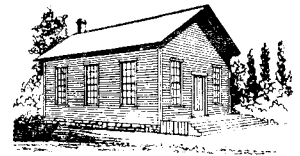




"Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history." — A. Lincoln

# FLASHBACKS



Revealing glimpses of our creative past

Vol. III, No. 3

Official newsletter of the  
UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

SEPTEMBER, 1974

## PILGRIMAGE to HISTORIC SPOT IN UNITED METHODISM

Saturday, OCTOBER 12, 1974

CAMBRIDGE, WISCONSIN

Willerup Memorial Methodist  
Church  
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

An opportunity to grow and appreciate the heritage of this church in United Methodism as the founding place of the Norwegian-Danish Conference in the world.

Speaker of authority.

The group may travel later in the day to the Rutland Church, site of the first United Brethren Conference.

Bring your friends whether or not they belong to the Wisconsin Conference Historical Society.

The fall colors should be at their best.

This is the first of the pilgrimages to sites of historical interest to Methodists. Do not miss this first one.

\*\*\*\*\*  
The Wisconsin Conference Historical Society welcomes you as a member. Send dues of \$2.00 to Mrs. Ethel B. Nulton, 204 1-2 South Main Street, Waupaca, Wisconsin. 54981  
\*\*\*\*\*

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## THE NEW RICHMOND STORY

Whenever there is a new church building, somehow even though the old one is torn down, the past lives again. Such was the case at New Richmond. When a new church was to be built, old records were uncovered and their story retold.

The home of B.C. B. Foster must have been a hospitable one for over a hundred and twenty years ago the children came there to Sunday School with Mr. Foster as their superintendent. There too the families came for church services. There was no minister to lead them but occasionally an Episcopal or a Presbyterian pastor stopped by.

The first regular appointment of a Methodist minister to the New Richmond area was in 1857 when the Minnesota Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church sent Reverend William A. Egbert to the Willow River Mission. On October 10, 1857, a little society was organized with the Fosters, Mrs. Diana Hooker, Mrs. A. Huntington, and Harvey Law, Jr. as charter members.

In 1861 the Willow River Mission became the New Richmond circuit. Services were held from house to house until a school-house was built. Even when a larger school building of four rooms replaced the old one, the little group of worshippers stayed in the little original "house of learning," which no doubt they had come to love.

This was the day before the telegraph, the telephone, and daily mail. During the Civil War families in New Richmond anxiously waited long days for news of the eight members of the church who were serving in the army. On April 16, 1865, the services of the little church were suddenly interrupted by a post rider who came to announce that Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated.

In 1868 a lumber dealer by the name of Cragin donated land for a Methodist church on the north side of the village, and in 1869 the first Methodist Church was erected. Henry Beal, Harvey Law, Jr., and Alex Russell cut the trees and hauled the logs from near Deer Park for Mr. Foster to saw into lumber. Henry Beal made pews with scroll ends and rolled backed tops. The dedication came in 1872. When in 1884 the Soo line railroad built its tracks just one block south of the church and the rumble of the train and the shrill whistle disturbed the quiet and the dignity of the church services, on a cold wintry day the church was moved to the present location in the heart of the city.

In 1894 Dr. Frank Epley bought the church a large bell, weighing 2,330 pounds. On it was inscribed:

This bell rings for a free church, free schools,  
a free press, for free speech, and the equal right  
of every citizen before the law...

Then came a fateful day on June 12, 1899, when a cyclone took the business part of the town. Along with it went the church. There in the midst of the rubble was all that was left - the great bell and a dead horse. The pulpit Bible was found later near Deer Park. Undaunted the people rebuilt with the old bell still calling them to worship. The parsonage too had been wrecked. It was replaced sometime during the pastorate of Reverend Koster, 1908-1913 and served until it burned in 1971.

A part of the old church will go into the new. The stained glass windows with their priceless memories are in the chancel area. The pipe organ, purchased in 1913 at a cost of nearly \$30,000 and renewed in 1967, will be moved into the new church in 1974. The Records and History Committee, composed of Erna Sette, Louise Goodlad, Marion Peterson, and Louise Girard, assisted in the March 24, 1974, worship at which time a display case was dedicated and its contents of historical treasures enumerated.

The final service in the old building was held on March 3, 1974, with the sacrament of Holy Communion observed. The assistants were members of the two former New Richmond churches, the United Brethren and the Congregational, who over the years had merged with the Methodist Church. Now they are all United Methodists.

Courtesy of Mrs. V.E.Girard

From the pen of WILLIAM BLAKE, our historian

United Methodists will be interested in the treatment given their early history in the authoritative FROM EXPLORATION TO STATEHOOD, by Alice E. Smith, which appeared last year. It is an ambitious publication project of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, celebrating the American bicentennial. Five other volumes are scheduled to follow, with the whole HISTORY OF WISCONSIN treated in detail.

The mission among the Chippewas, started by three converted Indians, George Copway, Peter Marksman, and John Johnson, is mentioned on page 157.

A brief recital of the beginnings of Methodist work in what is now Wisconsin appears on pages 603 and 604. John Clark, Samuel Ryan, and Electa Quinney are all mentioned, but John Dew and John T. Mitchell remain anonymous in her account, and there is no mention of John Lutz and his pioneering work in establishing the first churches of the Evangelical Association, or of James Davis in creating the United Brethren beach-head in pioneer Wisconsin. Miss Smith mentions in passing the Evangelical Association, grouping it with "the German Methodist Church." Evidently she was not aware that what she called the "German Methodist Church" was the outreach of the Methodist Episcopal Church among settlers whose mother tongue was German. See p. 604.

In her treatment of notable architectural features in the early history of the Badger state, the Mitchell-Rountree cottage in Platteville is pointed out as "a Tidewater Virginia residence, much admired for its suggestion of a southern mode of life." (p. 553)

Her treatment of the early antislavery controversy within Methodist Episcopal ranks in the 1840's suffers from Miss Smith's uncritical acceptance of the JOURNALS of Edward Mathews as her primary source. They were not "Journals" in the sense that they were written at the time the events chronicled occurred. Instead they were recollections, set down at varying intervals, as the intrepid antislavery crusader looked back over the stormy episodes he had experienced.

According to Miss Smith's account James Mitchell was tried and expelled by the Rock River Conference (M.E.) in 1844. Actually the case against James Mitchell for his actions in upholding the ownership of two slave girls by his wife, and subsequently sending them to slaveholding territory, was tried in the Rock River Conference session of 1845. The result was exoneration of the accused minister on that charge. He was tried on altogether different charges, growing out of his intemperate conduct in a dispute over the use of an organ and choir in the Clark Street Church in Chicago, in 1847. At the latter time and on the latter charges he was forced to take a supernumerary relationship, and soon after was transferred to a Missouri Conference. The whole matter is discussed and the sources cited, in CROSS AND FLAME IN WISCONSIN. pages 52 and 53.

Despite these errors in regard to our own denominational history, the book is a contribution of the highest value to our understanding of early Wisconsin. John Peter Bloom, of the National Archives in Washington, D. C., termed it, "a splendid book, a tour de force . . . It belongs in every school and library in the state, and will long remain the standard source of the period covered."

Its price (\$15.00) puts it out of reach of many, but almost every public library in the state is likely to have FROM EXOLORATION TO STATEHOOD on its shelves. To borrow and read it will be an enriching and enjoyable experience for any Badger.

#### ORAL HISTORY

Have you considered the use of cassette recorders for interviewing older members or for that matter some of the younger ones? Preserve their voices for the future.

Before attempting to record, pay them a visit. They will feel more at home with you later and with what they have to tell. You are more than listener.

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information.

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friend.