered the motion, Vivian Mitchell seconded, that the budget be approved as offered. Passed.

Bill Bakeman reviewed the 2004 membership: 312 full members, 12 life members, one honorary life, three student, and 12 institutions. Membership renewals are now sent to GCAH in Madison for processing.

Bylaw changes were considered: Articles 8 and 9 concerning nomination committee and audits. Bill Bakeman made the motion that changed to Articles 8 and 9 be approved. John Mitchell seconded. Passed.

A resolution proposed by Lyman Ellis of the California-Pacific Conference that meeting dates for the Historical Society annual meetings be established at least two years in advance was placed before the Society. Rob Sledge made the motion that we accept it. Charles Yrigoyen seconded. Passed.

The 2006 annual meeting to be held on September 21-24 in Harrisburg, Pa., was highlighted.

Charles Finney asked for special privilege. He spoke about the Dakotas Conference first clergywoman, Grace Huck of Spearfish, SD.

The Society's projects were considered. The Saddlebag book award was highlighted. Books published in 2005 and marketed in 2006 will be reviewed.

Awards for local church, annual conference and Jurisdictional level historians were considered. The resource person for the local church historian award is Michael Peterlin.

The Society approved Helen Long as our newest honorary life member.

With business completed, the Society adjourned at 2:26 p.m. for interest area programs.

The Texas United Methodist Society the rest of their agenda Friday and Saturday.

Respectfully submitted,
Lyle Johnston,
Secretary

United States Postal Service

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title Methodist History	2. Publication Number								3. Filing Date
	0	0	2	6	-	1	2	3	8
4. Issue Frequency Quarterly	5. Number of Issues Published Annually 4								6. Annual Subscription Price \$20.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4) P.O. Box 127, (36 Madison Avenue), Madison, NJ 07940								Contact Person Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. Telephone 973-408-3189	

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer)
P.O. Box 127, (36 Madison Avenue), Madison, NJ 07940

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)

Publisher (Name and complete mailing address)
Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.
P.O. Box 127, (36 Madison Avenue), Madison, NJ 07940

Editor (Name and complete mailing address)
Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.

Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address)

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
General Commission on Archives & History	P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box None

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
 Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
 Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement!)