

# TEXAS UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Editor's Letter by Wm. C. Hardt

Sometimes church historians get a bad rap from people who assume we spend our time and attention trying to live in the reflected glory of the past. I realize that our affinity with musty old churches, dusty old records, and weedy cemeteries may give that impression. Actually most of the church history enthusiasts I know are progressive people who love our history, are actively engaged in the current life of the church, and look forward with optimism to the future of Methodism. As a matter of fact, I would argue that historical imagination is often necessary for that optimistic outlook.

Those who wish to forecast decline can point to the demise of institutions. Within the last year Texas Methodism has lost Lon Morris College, the *United Methodist Reporter*, and Cokesbury retail outlets. Lon Morris College declared bankruptcy. The UMR closed its doors, and Cokesbury (the retail division of the UM Publishing House) went exclusively to on-line and catalog sales. We have also recently witnessed the unification of the Rio Grande and Southwest Texas Conferences into a new annual Conference—The Rio Texas Annual Conference. (see YouTube announcement at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9NhoebiFt4&feature=share&list=UUCizm6bNdYrpAngviLkqpnA>)

How does the historical imagination help us in times like these? By reminding us that our personal experience is but one small slice of a continuum of faith, and that the church we know is different from the church that was and the church that will be.

I could give literally dozens of examples of Methodist practices and institutions that seemed eternal but proved temporal. For example: The most common way that people once joined the church was at a summer revival. Texas Methodist youth groups once were organized into vigorous District and Sub-District units that met at least monthly. Methodist preachers once doubled as subscription agents for the *Texas Christian Advocate*. Most Texas Methodists belonged to churches on circuits that met only once per month, if that often. The Sunday School Superintendent was a figure of real power and influence. Presiding Elders and District Superintendents visited every charge in the district four times per year to hold quarterly conferences. Women were denied ordination. I could go on all day, and so could you. The church is always evolving, and one role of church historians is to remind everyone of the central historical truth—As long as the church remains true to proclaiming the gospel, providing healing ministries to a hurting world, and working for justice, all the practices by which those objectives are attained are subject to change.

History has many uses, and one of them is allowing us to meet the changes of the day with confidence.

## News From Bridwell Library

If you're going to be in Dallas during the month of August, you already know you need to spend most of your time in an air conditioned building. One of the best places to go is Bridwell Library where there is an exhibit that highlights the history of SMU.

The exhibit, which runs through August 28, is *Documents from Southern Methodist University's First Decade*. You will find it in the entry hall.

The quest for a central university, the removal controversy, the Educational Commission, R. S. Hyer's move to Dallas, and the eventual opening day of classes in 1915 are but some of the elements in one of the most significant stories in Texas Methodist History-the founding of SMU.

The exhibit features photographs, programs, announcements, and other materials. If you cannot go to Dallas, you may access the exhibit via the internet at <https://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/Collections/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/SMUcentennial>

In other news from Bridwell, I learned from Archivist Timothy Binkley that he is engaged in conservation efforts to enhance the level of protection for some of the most valuable documents in Special Collections.

Many of you will wish to browse the digitized collections from Bridwell at <http://digitalcollections.smu.edu/all/bridwell/browse.asp>

I did so and found Vol. 1 #1 *Service* of particular interest. It contained the 1920 schedule for the Course of Study which my grandfather attended, a memoir for

Professor Frank Seay (1881-1920), and a notice for the Fondren Lectures.



Archivist Timothy Binkley and Bishop John Wesley Hardt pose at the steps of Perkins Chapel, Perkins School of Theology, SMU. Bishop Hardt has deposited his papers at Bridwell Library. Archivist Binkley serves on the Board of Directors of the TUMHS.

## This Week in Texas Methodist History

The weekly column *This Week in Texas Methodist History* is now halfway through its 8<sup>th</sup> year. It may be accessed at <http://txmethhistory.blogspot.com/>

All 430 columns are searchable by keyword. Type the keyword in the box at the upper left and click on the magnifying glass.

## Historic Church Pictures

The previous issue asked readers to identify the historic church below.



The correct answer is Kosse UMC in Limestone County. Kosse was founded when the Houston and Texas Central RR pushed its way north after the Civil War. The town experienced prosperity when “cotton was king,” and is best known for being the childhood home of Bob Wills.

Here’s another historic Texas church. See if you can identify it. This time I’ll give a hint----Like Kosse, it is in a town on the Houston and Texas Central RR, and it has recently been relocated from its original site.



## SAVE THE DATE

The 2014 TUMHS meeting will be held in conjunction with the South Central Jurisdiction Convocation of Archivists in San Antonio. The meeting will begin at 12:00 noon on October 8 and continue until noon Saturday, October 11.

Our friends in San Antonio have already done quite a bit of planning. Look for more details as we get closer to the event. If you have suggestions or questions, you may call C. D. Barrington at 210-601-6287

In 2015 the TUMHS Annual Meeting will move back to its regular spring date. We will meet in Dallas and help celebrate the SMU Centennial.

## AWARDS

Don’t forget the two awards sponsored by the TUMHS.

The **Kate Warnick Award** is awarded to the best local church history published in the preceding year. There are three categories for churches with different membership sizes.

The **Walter Vernon Award** is for student essays relating to Texas Methodist History. This prize carries with it a cash prize, a spot on the annual meeting program, and possible publication in the *Heritage Journal*.

## From the General Commission

Perhaps you have not accessed the General Commission on Archives and History website recently. If not, you are missing some real gems. Its url is <http://www.gcah.org/site/c.ghKJI0PHIoE/b.2858857/k.BF4D/Home.htm>

Once there, I invite you to explore some of the digitized resources, bibliographic aids, and indices. Some of the past issues of the *Texas United Methodist Historical Society Newsletter* are available. The issues of *Methodist History* are available and searchable by key word. I found one digitized item particularly interesting, the October, 1927 issue of *Missionary Voice*. It is a theme issue on Texas. It provides a comprehensive look at Texas Missions of the era including Rebecca Sparks Home, Holding Institute, the Terry Mission, The Valley Institute, the mission at Thurber, and many more. That issue may be accessed at <http://archives.gcah.org/xmlui/handle/10516/2094> Warning! Do not open the link unless you have an hour or so to spare. You will be drawn in immediately.

The research aid I consult most frequently is the Conference Memoir Index. It is also searchable and provides information about memoirs drawn from the *Journals*. It is very useful for persons researching family history. My most recent use of it was for William Ralph Ward, pastor of First Methodist Church (MEC) in Port Arthur in the 1920s and interim president of Port Arthur College. Through my research I found that he was the father of Bishop Ralph Ward whom I had not suspected of having any Texas ties. Actually the future bishop attended Port Arthur High School.

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## Membership/Registration Information

The good works of the TUMHS including the Warnick Award, the Walter Vernon Student Essay Award, the Annual Meeting, the publication of the *Heritage Journal*, and lifting up the UM heritage depend upon the dues and gifts of its members. Your dues and gifts are used exclusively for these programs. We pay no rent, utilities, or insurance. Board members are not reimbursed for travel expenses. The membership benefits are a real bargain. The *Heritage Journal* alone is worth the \$20 annual dues. Please send your dues and gifts to the address below.

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