The arrival of the Circuit Rider

April 27, 1996
Memorial Student Union
DePauw University
Greencastle, Indiana

UNITED METHODIST SITE NO. 33

Old Bethel Log Church - Site No. 33
One of the first Methodist Episcopal church buildings erected in the Indiana Territory, Robertson’s Meeting House, as it was first known, was built on the Nathan Robertson farm in 1807. This was just six years after the first Methodist class meetings were held in the territory, and was a remarkable event for its time. Up to then Methodist meetings were held in members homes.

The building as it now stands is composed of the original yellow poplar logs, one original black walnut log and several oak logs from Nathan Robertson’s barn, which replaced some decayed original logs during a reconstruction in 1903. Old Bethel has been moved several times and even now occupies the third site on the lot to which it was moved in 1954 behind Gobin Memorial United Methodist Church. Its future depends on major renovation and reconstruction.

Bishop Robert R. Roberts Grave - Site No. 32
The large granite shaft on the DePauw University campus in front of the Roy O. West Library is the grave site of Bishop Robert R. Roberts and his wife, Elizabeth. Bishop Roberts’ body was moved to Greencastle, where his widow, Elizabeth, lived, in 1844, one year after his death. The monument was erected in 1859 with funds raised from Methodist Episcopal ministers in Indiana and is the oldest remaining structure on the DePauw campus.

Robert R. Roberts was born in Maryland in 1778 and became an itinerant minister of the Baltimore Conference in 1802. After serving several local church assignments, Roberts was among the first new bishops elected in 1816. He was assigned to the Western Conference, which included Indiana, and was the first bishop to live west of the Alleghenies. Having previously married Elizabeth Oldham while homesteading in Pennsylvania, he was also the first married bishop.

Pfrimmer’s Chapel - Site No. 246
The congregation of Pfrimmer’s Chapel was organized in 1812 and was the first United Brethren class in the Indiana Territory. Later, John George Pfrimmer established one of the first United Brethren Sunday schools there. The church is named for John George Pfrimmer and its building is located on land given to the church by Samuel Pfrimmer, his son. The cemetery across the road from the church holds the grave of Dr. Pfrimmer and some of his descendants.

John George Pfrimmer was a native of Alsace, France, born in 1762. He studied surgery and at 21 joined the French navy. In 1788 he emigrated with his wife to the United States and settled in Berks County, Pennsylvania. He was converted by Phillip William Otterbein entered the ministry with the United Brethren in Christ. In 1808 he moved his family to Harrison County, Indiana where he commenced organizing classes beginning with that which was later known as Primmer’s Chapel. He continued to work and live in the area until his death in 1825.

Nicholas Snethen Grave - Site No. 281
The grave of Nicholas Snethen is located in the Warnock Cemetery in Princeton, Indiana. The monument consists of an open Bible atop a marble column.

Nicholas Snethen was born on Long Island, New York in 1769. He was ordained in the Methodist Episcopal ministry in 1794 and served appointments in the East, particularly the middle Atlantic states. He became a close associate of Bishop Francis Asbury earning the title, “Asbury's Silver Trumpet.” Rev. Snethen served at one time as chaplain of the United States House of Representatives.

Critical of the episcopacy and the control of the church by the clergy, he and other like-minded men petitioned the M.E. Church for reform. When that effort failed, he backed the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church in 1830. In 1845, while on his way to take the presidency of the seminary, Snethen College, in Iowa, he died in Princeton, Indiana, home of his daughter, Jane Pennington.

UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
John J. Baughman
Born in Evansville, John J. Baughman served in the U.S. Army during World War II in Europe. Following the war, he graduated with honors from DePauw University in the class of 1948 and subsequently received an M.A. from Harvard and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. He joined the history department at DePauw University in 1953 and served as department head for 21 years. He is the author of numerous articles on the history of France, DePauw University, Putnam County, Indiana and the United Methodist Church. He was also an author of the 1982 Putnam County Interim Report, Indiana Sites and Structures Inventory and co-author of DePauw: A Pictorial History, 1987.

Dr. Baughman has been active in United Methodist history as a member and chairman of the South Indiana Conference Commission on Archives and History and member and chairman of the Joint Archives Committee, the advisory body of the Archives of DePauw University and Indiana United Methodism. He originated the idea for restoring the United Methodist Historical Society for southern Indiana and sits on its executive committee.

John Baughman and his wife, Elizabeth, reside in Greencastle. They have one son, John, who also lives in Indiana.

I. Blaine Emily
I. Blaine Emily is an ordained United Methodist minister and received his license to preach in 1950, followed by ordination as deacon in 1954 and admission in full connection by the Indiana Conference as an elder in 1957. Rev. Emily received his A.B. from Indiana University and an M.Div. from Emory University. He has held appointments at United Methodist churches throughout the South Indiana Conference, most recently with Decker United Methodist in Knox County, Indiana.

Rev. Emily served on many conference and district boards and committees including service as a member and vice-chairman of the South Indiana Conference Commission on Archives and History. He was a representative of the South Conference on the North Central Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History and has also served on the Joint Archives Committee.

Blaine Emily and his wife, Rosemary, live in Princeton. He has three children: John, Daniel and Myra.

South Indiana Conference
UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INAUGURAL PROGRAM
— April 27, 1996 —

10:30 a.m. Registration and social time (refreshments will be served)
11:00 Introductions
11:15 “History of Methodism” John J. Baughman
12:30 p.m. Lunch and Business Meeting
1:45 Panel discussion of United Methodist historic sites in southern Indiana
   “Nicholas Sneath’s Grave”
   I. Blaine Emily
   “Bishop Robert R. Roberts Grave”
   David Kimbrough
   “Pfiminer’s Chapel”
   Douglas Montagna
   “Old Bethel Log Church”
   Wesley W. Wilson
3:00 Adjournment

David L. Kimbrough
After 20 years service with the Department of Defense, David L. Kimbrough received a B.S. from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, and two M.A.s and a Ph.D. from Indiana University. His dissertation and recent book, Taking Up Serpents: Snake Handlers of Eastern Kentucky, generated great interest. It was the focus of numerous articles in both scholarly journals such as Appalachian Heritage and local newspapers from Dallas and Lexington to Boston. Dr. Kimbrough has also appeared on local television news programs and network programs such as “Hard Copy” and “Encounters.”

Most recently, Dr. Kimbrough has concentrated his research on nineteenth century Methodist circuit riding preachers. His forthcoming book published by the University of Tennessee Press is entitled Mirror of Space and Time: Reverend Joseph Tarkington, Methodist Circuit Rider. Dr. Kimbrough makes his home in Stanford, Indiana.

Douglas Montagna
Following graduation from Hamilton College with a B.A. in history, Douglas Montagna served as a teaching assistant at Northern Illinois University while working on an M.A. in history. He worked for a time in the mental health field before returning to Northern Illinois to continue teaching history and pursue a Ph.D. in early American history. Mr. Montagna’s dissertation, funded with a fellowship from the Pew Program in Religion and American History of the Pew Charitable Trust through Yale University, is due to be completed in August 1996. Its subject is the social and cultural history of the Methodist Episcopal Church in antebellum Indiana, focusing on the growth and changing nature of Methodism and the development of antebellum Indiana society.

Mr. Montagna also holds an M.B.A. from the State University of New York at Binghamton and lives in Greencastle for the duration of his research.

Wesley W. Wilson
A native of Columbus, Ohio, Wesley W. Wilson received his B.A. from The Ohio State University in anthropology and photography. Mr. Wilson attended the Case Western Reserve University where he received an M.S.L.S. in archives administration. Following graduation, he accepted a position with the Western Reserve Historical Society where he served as photographs archivist for three years.

Since 1984, Mr. Wilson has been the archivist with the Archives of DePauw University and Indiana United Methodism. He is a Certified Archivist, having received that designation from the Academy of Certified Archivists in 1991.

Mr. Wilson has served as an ex officio member of the North Indiana Conference and South Indiana Conference Commissions on Archives and History since 1985 and has been a representative at the North Central Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History. He currently serves as secretary on the executive committee of the South Indiana Conference United Methodist Historical Society.

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