Kumbaya

"Kumbaya" (Come by here), here being Camp Rivervale on April 24, 2010, the place and time of the 15th annual meeting of the Indiana United Methodist Historical Society. A continental breakfast will greet attendees when they arrive for registration at 9:00 a.m. Formal greetings will be given at 9:30 a.m. when attendees gather inside Robertson Meeting House, a place featured in the day's activities.

At 10:00 a.m., the first speaker, a person steeped in the traditions of Methodist camping programs and familiar with the camping experience, will speak on Camp Rivervale and its place in the lives of generations of Methodist campers, young and old.

At 10:45 a.m., Herb Cassel, author of *The Robertson Meeting House: A Brief History*, who also gave the speech of dedication of the meeting house within Camp Rivervale, its final home, will review the tortuous travels of Robertson Meeting House, the oldest surviving building of Indiana Methodism (maybe the oldest existing Protestant church building in Indiana), to its eventual survival and recognition within the state's Methodist community.

A business meeting of IUMHS follows at 11:30 a.m. The lunch, which follows at noon, will take on a personal dimension for the attendee's enjoyment of history. She or he is invited to bring an object relating to local church history for Show and Tell.

At 1:00 p.m., a very personal note will be added to the sessions. The family of Bishop Robert R. Roberts, on whose farm the group is assembled, will welcome the visitor in the person of Janet Endris, a direct descendant of Bishop Roberts, who will speak about her ancestor and the nearby community. A tour of the camp and Bishop Roberts' farm will follow.

Several persons have expressed an interest in staying at or near Camp Rivervale on April 23rd, the evening before the meeting. Information on accommodations is given at the end of this newsletter, along with a map showing how to reach Camp Rivervale by the highways of Indiana. Registration at Camp Rivervale on April 24th will cost $12 for members and $15 for non-members. An advance registration form is to be found at the end of this newsletter.

The lunch at noon will be a grilled marinated chicken breast, potatoes au gratin, green beans, glazed carrots, salad bar, rolls, drinks, and dessert. That is worth $12.
He Struggled

Bishop Robert Richford Roberts

If Bishop Robert R. Roberts could be likened to any person in the Bible, it might well be Jacob. While he did not physically wrestle with God, he did struggle mentally with acceptance of a calling to God’s service.

As Roberts dictated to Matthew Simpson, “I had counsel, advice and prayers of the preachers.... [A]ll that I desired to make me a Methodist was an evidence of my acceptance with God through the merits of the Redeemer.” This was not a minor concern to anyone being encouraged to commence preaching.

Roberts’ biographer Worth Tippy points out that a distinctive message of pioneer Methodism was then named “experimental religion.” The term meant God would reveal Himself to the soul; hence, a person will know that he is a child of God. The experience was spoken of as “conversion,” “assurance,” and a “consciousness of sins forgiven.” Tippy stresses: “Every preacher...must have had this experience, or he would not be ordained.”

Robert Roberts found his moment of conversion. As Roberts described the experience to Simpson, conversion was definitely a moment of new consciousness:

One day about sunrise in the month of May, I was in a corner of the fence praying, when, I humbly trust, God for Christ’s sake accepted me. Before that time I had frequently had sweet intimations of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. My heart was tender and I felt as if I could love God and his people. But yet, until that morning, my mind was not at rest. Then everything seemed changed. Nature wore a new aspect as I arose.... My mind was gradually opened, and although I had always led a moral life I firmly believed that my heart must be changed.

Roberts was losing his fight against joining the ministry; and his wife, Elizabeth, was present to bring him to the point of accepting a new direction for his life. Roberts’ indecision was paralyzing; he had lost his capacity for effective work. Elizabeth watched her struggling husband and said, “It’s no use, Robert. Don’t delay.... It’s ruining your life. The Lord has called you, and you must go.” Robert confided, “I have thought of all these things, oh, so many times. I have dreamed about them...and sometimes wept when you were gone. But I have made up my mind, and I am ready.”

Robert and Elizabeth disposed of the few things of value they could not carry, packed garments and bedding to transport on their horses’ backs, along with a few books and food, and departed for Baltimore, where Roberts hoped to be admitted to the Baltimore Conference.

As far as Roberts rose in the church hierarchy, he never ceased questioning his acceptance of the roles he was chosen to serve in the name of the Lord. Fourteen years after his ordination by Bishops Coke and Asbury, when Roberts himself was selected to be a bishop, he again felt trepidation, questioning his fitness for the office. Elizabeth, his wife, and James Quinn,

(Article continues on next page.)
an old friend, persuaded Roberts that it was his duty to accept. Roberts wanted to be sure that acceptance of the office of bishop was the will of God. In mental conflict between his election and his consecration, Roberts showed no elation, but rather seemed depressed. Despite his heavy mood, he decided to continue serving God.

While Roberts had struggled in his acceptance of his calling to God's service, he strived just as demandingly in America's pursuit of a western frontier. He first followed the frontier at the age of seven when he moved with his family from Maryland to the then frontier of Ligonier Valley in western Pennsylvania.

Roberts' education was typical of the frontier (i.e., brief, but adequate for advancement). Simpson quotes Roberts as saying, "I spent the winter [when he was eighteen years of age] in going to school some distance from my father's... I made some proficiency in Writing and some in Arithmetic, and that is about all the schooling I received." The school was taught by an Irishman named McAbee. Roberts received special attention as a student because of his demonstrated seriousness.

Striking out on his own, Roberts left Ligonier and homesteaded in a newly opened territory in Pennsylvania named Shenango Valley. With his brothers, he entered the new frontier, where he proved to have the clearest head in meeting the demands of an unsettled wilderness. Roberts' brothers gave up hope of finding suitable land. Roberts remained with a friend and found a tract on which he eventually settled. Later, his new wife, Elizabeth, would help in the planting. She would do such work in later years when Roberts was following a circuit.

After leaving Shenango with Elizabeth and joining the church, after rising to appointments by Bishop Asbury to Baltimore and Philadelphia, even after being elevated to bishop, Roberts would travel great geographical distances. As bishop, these journeys were made by choice. In his first trip to keep his conferences as bishop, Roberts would be gone seven months, would travel over four thousand miles, much of it along Indian trails, every foot of the way on horseback. He didn't have to change his clothes; he dressed in rough backwoods garb all his life.

Roberts had looked at southern Indiana as a possible home. He was absent from his pulpit in Philadelphia for four months for reasons known to his wife, Elizabeth. The White River and its tributaries had been opened for settlement. Roberts' brother, Lewis, likely reported that land at low cost could be secured. Indiana was worth Robert Roberts' time.

After becoming bishop, Roberts decided that Indiana was preferable to Shenango for the work he had to do. The future of the church, as Bishop Roberts saw it, lay in the Mississippi Valley. The Ohio and Wabash rivers made a base in Indiana one that gave access to the west. As Worth Tippy adds, "Indiana was the frontier, and the frontier was always calling him."

After riding over an area of Lawrence County with his brother, Lewis, Robert Roberts and his brother found a tract of land five miles southwest of Bono, where Lewis lived. It was an out-of-the-way place that suited Robert Roberts' mood and pocketbook. Nearly two years elapsed before the bishop could schedule time away from episcopal duties to move his family (Elizabeth, a twelve-year-old nephew, and the fourteen-year-old daughter of his sister) to Indiana.

Travel still placed demands on the bishop in his last year of life, which was also his last year of service. In that one year, "he preached the Gospel," states Charles Elliott, "in six different states, and among four distinct Indian nations in the territories west of the United States. He presided at four annual conferences; and, in the performance of his duties, traveled five thousand four hundred and eighty-four miles." Episcopal supervision of missions to the Indians west of the Mississippi River were duties he graciously accepted; it was a further adventure on the frontier.

The article above is extracted from Worth Marion Tippy's Frontier Bishop: The Life and Times of Robert Richford Roberts (New York: Abingdon Press, c1958).
Rivervale Song Sheet (1932)

To the tune "Somebody Love You"

*All Leaguers love you,*
*our own Rivervale.*
*Long to be down there*
*and hike over your trails,*
*True friendship grows there,*
*and right from the start,*
*Your spirit gets into every heart.*
*Classes and playtime or when skies are gray,*
*Go down just one time,*
*You'll find that it's true*
*You'll root for Rivervale too.*

Main Street, Rivervale Institute Park
Scrapbook

Oak Tree Shrine

Rivervale Song Sheet (1932)

"Taps"

Day is done, gone the sun,
From the lake,
From the hills,
From the sky.
All is well, safely rest,
God is nigh.
A Farm, a Home, a Campground

At the end of his days in Indiana, Bishop Robert R. Roberts and his family lived in a frame cottage on his farm at a site overlooking the valley of the White River. The land that was once that farm is now occupied by Camp Rivervale. In 1923, Nellie G. and Virginia Rose Fitzgibbons, direct descendents of Bishop Roberts, gave 65 acres, part of the bishop's original farm, to the Indiana Conference. Later, eleven acres along the river bank, the bluff, were purchased to bring total acreage to 76 acres.

Camping, a program of the Epworth League Institute, brought in 1,400 campers for a one-week institute in 1925. At first, campers pitched tents, sometimes in sinks or bowl-shaped depressions. Rain filled the holes, soaking tents and clothes.

Between 1927 and 1930, the tabernacle and seven district houses were built. Each district maintained its own house, feeding and housing distinct district youth groups. The Rivervale Daily Message, a newsletter of the Rivervale Institute, devoted columns to specific districts, and rivalries among them kept spirits high in sports and other competitions.

Camps for junior high youth, high school youth, and young adults offered classes titled "Jesus in Everyday Life" and "Jesus in the Poetry of Today." Hymnology, conducting, and choral singing were taught, the last by Cecil Stewart. The orchestra studied Haydn and Schubert. Margaret Eskew taught dramatics.

After World War II, the institutes enjoyed increased popularity until not one, but several weeks of programming were developed. When the houses came under the supervision of the Conference Board of Education, they lost their district identities and found new uses.

Presently, Rivervale has four retreat houses: Bloomington House (the remaining district house), Whitefield and Wesley Lodges, and Otterbein Lodge. The Robertson Meetinghouse found a home here in 1999. Recreational activities include canoe trips on the White River.
An Itinerant Church after 200 Years

The Robertson Meetinghouse

Could a church cover as large a territory as a circuit rider? It would seem the Robertson Meetinghouse (formerly known as “Old Bethel”) might be a contender. The Robertson Meetinghouse, the oldest surviving building of Indiana United Methodism (possibly the oldest existing Protestant church building in Indiana), was built in 1807 by Andrew Mitchell for Nathan Robertson on Robertson’s farm in Clark County, just north of Charlestown, Indiana. Since then it has been moved eight times: first, to the farm of James Robertson in 1837; second, in 1857, to a neighbor’s farm, where it sheltered, at different times, sheep and oxen; third, through the recognition and actions of the Indiana Conference in 1904, to its original foundation; fourth, by the Indiana Conference in 1925, to Charlestown, Indiana, for accessibility to the public; fifth, to DePauw University, on the grounds of Gobin Memorial Methodist Church in 1954, where it was moved again in 1965 (the sixth move) and again in 1991 (the seventh move); and eighth, to Rivervale Park, near Mitchell, Indiana, in 1999, where it serves as a chapel for worship and as a teaching tool.

A little church – 20 by 30 feet, of hewed poplar logs, with clapboard roof and a puncheon floor – the Robertson Meetinghouse enjoyed its glory days from 1807 to 1837. Circuit rider Peter Cartwright exhorted within its walls. A nearby grove was the site of a camp meeting, adding spirit to church activities.

A traveler receives gratuities along the road, making him a part of all the support he has known. A log from the barn of Nathan Robertson replaced the only unusable log of the meetinghouse at the time of its move in 1904. Two logs from the Clark County Courthouse in Springville were acquired as replacements in 1925. In 1954, timbers and chimney stones from the log cabin of Bishop Robert R. Roberts in Lawrenceport, Indiana, were incorporated, and floor boards were acquired from the home of Reuben Andrus, a former president of DePauw University. An organ, reputed to be the first organ in Switzerland County, was donated by Mrs. Copeland of Vevay, Indiana. This traveler’s saddlebags were set down, for a long while it is hoped, at Rivervale in 1999.
News from the Methodist Archives

A Special Section Providing News Items and Releases from the Archives of Indiana United Methodism, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana

Archives of Indiana United Methodism: New Acquisitions

Osgood United Methodist Church

The 2009 Directory: Osgood United Methodist Church, Celebrating 150 Years, 1859-2009. The Osgood Methodist Church began building in 1859. It was finished and dedicated in 1862. The church was remodeled in 1932 when Rev. R. M. Criswell was pastor. The church was destroyed by fire on the morning of February 27, 1934, but later rebuilt. [M010.009]

Brick Chapel UMC (Putnam County)

Wills, estate records and trustees reports from Brick Chapel United Methodist Church. In 1822, Benjamin Jones preached the first Methodist sermon at a log cabin in Brick Chapel (a small village north of Greencastle). In 1832, a larger log house was built by James Montgomery and friends and served as church and school.

In 1835, a brick building was erected on the site where the church stands now and was dedicated as Montgomery Chapel, as Mr. Montgomery gave the land to build it. In 1872, a more modern and larger brick building was built. In 1894, it was agreed to drop the Montgomery name, and the church became known as Brick Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1955, an educational unit was built. The construction of a parsonage occurred in 1961. In 1968, the church became Brick Chapel United Methodist Church by order of the Conference. [M010.008]
("New Acquisitions" continued.)

**Calvary UMC (Brownsburg, Indiana)**


Methodism began in Brownsburg in 1828 with the appointment of Rev. Joseph Tarkington to the White Lick Circuit, which included seven churches in the area. Services were held in a little red schoolhouse. A small brick church was built in 1837.

In 1872, a larger church was erected on East Main Street. In 1923, it was replaced by a much larger modern building. A new church home was completed at 409 S. Green Street in 1959. [M010.005]

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**Nick Mourouzis**


Coach Nick is also the founder of Chi Alpha Sigma, the nation’s first collegiate scholar-athlete honor society, which is represented at more than 96 colleges and universities in 32 states. He graduated from Miami University of Ohio in 1959 and earned a master’s degree in physical education from Ohio University in 1961 and a director’s degree from Indiana University in 1971. [D010.017]

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**Grayce Viola Priest Walther ‘10**

Slides, photographs, correspondence of Grayce Viola Priest Walther, including her years spent at DePauw University. [D010.023]

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**Guernsey Van Riper, Jr. ’30**

DePauw memorabilia, which includes an honorary degree hood. Mr. Van Riper graduated Phi Beta Kappa and was awarded the Walker Cup for excellence in athletics and scholarship. His service to the university included co-chairmanship of the Rector Scholar Steering Committee. [D010.021]
Directions and Accommodations

To stay at Spring Mill Inn, Spring Mill State Park:

To make a reservation call: 1-877-LODGES1
Or contact: indianainns.com

A deposit equal to one night's rate ($59 to $115), plus tax, will be required.

Deposits may be made by cash, check, or credit card. If paying by check, the inn must receive your check within ten days of the date you make your reservation. If you use your credit card for deposit, your account will be charged when you make your reservation.

Checkout time is noon; check-in time is 4 p.m.

To stay at Camp Rivervale:

Contact Missi Weeks-Jones,
Camp Rivervale Manager,
at 812-275-6925,
or 812-849-3631, or
866-271-2468, or her
cell: 812-653-1104

The cost is $20 per night.

Six rooms have queen size beds; six have single beds.

Bring sleeping bag or sheets/blanket.

Arrival time after 6 p.m., but staff is flexible.
INDIANA UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2010 New Membership and Membership Renewal Form

Name__________________________________________

Address________________________________________

City/State__________________________ Zip________

Telephone______________________________

e-mail (if available)________________________

Please check your membership request.

____$10 Individual for One Year
____$15 Family for One Year
____$25 Congregation for One Year

Life Memberships:
____$100 Personal Life Membership
____$150 Life Membership for Family
____$250 Life Membership for Congregation

Please return by April 14 to: Lois G. Shelton, Treasurer
IUMHS

Make checks payable to: 4189 Troy Road
IUMHS/Membership Washington, IN 47501

Check one: new Membership____, renewal____

INDIANA UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2010 Annual Meeting Registration Form

Name__________________________________________

Address________________________________________

City/State__________________________ Zip________

Telephone______________________________

e-mail (if available)________________________

Please fill in the number attending:

____members will be attending
@ $12 each

____non-members will be attending
@ $15 Each

____Total amount enclosed

Please return by April 14 to: Lois G. Shelton, Treasurer
IUMHS

Make checks payable to: 4189 Troy Road
IUMHS/Annual Meeting Washington, IN 47501

Name of your church congregation: ____________________________
Indiana United Methodist Historical Society

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