



**ALABAMA – WEST FLORIDA CONFERENCE  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

FEBRUARY 10, 2016

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**Robinson Springs United Methodist Church  
5980 Main Street, Millbrook, Alabama**

Robinson Springs United Methodist Church (founded in 1828) is one of the oldest churches in Elmore County, Alabama, although the present sanctuary, completed in 1845 in Robinson Springs, was initially located in Autauga County. The church is one of seven southern churches of similar Greek-colonial architecture.



The church building is large for rural churches of the time and it's believed that the builders used the measurements for the tabernacle God gave Moses during the wanderings in the wilderness. The original sanctuary measurements are 90 x 40 x 22 feet. Included in the sanctuary is a slave gallery that was still in use by African American members after the Civil War. There is no interior access to the balcony as slaves were not allowed to enter the actual sanctuary. As such, the balcony can only be reached through exterior doors. The façade itself is a beautiful example of well-proportioned Greek Revival design which was so popular in the 1830's and 1840's all across America. The fluted Doric columns were probably hand fashioned by slave carpenters. The church itself was most likely built by a country craftsman who used a handbook as a guide.

The timber foundation was hand-hewn from heart pine and is still solid. The pews were also hand-hewn and are held together by pegs. In the center section, dividers remain in the middle of the pews which were formerly used to keep men on one side of the church and women on the other. Both remain in near perfect condition and are used by the church today. Also, still remaining in the church is the original ornately carved communion rail and pulpit.

At the beginning of the 1800s, missionaries were preaching the gospel to Indians in the Robinson Springs and Coosa Valley area. Settlers at large were admitted into the area around 1817. Settlers from Rocky Mount (near Millbrook), Coosada, Elmore, Speigner, Deatsville, Dutch Bend (now vanished) and Robinson Springs gathered for nondenominational services in two log assembly houses near Robinson Springs (now the east end of Paige Hills and Briarwood Estates). Around 1828, a custom began of having a summer picnic. The tradition continued until the mid-1980s with a Fourth of July barbecue that was held across the highway from the church grounds.

In 1828 several Christians of the Methodist tradition adopted a constitution in Baltimore, Maryland, and became the Methodist Protestant Church. They brought the Robinson Springs worshipers together under the leadership of Reverend Payton Bibb -brother of the first two Alabama governors: William Bibb and Thomas Bibb. The Charter members were Reverend Peyton and Mrs. Martha Bibb, James B. and Mary Robinson, William Zeigler, George Speigner, Louis G. and Mary Robinson, Alexander McKeithen, Benjamin Gains, Sr., and Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Cooper.

Early conference records were lost and the earliest minister recorded starts in 1846, which is a year after the church building was completed. Those joining the completed church in August 1845 included members of the Cotton, Long, Hall, Hodnots, Goodwin, Graves, Glenn, Goree, Jackson, Young, Rives, Reese and Speigner families. The records of 1859 reveal membership consisted of 80 white and 55 African-American worshipers. At the 54<sup>th</sup> Methodist Protestant conference that was held at the church in 1892, it was voted to "unite with sister churches of non-Episcopal Methodism." The Methodist Protestant Church of Robinson Springs

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became part of The Methodist Church in 1939 when the Methodist Protestant Church, Methodist Episcopal Church-North and Methodist Episcopal Church-South united. The ME-North and South joining healed a schism that had occurred shortly before the Civil War.

Peyton Dandridge Bibb, great-grandson of Rev. Peyton Bibb, the founding pastor, in collaboration with Mrs. Josie Faulk, commissioned a local craftsman to make a cabinet for RSUMC that now holds the original Bible used by the Rev. Bibb. During a special worship service on May 18, 1988 Mr. Bibb and his family presented Rev. Bibb's Bible, with its ribboned marker, as a gift to the church. It had remained the family since Rev. Bibb's time. The family also placed the original silver communion vessels, a mallet used to build the church and a conch shell blown to call people to worship before the bell tower was built inside the cabinet. Mr. Bibb said it gave him great pleasure "to return the Bible to its rightful home". The cabinet was consecrated as a memorial to Mr. Bibb's mother and father, Peyton and Florence Bibb, as a gift from each of their children.



At the front of the church, on the left side facing the pulpit, are the "anxious benches." These pews came into use during the Camp Meeting movement of the early 1800s. During that time, persons did not kneel at the communion railing in response to an invitation as is common today. Instead, if a person was in need of prayer or wished to give their life to Christ they would sit on the "anxious bench," alerting the pastor and church elders that they needed to talk to someone and/or receive prayer.

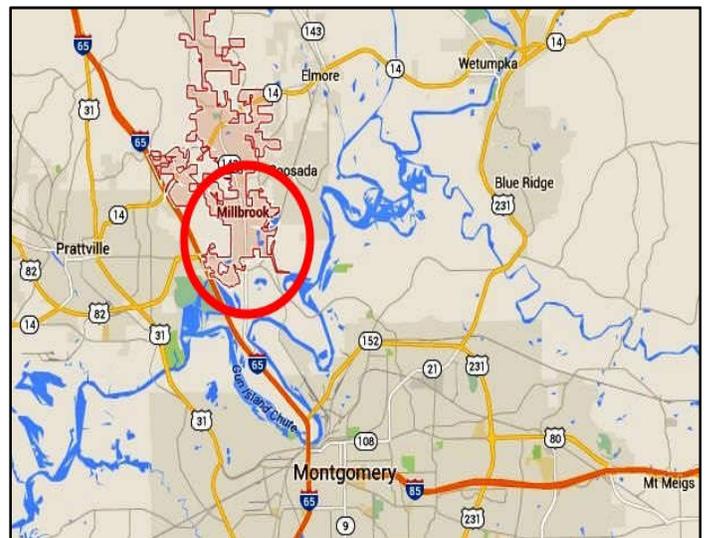
The remaining rooms (Sunday school, office, prayer room, nursery and fellowship hall) were added in the late 1930s, with the second floor being added in the late 1950s. In 2005-2006 Robinson Springs performed several

needed renovations, including adding siding to the sides of the church to protect the original wood, repairing the bell tower so that the bell could still be rung before and after each service, completely renovating the fellowship hall, adding new handicapped access, and strengthening the foundation and the balcony support. In 2008, RSUMC received a gift that paved the drive around the church, provided for parking, and added additional land. The church's plans and photos of the interior and exterior (showing it as one of three perfect architectural southern churches) are stored in the Library of Congress in Washington DC.



Robinson Springs UMC stands virtually intact with several families of eighth-generation descendants of the church's founders still worshipping at the church. Currently, the church has around 170 members with an average attendance of 105.

Extracted from [www.rsum.org/History](http://www.rsum.org/History)



Location of Millbrook, AL

## Andrews Chapel – The McIntosh Log Church McIntosh, Alabama



The McIntosh Log Church, also known as Andrews Chapel, is located in the town of McIntosh in the Tombigbee Valley of southwestern Alabama. It is north of Mobile and not far from the Alabama-Mississippi state line. This area of southwestern Alabama was one of the earliest places in Alabama where Methodism was preached.

The town was named for William McIntosh, one of the most prominent chiefs of the Creek Nation before the turn of the nineteenth century and at the time of the Creek removal to Indian Territory. William was descended from a Scotch trader who had come to the area to set up a trading post and had taken a Creek wife. McIntosh Bluff, nearby, was the ancient seat of the Tohome Indians and became the earliest American settlement north of the 31<sup>st</sup> degree of latitude in what became the state of Alabama. After William McIntosh signed the papers which allowed the Federal government to remove the Creeks in that area to Indian Territory, a group within his tribe captured and executed him for treason. But the removal still took place.

The first Methodist preacher in southwest Alabama was the renowned Lorenzo Dow, who in 1803 came to the area and spent several years preaching up and down the Tombigbee River. One at least one trip, he brought his wife with him. He recorded in his diary that he found a "thick settlement" of people at McIntosh Bluff who for the most part were little concerned with religion.

After Dow left, petitions for a preacher were answered when the Methodist Conference of South Carolina of 1808 began sending preachers to the area. Sometime later a church was built, but its exact location is unknown.

In 1860, John G. Rush and his wife donated land for a Methodist church in McIntosh and a log building was constructed. This building was called Andrews Chapel, named for Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Bishop James O. Andrews. It served the congregation of the McIntosh Methodist Church until 1952, when a new church building was constructed adjacent to it. The old

log building remained, and it is one of the few remaining log churches in Alabama and is the only one located on a major United States highway. Of the remaining log churches in the state, it was said by the Alabama Historical Commission that Andrews Chapel showed the highest degree of sophistication and skill.

In 1952, a new church was built and the chapel was used as a Sunday school for several years. In 1974, the McIntosh Log Church was nominated to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places and this nomination was approved. It remained vacant for several years, but has now been restored.



The squared-log building features square notched corners and a wood shingle roof. It is a single pen log structure which measures 36 feet by 26 feet and rests on 10 brick piers 18 inches in height.

Logs used in its construction measure 11-1/2 inches by 5-1/2 inches and are secured at the corners by square notching. Cracks are filled with caulking. The structure rises to a height of 13 feet 6 inches at the eaves and 18 feet 6 inches at the apex of the gabled roof which is covered with wooden shingles. The area within the gable end is covered with wooden siding.



On the west elevation is a small (8 x 10 foot) portico which was added in the 1940's. The portico is supported by colonettes which rest on concrete piers. Centered under the portico is a flight of wooden steps leading to the single wooden door. This door is divided into two rectangular panels in the upper half and one large panel in the lower half.

The north and south elevations contain three windows each while the eastern elevation has two. All windows measure 3 feet 4 inches by 6 feet 4 inches.

In the 1940's a chimney was added for a pot-bellied stove to provide heat for the building. The stove was subsequently replaced with gas heaters, and the chimney was removed during restoration.



The interior is furnished with the original wooden pews and pulpit furniture. Wall boarding had been added to the walls and ceiling, and that has been retained. McIntosh residents keep up the interior of Andrews Chapel for use at Memorial Day and other special events.

#### **More Than Just a Building**

An article by Roy Hoffman in the *Press-Register* on September 17, 2011, contains an interview with Elizabeth Ruth Everette who was 94 years old at the time of the interview. She told him that the log church on Alabama 43 was much more than a preservationist's dream, that it represents the world of her childhood.

***Born and raised a Methodist, Everette grew up as one of 10 children in this Washington County town. Sunday mornings meant church. "We put on starched and ironed dresses," she recalls, then they headed down the road, coming to a small creek. "We took off our shoes but put them back on to go into the church."***

***Down the long pews, in the summer's heat, she remembers, her mother and the other ladies fanned themselves to keep cool. If the children misbehaved, she says, "they got a look. That's all you needed." "In the winter," she says, "there was a pot-bellied stove."***

***The preacher, a circuit rider who came to town on a horse, she says, spent one Sunday in McIntosh, the next in nearby Mt. Vernon.***

***There were suppers under the trees, and singing. "It was a community center," she says.***

***For Everette, who spends her days at home now, the log cabin church keeps the past vivid.***

***She loves to reminisce about the sanctuary of her childhood with her son, Terry Everette, and the other family members who come and go on visits.***

***Even though a new Methodist church, opened in 1952, sits across the grounds, it is Andrews Chapel that holds her attention. According to Carroll Daugherty, 83, Everette was responsible for getting the church put on the National Register in 1974. She has also been the mover and shaker in its restoration, and on keeping it open at Memorial Day and on other special occasions, he says.***



***Daugherty, the mayor of McIntosh for the last 42 years, is Everette's brother. "Methodists and Baptists went to the church together," he recalls. Back then, he says, one preacher would do for both faiths. "He'd hold your attention," he says, "by hollering."***

***Of course, there were differences of ritual. Methodists were sprinkled inside the log church, Daugherty remembers, but the Baptists went to a nearby swimming hole, Bilbo Creek, to be baptized by immersion. The groups went their separate ways when a Baptist church was built, says Daugherty.***

***Cartledge Blackwell, architectural historian with the Mobile Historic Development Commission, praises Andrews Chapel's architectural details, including the squared logs. "That the McIntosh church never received a facing is unique," he says, referring to clapboard siding popular on some older churches.***

***"Not only is it unique in that regard," he says, "but it is also still standing. Most antebellum congregations went through several gathering spaces."***

***Daily, thousands of people drive by the old church. For those who stop, it offers a step back in time. "In short," says Blackwell, "the building is not simply a picturesque vignette viewed from a car window. The church is a testament to lived experience, overcoming obstacles, and maintenance of tradition."***

***For Everette, the church is, quite simply, "where I began to worship."***

***And it is the place where, on hallowed soil, headstones tell of loved ones in eternal rest.***

Andrews Chapel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. It is included in Alabama's Tapestry of Historic Places published by the Alabama Historical Commission. This historic church is located beside Highway 43 in McIntosh, AL (GPS coordinates 31.262167,-88.030278).

## Where Did the “West Florida” Part of our Conference Name Come From?

The West Florida part of the Alabama-West Florida Conference has an interesting history. As this map shows, much of what is now the Alabama-West Florida Conference area was originally in West Florida.

In 1763, Spain traded Florida to Great Britain and the British divided Florida into the two British colonies of East Florida and West Florida and gave land grants to officers and soldiers who had fought in the French and Indian War in order to encourage settlement. A large number of British colonists came, but mainly into East Florida. After Britain's defeat by the American colonies, Florida was given back to Spain. The region became a haven for escaped slaves and a base for Indian attacks against the U.S. Americans of English and Scots-Irish descent began moving into northern Florida from the backwoods of Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama.



By then, Florida had become a burden to Spain, and in 1821 Spain ceded the territory to the United States. Andrew Jackson served briefly as military governor of the newly acquired territory, and a year later the United States merged East Florida and part of West Florida into the Florida Territory. On March 3, 1845, Florida became the 27th state. Methodist circuit riders from the South Carolina Conference were already active in northwest Florida by this time.

The population of northwest Florida initially grew very slowly, hampered by the difficulties of transportation. The areas on or very near the Gulf coast and those near navigable rivers were served by ship and boat, but those in inland areas still had to travel overland and there were no paved roads. There were no sizeable settlements between Pensacola and the Apalachicola River until the construction of the Pensacola & Atlantic Railroad in the 1880s.

Small towns began to spring up along the railroad, some of which (such as DeFuniak) were named after railroad executives. One of these towns, Crestview, originally existed only as a boxcar set off beside the track at the highest elevation on the route to act as a station. The increased population in this area resulted in the formation of a new county, Okaloosa, in 1915 and Crestview became its county seat.

### THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF CRESTVIEW, FLORIDA

Written by Members of Crestview Boy Scout Troop 30

First published in *A Journal of Northwest Florida*,  
Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County, Florida,  
Volume X, Number 34, Spring 1986

The Methodist Episcopal Church South in Crestview, Florida, was organized about 1908. The Reverend C. A. CORNELL was the presiding elder at that time. At the time of organization this was the western boundary of the Marianna District. Services were being held in the Congregationalist Church located on block 4 and block 5 according to the Army Survey of the town. From 1915-1918, the Reverend D. A. SELLERS served as pastor of the Milligan charge which consisted of monthly appointments at Crestview, Milligan, Holt, and Falco (Alabama.) Later Niceville replaced Falco.

During 1919 the church was served by, the Reverend J. W. MATHISON who resided in DeFuniak Springs. The annual conference for that year was held at Demopolis, Alabama,

and the Reverend R. J. COXWELL was assigned to the charge for the year 1920. The Reverend COXWELL, together with the board, saw the need for a building and a campaign was started to raise funds for the building. Plans were conducted for the purchase of anchor concrete blocks and to raise funds for a new building for the First Methodist church.

The first collection of funds was made by three girls, Bobby Lee COXWELL, age 14, Faye McGRUFF, age 14, and Velma CLARY, age 12. They sold sandwiches and collected \$23.66. During the year, sufficient funds were received to purchase 3000 bricks and at the fourth quarterly conference, Frank C. WEBB, D. H. McCALLUM, and J. C. H. CORLEY were appointed as the building committee. Sufficient funds having been raised, the bricks and the lots were purchased. \$175.00 was paid for lots one and two, with the Crestview Land Company donating the third.

The conference assigned Reverend W. F. FLOYD to the charge for the year 1921, and soon after his arrival work began. Mr. J. B. HAYSLIP and Mr. M. T. BARROW did the stone work. The first service was held in the new church on Sunday, November 6, 1921.



Crestview First Methodist Church circa 1940s

Among the ministers serving the church during its long history were: The Reverends A. G. ELLIS, D. R. WHITE, R. W. JUDKINS, PAUL B. DANSBURY, O. VANLANDINGHAM and W. H. WILIAMSON. It was during the ministry of the Reverend WILT WILLIAMSON that the first unit of church school rooms was added to the sanctuary. This unit included the church office, the Ministers study, the Fellowship Hall and three classrooms.

During the pastorate of the Reverend W. E. MIDDLEBROOKS the Annex was added to the fellowship hall. It included eight classrooms and housed the children's division, the kindergarten and two nurseries. Three years later, the second story was added to house the Youth Department and the Junior Division.

In May 1962 the Reverend A. L. MARTIN, church pastor, presided at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new



Methodist Church. The construction was completed at the cost of \$316,000 which included the parsonage (\$37,000). The new church building is located at Texas Avenue and Eighth Street. The parsonage is a block away on Eighth and Alabama Avenue.

Bishop W. Kenneth GOODSON, leader of the Methodist Church in Alabama and Northwest Florida, took part in the consecration of the First United Methodist Church on October 2, 1962. This service brought to completion four years of labor. Space on the main floor of the sanctuary was provided for 440 people with additional room for 150 people in the balcony and 50 seats for the clergy and choir. The educational building includes 31 classrooms, a fellowship hall, kitchen, recreation room, nurseries, and

office suite. This past year a portico has been built on the east side of the sanctuary in memory of George W. BARROW, SR. who passed away in March 1985. Mr. BARROW had been a member of the church almost from its beginning.

For sixty-four years the Methodist Church has provided Christian leadership in the community through its faithful members and outstanding ministers. We have a rich heritage in our church of which I am proud to be a member.

The memorial windows in the original Crestview Methodist Church were dedicated as follows:

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rev. W. F. FLOYD          | Rev. R. J. COXWELL        |
| Mr. Purl G. ADAMS         | Dr W. H. DELACY           |
| Mr. Wm. E. WEBB           | F.C. WEBB                 |
| Mr. & Mrs. C. B. FERNON   | Charles Dean SAVAGE       |
| Rev. B. B. BROWN          | Mr. & Mrs. D. H. McCALLUM |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. C. CORLEY   | Mr. W. L. ADAMS           |
| Mr. L. BUSH               | Mr. & Mrs. J. W. BOWERS   |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. G. PERRYMAN | Mr. J. D. COBB.           |

Ministers serving our church were:

- |                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| W. S. GUICE 1912-13         | J. T. AECKFORD 1937        |
| C. WESTON 1913-15           | J. L. WHITE 1938           |
| D. A. SELLERS 1915-17       | A. G. ELISOR. 1939-41      |
| J. W. MATHESON 1919-20      | R. W. JUDKINS 1941-44      |
| W. F. FLOYD., 1920          | Walt WILLIAMSON 1945-49    |
| B. F. BROWN 1921            | W. E. MIDDLEBROOKS 1950-52 |
| J. F. PRICE 1922-23         | W. B. ATKINSON 1953-56     |
| B. L. FOLSOM 1923           | O. W. MATHISON 1957-58     |
| J. F. PRICE 1924            | A. L. MARTIN 1959-64       |
| O.H. VANLANDINGHAM 1925     | H. E. EDDINS 1964-68       |
| Grant GAFFORD 1926          | Lamar SPENCER 1968-74      |
| E. E. STAFFORD 1927         | James N. LOVE 1974-76      |
| J. W. GIBSON 1928           | James SAVAGE 1976-78       |
| O. H. VANLANDINGHAM 1929-31 | Thomas SOWELL 1978-82      |
| Paul DANSBY 1932-35         | Stanley MULLINS 1982-      |
| J. O. WILSON 1936           |                            |

*[Editor's Note: This history was prepared by Billy RUTLEDGE, Lee SMITH, and David SMITH in January, 1986, as part of the requirements for earning their Boy Scout God and Country Recognition (received during the morning service on February 9, 1986). Opal BARROW (their great grandmother) helped them with a portion of their work. George W.BARROW, SR. (their great grandfather) was the first Scoutmaster of Troop 30, the same troop to which these boys belonged. This was also the first scout troop formed in Crestview.]*

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## Crestview Today

Today, Crestview is served by three United Methodist churches: the Crestview First United Methodist Church whose early history is described above; the Crosspoint Crestview South Campus; and the Crosspoint Crestview North Campus. The two Crosspoint campuses are two of the three campuses of what was formerly called the Niceville First United Methodist Church. Those two campuses plus the Crosspoint Niceville campus make up the three.



## A Brief History of the Alabama-West Florida Methodist Conference Historical Society

by Douglas Clare Purcell, Former Society President

During the 46th Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held in Montgomery on December 12, 1877, a committee was appointed to “take into consideration the expediency and practicality of writing the History of Methodism in Alabama”. The apparent outcome of this effort was the publication, in 1893, of Anson West’s **A History of Methodism in Alabama** which covers the period from 1808 to 1865. Until the publication of Marion Elias Lazenby’s **History of Methodism in Alabama and West Florida** in 1960, West’s book was the standard history of Methodism in Alabama.

The publication of West’s book almost surely sparked a renewed interest in church historical matters as evidenced by the organization of the Alabama Conference Historical Society on December 8, 1905 during the session of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Dothan. The first officers of the Society were: President, Dr. John A. Rice, Montgomery; Active Vice President, Rev. Charles H. Motley, Monroeville; Secretary Treasurer, Hervey W. Laird, Montgomery; and Curator of Collections, Dr. Thomas M. Owen, Montgomery. Seventy-one members were enrolled at this first meeting with the dues set at \$1 per year. The stated purpose of the Society was the “collection and preservation of the materials for the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the bounds of the Alabama Conference”. Of course, another impetus for the formation of the Society was the coming centennial of Alabama Methodism in 1908.

The Alabama Conference Historical Society remained active through at least 1910 when Dr. Thomas M. Owen published his compilation entitled **Handbook of the Alabama Conference Historical Society, M.E. Church South**. Records of the Conference show that the Society apparently languished as only five reports were published between 1910 and 1953. The renewed interest in the Society was obviously stimulated by Franklin S. Mosley who served as Historian of the Alabama-West Florida Conference from 1959 until his death in 1976. Later Dr. Glenn Massengale and Mary Ann Pickard served as Archivists to administer the Conference historical collections at Huntingdon College in Montgomery.

In 1980 the Council on Archives and History passed a resolution to reorganize the historical society and drafted a proposed constitution. In 1981, Douglas Clare Purcell was assigned the duty of organizing the new historical society. By 1983 the Alabama-West Florida Conference Historical Society had been reorganized with Purcell as President. One of the Society’s initial projects was the reprinting of **A History of Methodism in Alabama**. Long out-of-print, the original edition commanded a premium

price if a used copy could be located. The Henry County Historical Society provided an original edition to be used for the reprint and the Alabama Genealogical Society granted permission to the Society to incorporate the index, previously available only in mimeograph form, into the new edition. The foreword for the book was written by R. Glenn Massengale, Archivist-Historian of the Alabama-West Florida Conference and the reprint was released with the support and assistance of the North Alabama Conference.

Interestingly in 1916 Bishop Clare Purcell, grandfather of Douglas Purcell, was among the first to propose the formation of a Conference Historical Society for the North Alabama Conference that later came into being in 1919. This was the first step in the process that led to the publishing of **History of Methodism and Alabama and West Florida**. The history was later authorized by resolutions of endorsement from the North Alabama Conference Historical Society and the Alabama Conference Historical Society who assisted in the effort.

On November 18, 2006 the Commission on Archives and History voted to reorganize the Alabama-West Florida Conference Historical Society to supplement and support their work. Reverend Leonard Shultz was elected President. Thad Chesser was president of the Commission on Archives and History and with Mary Ann Pickard served as Archivist. In 2007 Dr. Robert H. Couch of Auburn served as President with Chesser and Pickard serving in their same capacities. Other officers were vice presidents Claud Brown of Opelika, Rev. Ed Shirley of Camden, and secretary-treasurer Sharon Tucker of Montgomery. Membership in the society was \$10 per year or a \$9 dollar increase from the formation of the original Alabama Conference Historical Society in 1905.

Like the Alabama Conference Historical Society, which was organized (in part) to prepare for the centennial of Alabama Methodism, the reorganization of the Alabama-West Florida Conference Historical Society was due partly to organize the 2008 Bicentennial. The celebration of 200 years of Methodism in Alabama was co-sponsored with the North Alabama Conference. A large Bi-

centennial Celebration Day was held at the St. James United Methodist Church in Montgomery on March 29, 2008.



A special Bicentennial calendar and Bicentennial note cards were created as a part of the celebration. These depicted pictures of historic wooden churches in the conference. Other Bicentennial memorabilia included coffee mugs and church fans bearing the Bicentennial logo designed by Ray Brown. The logo was commissioned by the North Alabama Methodist Conference.

Participating in the Bicentennial Celebration were a number of dignitaries including Bishop Larry Goodpaster, Governor Bob Riley, House Republican leader Mike Hubbard, and General Conference Director of Archives and history, Dr. Robert Williams. The noted blue grass gospel band known as the Circuit Riders of Mobile performed and nationally known Alabama legend Katherine Tucker Windham of Selma told some stories. Voices of historic Methodist personalities of the past were heard. Portraying Bishop Francis Asbury and Matthew P. Sturdivant were former state Senator John Rice of Opelika and Reverend Robert Gibbs Couch of Saraland.

During the year-long Bicentennial Celebration, the Historical Society adopted several major goals, church historians in the conference were encouraged to update (or write) their church histories, and a series of historic articles were published in the Conference's electronic newsletter, *NewsConnection*. This history of the Historical Society is one of the articles in the series..

Reverend Jabe Fincher of Coden, AL in Mobile County, COAH Historian for a number of years, completed a new History of the Alabama-West Florida Conference. The publication date of the new history had not yet been set at the end of 2007. Editing of the new conference history was underway in late 2007 by COAH president Thad Chesser who had also become the newly elected COAH Historian.

Note: In 2007, former Alabama West Florida Historical president Doug Purcell served as executive director of the Historic Chattahoochee Commission in Eufaula.

***Douglas Clare Purcell, 10/31/2007***



**Mr. Purcell**

## **Win This For Your Church!**

A precious keepsake for any United Methodist and their church is a quality print of John Wesley. This Annual Conference will be your opportunity to have this professionally framed print of the Founder of Methodism.



Everyone that renews their AWF Historical Society membership or becomes a new member at Annual Conference 2016 will have their name in the drawing for this beautiful print.

The 2016 Annual Conference will begin on the afternoon of Sunday, June 12, 2016, and will end around noon on Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>.

The winner will be announced on the Tuesday afternoon of the Annual Conference, June 14th.

The retail value of this framed print is \$300. It would look wonderful in any United Methodist Church building's foyer or hallway. The affixed label at the bottom says:

**AWF Historical Society  
2016  
John Wesley**

Please come by and visit our display booth and fill out a membership application to join or to renew.

Keep an eye out for John Wesley who may be seen wandering around the Annual Conference with membership applications in his hands!

**Thanks to Rev. Ed Shirley who contributed the print and to Dan Fraley, Brundidge UMC, who contributed the professional framing.**

# The Methodist Hymnals and the Beloved Cokesbury Worship Hymnal

based on an article by Reverend Steve West found at

<http://stevewestsmusings.blogspot.com/2010/03/look-at-past-to-discover-future.html>.

Reverend Steve West is currently lead pastor of Arab (Alabama) First UMC. Although he loves being a pastor, he says music is his way of “praying twice.” As vocalist, pianist, trombonist, and worship designer, he has led music and worship in numerous settings at churches, retreats, and conferences. Reverend West says, “If there has been a constant in the history of Methodist song, it’s been change. Yet if we observe change over time, the same vibrant passion for the creative and popular on the one hand, and the scriptural and historical on the other, plays itself out again and again.”



He notes that the United Methodist Church and its predecessors have officially produced 27 hymnals and 9 supplements. In his excellent study of Methodist hymnology, documented in his paper, *A Look at the Past to Discover the Future*, which he presented to the North Alabama Conference Historical Society in 2010, he discusses the history of our hymnology, traces the changes over time, and thinks out loud about the future.

This AWFC-HS newsletter article, with Reverend West’s permission, is based on abridged extracts from his paper which goes far beyond what our limited space here can provide.

Charles Wesley was the most prolific hymn writer of history thus far, writing over 6,500 hymns (some estimate as many as 9,000). But what many do not realize is that it was John Wesley who essentially created the hymnal as we know it. He was a diligent editor and compiler of many hymnals before the denomination was officially born, practicing the editorial license we continue with every hymnal.

John became heavily influenced by the German Moravians’ religion of the heart. He was fascinated with the vernacular German hymn because of the heart-felt, emotive character of their singing compared to the metrical psalmody the British elite preferred. His first hymn book, *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, came out in 1737 (with a second edition in 1738) while Wesley was in Georgia. Among its 70 selections were a few of John’s own translations of German chorales, as well his adaptations of a number of hymns by Isaac Watts and others. While the Church of England prohibited the use of vernacular hymns in formal worship, Wesley began a history of cautiously introducing them during the serving of communion, in addition to the acceptable personal use outside of services. [In fact,] 2 of the 12 charges later placed against him were grievances about his use of hymns in worship. One reads “by introducing into the church ... compositions of psalms and hymns not inspected or authorized by any proper judicature.”

After the brothers experienced conversions, Charles became the prolific lyricist and John stayed the main editor and compiler of the movement, though each did some of the other. In 1741, John published *A Collection of*

*Psalms and Hymns*. He published *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1739, 1740, and 1742, collecting them in 1753 into one *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, intended for the use of real Christians of all Denominations*. This was the main Methodist hymnbook until 1780, with 24 editions issued. More and more of Charles’ hymns were included. In addition, Charles himself published a number of hymn collections on themes such as *Redemption Hymns, Funeral Hymns*, and *Family Hymns*. One of his most important collections was *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*. Wesley hymn books were the best instrument of popular religious culture Christendom had ever seen.

During this period, hymnals were text only. Wesley created tune books to supplement the hymnals, but tune books were only for the musicians. He got material from folk music, pub tunes, Italian opera, and Handel oratorio – the contemporary music of the time! His first was *The Foundry Collection* in 1742. His second, *Select Hymns with Tunes Annexed* in 1761, provided melodies in the back and assigned a tune for each hymn.

Wesley hymnals drew great criticism from the institutional church. It produced emotionally compelling, rousing singing frowned on by traditionalists. This fueled the movement because hymns were easy to sing, contemporary to the ear, and simple in language. Many were attracted away from the established church to this modern media phenomenon. We think of hymnbooks as “traditional” now, but at the time they were quite radical. John and Charles published some 65 hymn collections for various times and seasons.

In 1780, late in life and four years before the denomination was officially formed, John Wesley issued *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*. The vast majority of the 525 songs were of Charles, though there were a few from John, Isaac Watts, and others. John also published the tune book *Sacred Harmony* in that same year, 1780, to provide some tunes to accompany this large collection of texts. This is of profound importance because this hymnal represented a shift. This was a first attempt to solidify, into one book, the singing of Methodism.

John Wesley said in the preface that “it may be doubted whether any religious community in the world has a greater variety” of hymnals and noted that “people were bewildered in the immense variety”. There was desire for one book for all occasions. He continues, “It is not so large as to be either cumbersome or expensive; and it is large enough to contain such a variety of hymns as will not soon be worn threadbare. It is large enough to contain all the important truths of our most holy religion, whether speculative or practical; yea, to illustrate them all, and to prove them both by Scripture and reason; and this is done in a regular order. The hymns are not carelessly jumbled together, but carefully arranged under proper heads, according to the experience of real Christians. So that in

effect this book is a little body of experimental and practical divinity.”

As a result of this move toward standardization, this became the new tradition to follow. So naturally, divergence began! Alternatives to the “Large Hymn Book,” as the 1780 *Collection* came to be called, were developed. “Pocket Hymn Books” were first published in England in 1785 and 1786 by Wesley, with more Wesleyan hymns. Shortly after in America, Pocket Hymnbooks were published in New York and Philadelphia in 1786 and 1802 using representatives from each annual conference, with a supplement in 1808 compiled by Bishop Asbury. These were cheaper and easy to travel with circuit riding, but each of them also notes they were “collected from various authors.” A divergence from British Methodism had begun and singing was taking on its own shape on our continent.

At times, even these were not available on the frontier. The Mississippi Conference commissioned *Sellers’ Selection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in 1816 in pamphlet form, due to the lack of availability of official resources and the expense of shipping by sea.

Another shift is represented by the 1821 *Collection of Hymns for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, in part because it brought about a new ordering and standardization of tunes, but also because it showed that the recently popularized Pocket Hymn-books had already become the new rule. The 1821 *Collection* still did not include tunes with the texts, but it cross-referenced an official tune book, which also began publication in 1821. The subtitle of the tune book is “*Containing a Collection of Tunes from the Best Authors, Embracing Every Variety of Metre*” indicating to us its goal of expansion. The meters listed in the hymnal assisted the musicians to cross-reference to the tune book, and music was printed with shape notes. This was the first Methodist shape note tune book. Shape note singing with its characteristic oblong tune book had become a part of American culture since singing schools rose in New England in the late 1700’s, but was storming the South and Midwest during the early 1800’s. These two books represent a fundamental shift, not only because they attempted to overcome the freeform association between hymn books and tunes, but it was another attempt to bring the fold under one hymnal in a uniquely American format.

The outdoor camp meeting movement was sweeping the country. It was a rural phenomenon and almost exclusively Methodist, yet its repertory was neither accepted into official hymn books nor spread through any sanctioned camp meeting or revival songbook. Two distinct bodies of folk hymnody, one being African American Spirituals passed on by oral tradition, and the other being the shape note singing of the singing schools, came together to create the new “evangelical hymn.” Evangelical hymns that emerged from camp meetings include songs such as “Marching to Zion” and “I Am Bound for the Promised Land” as well as spirituals such as “There is a Balm in Gilead” and “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder.”

American tunes blossomed during the camp meeting period largely because of the father of American church music, Lowell Mason. He wrote tunes such as “Antioch” (“Joy to the World”), “Cleansing Fountain” (“There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood”), and “Dennis” (“Blest Be the Tie that Binds”). Lowell Mason wrote 1600 hymn tunes.

The need for new resources was great while this movement was being completely ignored by official hymn books that favored Wesley hymns. The divergence of publishing houses was not between England and America this time, but between the newly divided north and the south. A hymn collection was published by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1847 followed by one in the northern church in 1849. Something very important happened here. Alternate publishing had begun in Nashville, and this opened the door to Nashville’s role in playing out the creative tension between the “vernacular and evangelical” and the “mysterious and liturgical” through the rest of our history. Influenced by the camp meeting movement, the southern church produced the first *Songs of Zion* in 1851. *Songs of Zion* has been an ongoing force ever since. A large percentage of southern Methodists were African American, the majority which were of course slaves. It is important to note that it was the southern church that first published spirituals and camp meeting evangelical hymns, the new vernacular song of the generation after the Wesleys.

The 1878 Hymnal of the Methodist Episcopal Church shifted things once again because of the reform it represented, swinging back toward the liturgical side. The southern church had already published *A Collection of Hymns and Tunes for Public, Social, and Domestic Worship* in 1874 that included a number of songs from the *Songs of Zion*. These are the first hymnals that appeared with tunes in its first edition, a dramatic and lasting change which “wedded” particular tunes with texts.

The 1878 hymnal included liturgies for baptism and communion. An official order of worship was printed inside the front cover of the 1896 edition. This was a return to Anglican roots that was uncomfortable for ministers who for a century had concocted their own order of worship, influenced by camp meeting experience. The 1878 hymnal greatly expanded the repertory, with evangelical hymns, shape notes songs, Lowell Mason tunes, Handel and Haydn, Lutheran chorales, and Anglican chants. It had everything except the African American spirituals the southern hymnal had attempted.

More hymnals followed suit. The 1882 Methodist Protestant Church Hymnal *A Tribute of Praise* notes in the preface that “trashy and sentimental compositions have been discarded.” There was a shift toward the more formal in urban churches and the songleader was replaced by a choir and organ. In 1905, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South did their first joint publishing venture.

However, what is most important to understand is that by now, a southern publishing policy of offering alternatives had developed fairly well. So the creative tension played itself again. This entire period saw the development of the “gospel hymn” during reconstruction days, never honored with official publications. The opposition to this was more southern than northern. Where, the voices demanded, was “Shall We Gather at the River” and dozens of other favorites? This led to the *Cokesbury Hymnal*, one of the best selling hymnals of all time.

This southern genre of the gospel hymn remains what is perhaps America’s most distinctive and popular song,

emerging out of its roots in the camp meeting, singing schools, and African American experience. The greatest example of gospel hymnody is Fanny Crosby, who became a Methodist late in life, and was a blind writer and preacher who wrote about as many hymns as Charles Wesley. She wrote favorites such as “Blessed Assurance,” “To God Be the Glory,” “Near the Cross,” and “Tell Me the Story of Jesus,” dying in 1915. The original 1923 edition of the *Cokesbury Hymnal* is in shape notes. The brief preface notes that it was compiled by asking 250 clergy to report what people loved to sing the most. The expanded preface of the 1928 edition, *The New Cokesbury Hymnal*, reads, “five years ago, in presenting *The Cokesbury Hymnal* to the people, we said: ‘This book is an attempt to bring back the old hymns and tunes that people love to sing.’” It continues “so that we may say that the hymns and tunes contained in it have been chosen ‘by the people and for the people.’” Carlton Young, the editor of recent versions of *The United Methodist Hymnal*, wrote that the hymnals between 1905 and 1939 “shunned the unique contributions of USA hymnody: African American religious songs and gospel hymns.” He added that these hymnals were mostly informed by choral and organ literature and hymn singing in Academic settings. So the *Cokesbury Hymnal* gave people their vernacular song. It sold a million copies in the first two years and went up from there, with the newer *Cokesbury Worship Hymnal* published in 1938, three years after gospel hymns had once again been left out of the official 1935 hymnal. Carlton Young notes that the controversy “succeeded in separating the church’s main hymnal from most of the people and their song.”

Now we have crossed into the memories of some of us and we can see how this has played itself out in our own lifetimes. In my childhood, often Sunday mornings were given to the official hymnal and Sunday nights to the *Cokesbury Hymnal*, just as previous generations had done with Pocket Hymn Books. Though these songs seem old to us now, at one time the *Cokesbury Hymnal* was the vernacular, contemporary music that people loved. It was delightful, rousing, and easy to sing. The twofold dynamics spanning Methodist history had played themselves out again.

Resources have also attempted to swing the pendulum back. The *Abingdon Hymnal* in 1938 followed by the *Upper Room Hymnal* in 1942 set out to preserve hymns from our rich past and include new ones. They are full of the historical and the new, but were alternatives to the gospel hymnal, swinging us back to the liturgical side in light of new sounds. This is similar to what the more recent *Upper Room Worshipbook* sought to do, finding common ground and depth in light of major waves in worship life.

By now, if I have been successful, we are beginning to see all these resources as one massive conversation! They mark the continual swing of the pendulum between both dynamic values of Methodist singing.

The 1966 and 1989 *United Methodist Hymnals* seem so different from each other to those of us who have been through both of them, but in the grand scheme of things they represent the same movement. They were the first ventures of our new denomination (the 1966 was just shy of union in 1968). They also shared the same editor, Carlton Young, and shared similar goals.

The 1989 hymnal did set out to correct and improve the previous one, especially in the area of inclusive language (one of the more controversial and difficult tasks of their assignment) and it included more ethnic diversity. The 1966 had been the first mainline hymnal to include a Native American hymn, “Many and Great.” The 1989 added verses of various hymns in other languages, a little sprinkle of the global. The 1966 hymnal was criticized for lack of African American spirituals (only 5 spirituals under the heading “American Folk Hymn”). In the 1989, 30 were included from the *Songs of Zion* tradition.

As we look forward to our next hymnal, we can embrace the new realities of both music and medium or we can bury our heads in the sand. But more than anything, I am proposing that we cannot proceed as if these struggles are somehow new. Technology has changed the way it looks and the way it works, but the creative tension is the same as it’s always been, and the same as it always will be.

**Steve West**

### ***Dwelling in Beulah Land*** by Sally Kilpatrick

It never ceases to amaze me the things we take for granted that are particular to a certain country, region, or even family. What does any of that have to do with *Dwelling in Beulah Land*? Well, I’ve learned a lot of things over the years. What we always called butter beans? They are actually lima beans. What I’ve always known as butter cups? They’re really daffodils. And songs that I thought everyone knew? Obscure camp meeting tunes from a little brown book popular in the Methodist church. The *Cokesbury* isn’t even the official Methodist hymnal, but you would’ve never guessed that from where I went to church. A good number of the songs I know by heart—like *Dwelling in Beulah Land*—aren’t even in the official Methodist hymnal. Imagine my shock when I entered a story in a contest, one up in Chicago, and I get back the comment, “Did you make this hymn up?” Sacrilege!

*Dwelling in Beulah Land* is a song in the *Cokesbury* hymnal. I’m going to attempt to boil down the history of the hymnal, which will tell you a lot about the song. Basically, the Methodist hymnal of the late 1800s had swung back to the religion’s European roots. Meanwhile, camp meetings had taken hold of the nation—particularly in the South—and southerners loved them and sang some gospel and even some African-American spirituals. As the Methodist hymnal continued to eschew these “popular” or “trashy and sentimental” upstarts, the people clamored for them. Add in a dose of southerners not liking the return to traditional and the northerners not liking anything the southerners wanted because ...Reconstruction, and you have a little creative war going on as to which songs the church was going to sing. That war played itself out in my own church, albeit in subtle ways, by favoring the “little brown book” over the “big red one.” Fascinated by hymnal history? I gleaned all of this information from [Steve West’s blog Musings of a Musical Preacher](#)—and that post is just one of several that I plan to peruse at some point in the future.

**Sally Kilpatrick in *Super Writer Mom Blog***

## Information and Events of Historical Society Interest

### 2015-2016 Executive Committee and Officers of the AWFC-HS

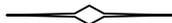
Jim Young, President  
Rev. Ed Shirley, Vice President  
Sharon Tucker, Recording Secretary  
Mary Ann Pickard, Financial Secretary  
Carolyn Coker, Member at Large  
Craig Reynolds, Member at Large  
Joyce Stimak, Member at Large  
Myrtice Carr, Previous Past President



### The Historical Society Website

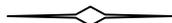
<http://www.awfhistory.com/>

Please visit the website for the AWF Conference's Historical Society. This website was created so that we may be more accessible to everyone with information and offer an avenue of interaction concerning our shared interest in Methodist history. Please browse through the pages to learn more about early Methodism in America, Alabama, and West Florida. We will be adding more to our internet files through the efforts of volunteers (we invite you to be one), members of the Historical Society (you can become one), and our conference archivists (we have some good ones). We regularly plan events where we enrich our knowledge of history, enjoy fellowship, and actually visit a historic location.



### We're Also on Facebook!

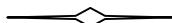
Follow us on Facebook. Enter "AWF Historical Society" in the search box at the top of your Facebook page. "Like" us – Follow us! Participate with comments and photos. Invite your friends.



### The AWFC Historical Society Newsletter

The newsletter is published quarterly and all comments and suggestions are welcome.

If you would like to submit an article or a notice or an announcement for publication in the AWFC Historical Society Newsletter, please contact the editor, Jim Young, at [youngjimmy@cox.net](mailto:youngjimmy@cox.net) or by phone at 850 862-8642.



**History is not a burden on  
the memory but an  
illumination of the soul.**  
Lord Acton

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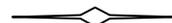
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### The Historical Society Fiscal Year

The AWFC Historical Society Executive Committee, at their February 2015 meeting, amended the by-laws of the Society to establish the AWFC-HS Fiscal Year as being from AWF Annual Conference to the next AWF Annual Conference.

The Executive Committee members for 2015-2016 were re-elected at the September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Annual Meeting to continue to serve during the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year.

### Your Help Is Needed!

**Our Society has a relatively small number of members. We need your help to make everyone in the AWF Conference aware of our group and what we do. We need to educate District Superintendents, Pastors, and Church Councils about the need for an active effort in each church to collect and preserve our history.**

**We need to recruit new members and to involve more folks in our activities.**

**We need your suggestions for locations for future AWFC-HS Annual Meetings. Consider your own church or historic churches in your area and let us know.**

Articles or suggestions for articles for this newsletter are also needed and will be appreciated. People, places, and events of historical AWFC interest are worthy of being featured here.

FEB 2016