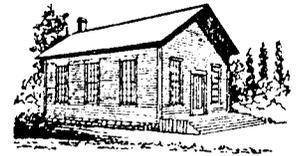




"WE are the end-product of our history."

FLASHBACKS



Revealing glimpses of our creative past

Official newsletter of the

UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

Vol. 16 No. 1

February, 1989

EAU CLAIRE LAKE STREET SHARES PERSONAL HISTORY OF METHODISM AT PILGRIMAGE

Randell R. Richter, pastor of the Lake Street United Methodist Church, Eau Claire, and Mrs. Doris Buchholz, Mrs. Mary Lee, and Mrs. Harriet Hamilton of that congregation shared personal experiences and excerpts from journals and letters relating to the early years of Methodism in the Chippewa River area with those who attended the Annual Fall Pilgrimage of The United Methodist Historical Society of Wisconsin on October 1 at the Lake Street Church. Pilgrims enjoyed exhibits featuring the history of the Chippewa River area and a noon luncheon served by the women of the church before the program.

Letters...

Excerpts from the letters of Lucy Hastings to her relatives in Massachusetts reveal much about the beginnings of Methodism in that area. Lucy and D. S. (Smead) Hastings hosted the first class meetings in Eau Claire around 1857. Not much is known about them other than that Smead was a carpenter, Rev. Richter said.

Mrs. Buchholz shared memories of First Church (East Side), including her recollection of her brothers carrying out burning pews when the church was destroyed in 1909.

Mrs. Lee recalled the history of Lake Street Church and the incident in which a cement cross crashed through the narthex from the roof in 1935 following the benediction. No one was injured.

Mrs. Hamilton, great-granddaughter of Preacher Joseph J. Austin, who was transplanted to Wisconsin from Vermont, presented several readings from his journals of the 1860's. A copy of the letter of Sept. 18, 1882 to Rev. Austin from J. Lawson, Presiding Elder of the West Wisconsin Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, appears elsewhere in Flashbacks with selected excerpts from the program.

Rev. Dick O'Neil presented a paper on the history of the Northwest Conference between 1860 and 1868.



Lourinda Sanford, as Martha Wesley Hall, recreated for us the story of her brother John Wesley's intervention in the rescue of Martha Thomas from Bedlam Insane Asylum in February, 1750, as taken from his journal.

1989 Officers Elected at Pilgrimage

Officers of The United Methodist Historical Society of Wisconsin were elected at the annual fall pilgrimage held at Eau Claire Lake Street UMC.

Merlin Hoeft was elected vice president and Dorothy Brice, recording secretary, replacing Bill Jannusch and Ruth Steffen in those offices.

Charles Sanford was reelected president; Linn Emerick, treasurer; Lois Olsen, membership secretary and Executive Committee treasurer; and Ferne Hoeft, Flashbacks editor.

Mary Schroeder and Joann Hornby are members-at-large.

Conference Historian Arlow Anderson and Randell Richter, chairperson of the Commission of Archives and History, were named ex-officio members of the Executive Committee.

EAU CLAIRE DISTRICT.

WEST WIS. CONFERENCE,

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Portage

J. LAWSON, P. E.

Wis. Sep. 18. 1852

Rev. J. J. Austin

Dear Bro. Inclosed find your transfer to this conference from Bishop Andrews. The charge to which you are appointed is Greenwood in Clark County. It has a good parsonage and a good church. I thought of Durand but did not think that charge good enough for you. Greenwood will pay you \$700 and parsonage. Please remember that the Seneca appointment on that charge is now put on the Thompson & Seneca mission. You can come by what route

MRS. HAMILTON SHARES J. J. AUSTIN'S JOURNAL TESTIMONY TO LOVE OF CHRIST

Mrs. Harriet Hamilton presented a brief biography of her great-grandfather, J. J. Austin, beginning with his birth in 1838 in Vermont. He entered the ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church after completing work at Ft. Edward Institute, New York. Following his marriage to Clarissa Newell, he served in Vermont churches for 17 years, seven years in Vermont, eight years in New York, and more than two years in Wisconsin where he served until his death.

Mrs. Hamilton concluded with this entry in his journal, dated Monday, July 9, 1866:

"I have rejoiced in the Lord and have proved the blessedness of it, but a little space between me and heaven....I am looking forward for a great many years I have known the Lord as my Savior. He saved my hope like an anchor to the soul. I want to say I belong to the body of Jesus, the claim to the fulness is mine by right. I am His and He is mine. I have a great comfort and joy from the fact. God has saved me day by day. He gives me the way. Today I reckon myself dead into sin. I alone am glad I am a soldier of the cross. I am glad in this army. I will follow Jesus all the way through. I am glad I have a song in the Lord. Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound."

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337 Lake Street

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Ministers: All Members and Friends
Pastors: NORMAN D. STEPHENSON
 RANDELL R. RICHTER

LAKE STREET CONGREGATION CELEBRATE BEGINNING WITH LUCY HASTINGS LETTERS

Pastor Randell Richter of Lake Street UMC opened the program for the 1988 Annual Fall Pilgrimage celebrating the beginning of Methodism in the Eau Claire area with particular emphasis upon the letters of Lucy Hastings who with her husband hosted the first class meetings. Excerpts from some of those letters follow:

Oxford, Apr 27th, 1856

There has been quite a revival of Religion in this place this winter. Not any excitement, it has seemed, like the spirit of God working upon the hearts of men. Smead is one of the converts; he was rather inclining to be a skeptic, & we are trying to live a Christian life. As for myself, I have indulged a hope rather over a year, but have never made any public profession untill now. We have joined the Methodist Class; & were two weeks ago both baptized by immersion, four others were baptised with us. We feel quite anxious & interested to know your views & feeling in regard to a future state; the salvation of the soul is the end of our existance, the very purpose for which we were made. Dear brother, do you think of these things? Is your bible daily read & studied, that you may know what is your duty to God. Do you ever pray before your family or in secret; & are you striving to do every known duty in the fear & love of God. Think when we receive a favor from man how ready we are to thank him, & also feel under obligations to him; & shall we be less grateful to him from whom we receive all things, & to whom we owe all things. Oh think of this, let not the cares & trials of this life steal all your time & affections from God, but prepare to meet him in peace. & may you & yours so live that together with all our brothers & sisters we may meet, an unbroken number with all our loved friends who have gone before us in that Spirit land, where all is peace, love & joy & where partings are no more.

Eau Claire, March 11th/60

Dear Sister.

Your letter was received today noon, & this evening I will stay at home from meeting & write to you. For it is the only way I have in my power to express my deep sorrow & sympathy with loved friends in affliction. Oh it is sad to think of our dear brother's lot in this world. What you say in regard to his wife does not surprise me for from what I learned of her by him when he visited us & by her letters to him (he always showed them to me), I was satisfied she did not care anything about him. But it does seem strange that she should treat him so unkind now that he is so very low. I would suppose a sense of duty would cause her to do otherwise, even to a slave & much more so to one who has been so kind, & loved her so deeply as E has. I pity the reflection she will sometime have; may God have mercy on her. Were he within my reach, she should have no more chance to abuse him. I would take care of him myself if it cost me my life. But Alas, he is far from me, & I cannot soothe or cheer his wounded spirit. But God can & will do it, if he only goes to him with it all & pleads through the merits of the Saviour. Oh that I could see him once more, though it were but for an hour. It seems sometimes as though I could not be denied & yet I suppose I shall be & must be resigned & leave him in the hands of him who careth for us. It seems his religious views & feelings are much the same as when he was with us. It used to make me feel bad sometime to hear him talk as he did about somethings, & yet in some respects he seemed like a Christian. He was so good & kind to every body, that I often felt that he was one, & his errors or strange views were mistakes of the head &

4.

not of the heart.

Eau Claire, March 11th/60

Well Sarah we are all poor sinful, suffering creatures, of a day as it were, & we do need something to lean upon & bear us up. & that is just what our Saviour came into the world for, to "seek & save that which was lost." Oh Sister lean on him with faith, plead his merits & you are safe. We cannot save ourselves, he is our righteousness. Look away from self, see what he has done for you, yes for you he suffered & died that you might live. Sis believe love & bless him. You ask me to pray for you, be assured I do, but you must pray for yourself. Go to God with all you hopes & fears, tell him you whole heart just as you would to an earthly parent. Believe that he is the hearer & answerer of prayer, & he will hear you. Never be discouraged, persevere till death & may the Lord give you peace.

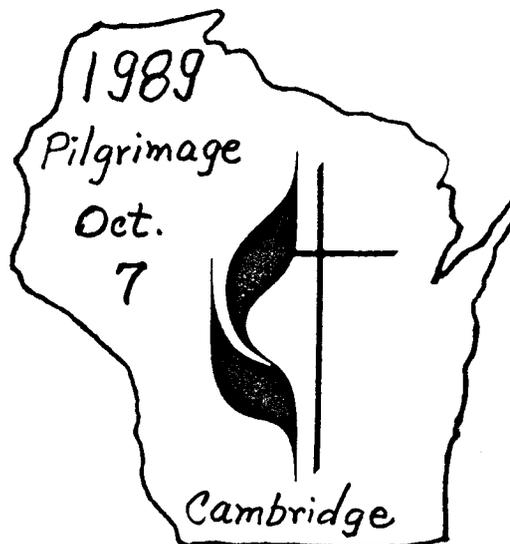
How does Freedom bear her trials? Did you ever talk with her upon the subject of religion? Poor Ophelia, I often think of her & sometimes wish I had taken her with us. I do hope she will yet be better, my love to them. Do not let her die without talking to her upon the subject. Excuse mistakes, write again soon. Love from D S & L A H.

**1989 PILGRIMAGE TO CELEBRATE
FIRST NORWEGIAN DANISH CHURCH**

Willerup United Methodist Church, Cambridge, will be the site of the 1989 Annual Pilgrimage of the Historical Society on October 7. We will celebrate the first Norwegian Danish church building in the world. It is hoped that Willerup UMC will be named as a shrine by that date.

Conference Historian Arlow Anderson will be in charge of the event.

Consideration is being given the 150 anniversary of the Evangelical Church as the 1990 Pilgrimage set for October 6, 1990.



O'NEIL PRESENTS PAPER ON NORTHWEST METHODIST EPISCOPAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Rev. Richard O'Neil presented a comprehensive paper on the history of Methodism in Northwest Wisconsin as a part of the program of the 1988 Historical Pilgrimage held at Lake Street UMC, Eau Claire, in October. Excerpts follow:

The History of Methodism in Northwest Wisconsin begins before the creation of the Annual Conference in 1860. In fact it even begins before the creation of the West Wisconsin Annual Conference in 1856. In 1855, according to the Wisconsin Annual Conference Minutes, there were only seven (7) potential churches in Northwest Wisconsin, north of Black River Falls. These were the Kansas Mission (in Dunn County), the Chippewa Falls Missions, the Montonville Mission (in Trempeleau County), the Oceola Mission, the Hudson Mission, the Prescott Mission, and the Superior Mission. Only four of these Missions were going before 1855, they were Chippewa Falls, Montonville, Hudson and Prescott.

At the 1855 Wisconsin Annual Conference on pages 38 and 39 of the Minutes, you will find their recommendation for the splitting of the Conference. The Conference at this time consisted of the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota. The recommendation was to split Minnesota off from the Conference and divide Wisconsin into two Annual Conferences. Their recommendation was also to place "that part of Wisconsin which lies North and West of a line beginning at the mouth of Black River" [1] to be included in the Minnesota Conference. These recommendations went to the 1856 General Conference and were approved.

James Lawson in the book "History of Methodism in Wisconsin", printed in 1890, says concerning that Northwest part of Wisconsin, that was included in the Minnesota Conference in 1856, as being:

"...one hundred and eighty-six miles long and from sixty to one hundred and twenty six miles wide. It covered almost the entire lumber region of the State, embracing the rich but as yet undeveloped valleys of the Black, Chippewa, Cedar, and St. Croix Rivers, with their numerous tributaries. At this date it was yet comparatively new territory. The richness of the lumber interests, however, were fast developing, while the pioneer itinerant was pushing his way among the early settlers." [2]

According to the 1855 Minutes of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, there were in the Northwest part of Wisconsin only four (4) appointments (Point Douglas?, Hudson Mission, Prescott Mission and Chippewa). Of these four appointments, two were supplied and two were to be supplied. There were no church buildings or parsonages in the area; there were only 150 members, 2 Sunday Schools and 41 Scholars; and they raised nothing for Benevolences. However, by 1860 there were 948 members; 12 local preachers; 3 church buildings, valued at \$4,000; 1 parsonage, valued at \$400; collected for missions for that year, \$10.80; 36 Sunday-schools, and 1,000 scholars. This

indicated that a lot of work had been done in that area in those four years.

One of the more interesting incidents which occurred in this area was the great revival awakening in the Alma area (which extended to Chippewa) during the late 1850's. Rev. Sylvester Webster was the main preacher, with help from Rev. Enoch S. Havens. The work and awakening covered the Buffalo, Pepin, Dunn and Eau Claire counties. They were a lot of souls converted through this awakening; they say that at Pepin, over one hundred were converted. If you wish to read more about this incident, you can read it in Bennett and Lawson's book, "History of Methodism in Wisconsin" on pages 362-364. Interestingly, that in that first class in Alma were the Edward Doughty and Henry Coleman families. Both Edward Doughty and Henry Coleman became preachers in Wisconsin (Henry started in West Wisconsin in 1858 and transferred to Wisconsin Conference in 1859, and Edward started in Northwest Wisconsin in 1860), and their sons also became ministers in Wisconsin.

Everything was now ready for the beginning of the Northwest ME Annual Conference in 1860. It is assumed that the members and preachers of the churches in the Northwest part of the state were the one pushing for a separation from the Minnesota Conference. There were some strong feelings in the West Wisconsin Conference over how the 1860 General Conference set the boundaries for the new Northwest ME Conference. In fact at the 1860 West Wisconsin Annual Conference, a resolution was passed that said:

"WHEREAS, by action of the last General Conference, the North-West Wisconsin Conference was organized by taking the La Crosse District from our Conference; and WHEREAS the line fixed upon and established by the General Conference, proves to be further south than was expected or understood at the time, and runs through three of our circuits, Viroqua, Newton and New Brookville, Therefore, RESOLVED, That with the consent of the N. W. Wis. Conference, we respectfully request the Bishops to leave the line between the Conferences to run East from the Mississippi River, on the North line of Bad Ax county, until further action of the General Conference in the case."

This resolution was prepared and submitted by Alfred Brunson and Robert Langley (Alfred Brunson having been a delegate to the 1860 General Conference and Robert Langley served in the La Crosse District.). The North West Wisconsin Conference, which had met before the West Wisconsin Conference in 1860, had taken up this issue; but the minutes do not indicate what the Conference did. They could have just agreed to work out the problems with the Viroqua circuit, and leave the rest as it was. Obviously no action was taken, because at the 1863 Session of the West Wisconsin Annual Conference the following resolution was presented: "RESOLVED, That the West Wisconsin Conference,

request the General Conference, at its next session to re-arrange the Conference lines of this state." This resolution was passed. However, the North West Wisconsin Annual Conference in 1863 took no such action. The General Conference of 1864 took no action on the West Wisconsin resolution.

James Lawson in the "History of Methodism in Wisconsin" wrote concerning the division:

"The General Conference of 1860 again changed the boundaries of the Conference, by forming the North West Wisconsin Conference out of part of the West Wisconsin, and that portion of the Minnesota Conferences in the state of Wisconsin, thus taking from the West Wisconsin Conference the counties of La Crosse, Monroe, Jackson, and a portion of Vernon, and reducing the limits of that Conference to eleven counties in the extreme Southwest corner of the State, with no possibility of obtaining any new territory. The arrangement could not be otherwise than embarrassing to the work, and greatly retarded the Conference [West Wisconsin that is] in both material and spiritual success." [3]

It also needs to be said that James Lawson was one of two delegates to the 1864 General Conference with the resolution to reconsider the boundaries between the West Wisconsin and North West Wisconsin Conferences.

On September 5, 1860 the North West Wisconsin Annual Conference convened in Sparta, Wisconsin with Bishop Levi Scott presiding. On calling the roll of Preachers who were in Full Connection and considered members of the Conference, twenty (20) responded. At this Conference, T. M. Fullerton was readmitted. J. W. Millour was elected Secretary and William M. Osborne was elected Statistical Secretary. Nine men were Received on Trial; five men were to Remain on Trial; four men were Admitted into Full Connection and three of them were elected and Ordained Deacon; five men were Ordained Elder; none had Located, Withdrawn or Died; and two men were Superannuated or worn out or Retired (these were James Gurley and G. F. Hilton). H. H. Smith and J. E. Irish transferred to West Wisconsin that year. The Conference consisted of three Districts: La Crosse (T. C. Golden, Presiding Elder); Galesville (J. W. Millour, Presiding Elder); and Prescott (Chauncey Hobart, Presiding Elder). There were stationed 38 preachers and 6 charges left to be supplied. The total membership was 1,771 members and 520 probationers. There were only 7 church buildings and 5 parsonages in the Conference. The average salary of the preachers did not exceed \$200. They had a school in the Conference, called Galesville University, which was started in 1859 and continued until 1877. In 1860 Samuel Fallows was the Principal, but in 1861 he Transferred to the Wisconsin Conference. A resolution was passed, at this Conference session, indicating their highest regards and esteem towards the brethren of the West Wisconsin and Minnesota Conferences.

The 1861 session of the North West Wisconsin Annual Conference was held in Galesville from September 26-30. At this session four men were Admitted on Trial; nine were Remained on Trial; two were Admitted into Full Connection; four were elected Deacon and Ordained; two were elected and Ordained Elder and one had his Elders Orders recognized; four were located; and three were Superannuated or worn out. At this Conference session the Galesville District was dropped in name and renamed the Chippewa District and Chauncey Hobart was the Presiding Elder. At this session it was recorded that the Conference had 2,027 members; 385 probationers; 31 Local Preachers; 33 Effective Preachers; 6 places were to be supplied; 10 church buildings; 15 parsonages; 96 Sunday Schools; and contributed \$181 to Missions compared to \$98 the year before.

The 1862 Annual Conference session was held in Hudson from September 24-30. During the past year Chauncey Hobart was commissioned a chaplain in the Third Minnesota Regiment and Matthew Sorin supplied the Chippewa District as Presiding Elder. He continued to do so for the 1862-1863 Conference year. At this session two were Admitted on Trial; five were Remained on Trial; seven were Admitted into Full Connection and all were received as Deacons and six of them were Ordained; two were elected and Ordained Elder; one was located; and three were Superannuated or worn out; none had been Expelled, Withdrew, or Died. At this session, it was reported that membership had decreased to 1,939; probationers had dropped to 300; Local Preachers had risen to 40 and Effective Preachers had risen to 36; Pastoral Charges had dropped to 35 but only 5 were left to be supplied; church buildings had risen to 11 but the number of parsonages had dropped to 11; the Sunday School had risen to 105; and the amount to Missions had dropped to \$176.

The 1863 Annual Conference session was held at West Eau Claire, at the Congregational Church, from October 7-10. At this session four were Admitted on Trial, three Remained on Trial; three were Admitted into Full Connection and Ordained Deacon; two were elected and Ordained Elder; four were Superannuated or worn out; none had been Expelled, Withdrew or Died. It was reported that the membership had increased by 194 to 2,132; number of Local Preachers and Effective Preachers had dropped to 38 and 34 respectively; 34 preachers were stationed and 6 were left to be supplied; 4 ministers transferred from this Conference; the contributions to Missions had increased substantially to \$459; and the number of church buildings and parsonages had increased to 13 and 12 respectively and there was an increase in number of Pastoral Charges to 37. The average salary this year was only \$220. This together with the newness of the field, the smallness of membership and the comparatively small aid from the Missionary Society caused some of the preachers to leave the Conference. An appeal was made to the General Missionary Committee, at this Conference session, for an

increased appropriation to the Conference, so that they would receive three thousand dollars from the Committee.

The fifth session of the Conference was held at Black River Falls from September 21-26, 1864. Bishop Kingsley was sick in Winona, Minnesota and could not attend the Conference; and therefore, William Hamilton, well respected by the Conference, was elected president of the Conference and conducted business in the absence of the Bishop. At this session two were Admitted on Trial, five Remained on Trial; one was Admitted into Full Connection and two were elected Deacons (but not Ordained because of no Bishop); seven were elected Elder and not ordained because of no Bishop present; two were Located; five were on Supernumerary; three were Superannuated or worn out; none had been Expelled, Withdrew or Died. At this Conference, two men (John W. Johnson and Isaac E. Springer) were commissioned as chaplains in the army in Wisconsin regiments; and this made a total of five ministers from this small Conference, the others being Chauncey Hobart, William McKinley, and T. C. Golden. At this Conference there was reported a 95 member increase, bringing it to 2,227; a reduction of Local Preachers and Effective Preachers to 32 and 28 respectively; 26 preachers were stationed and 11 pastoral charges were left to be supplied; there was a decrease of Pastoral Charges to 36; contributions to Missions dropped to \$419; the number of church buildings and parsonages rose to 14 and 15 respectively; and Sunday Schools continued the decline to 97 with only 628 scholars.

In 1865 the Conference met in "The Company's Hall" in Menomonee from September 14-18. At this session five were Admitted on Trial; three Remained on Trial; one was Admitted into Full Connection; six were elected and Ordained Deacons (along with those from last year); no new Elders were elected, but those from last year were re-elected and Ordained; one was located; four were on Supernumerary; two were Superannuated or worn out; none had been Expelled, Withdrew, or Died. In the past year the membership had jumped 33 members to 2,260; number of Local Preachers and Effective Preachers had risen to 41 and 31 respectively; number of Pastoral Charges had risen to 38; 32 preachers were stationed and 8 pastoral charges were left to be supplied; contributions to Missions increased substantially to \$850 and Missionary Apportionment from General Missionary Committee (money sent to NW Wisconsin Conference to help with the salary for the preachers) was increased to \$3,500; number of church buildings had risen to 15 and the number of parsonages had remained at 15; number of Sunday Schools had dropped to 89 and the scholars had risen a little to 647.

Prescott was the site of the seventh session of the Conference, which met from September 12-17, 1866. At this Conference session six men were Admitted on Trial; six Remained on Trial; two were Admitted in Full Connection, elected and Ordained Deacon; none were elected and Ordained Elder; two were Located; three were on Supernumerary relationship; four were Superannuated or worn out; none had been Expelled, Withdrew, or

10.

Died. It was reported that the membership had jumped 313 members to 2,573; Probationers for the first was higher than when the Conference began in 1860, 597 were recorded; there were 39 Local Preachers and 31 Effective Preachers; 33 Preachers were stationed and 14 places were left to be supplied; contributions to Missions increased by \$103, to \$953; number of Pastoral Charges were, for the first time, more than when the Conference began, there were 43; there were 16 church buildings and 17 parsonages; and there were 108 Sunday Schools and 789 scholars. Arrangements were made at this session to celebrate throughout the North West Wisconsin Conference the "Centenary of American Methodism." There was a misunderstanding concerning the Missionary Apportionment, and some churches did not receive any aid. At this Conference charges were brought by James Gurley against his Presiding Elder, C. P. Hackney; but Hackney's administration was upheld.

The last session of the North West Wisconsin Conference was held in Sparta from September 12-16, 1867. It is ironic that the last session would be held at the site of the first session. At this final session, presided over by Bishop Matthew Simpson, two men were Admitted on Trial; five Remained on Trial; five were Admitted into Full Connection; two were elected and Ordained Deacon; two were elected and Ordained Elder; one was Located; two had the Supernumerary relationship; four were Superannuated or worn out; none had been Expelled, Withdrew or Died. Only 34 preachers were stationed and 11 places were to be supplied. It was recorded that the membership had jumped 223 to 2,796 and there 555 Probationers, a little down from the previous year; there were 45 Local Preachers (highest number the Conference ever had, which was not good news) and there 34 Effective Preachers (only one more than the previous year); there were three more Pastoral Charges, bringing the number to 46; contributions to Missions dropped \$179 to a giving of \$774; there were 25 church buildings and 21 parsonages; and there were 94 Sunday Schools (down 12) but they had their highest number of scholars with 843. At this Conference T. M. Fullerton was elected de/egate to the General Conference and C. P. Hackney was elected reserve.

At the 1868 General Conference, the North West Wisconsin Annual Conference was merged with the West Wisconsin Annual Conference, with the counties of Douglas, Bayfield and Ashland being attached to the Minnesota Conference. Wisconsin would not see the of their work in these counties until 1887. At the 1868 session of the West Wisconsin Annual Conference, held in Mazomanie on September 28, Rev. Isaac E. Springer, secretary of the now late North West Conference, presented a certificate of the members of that Conference; and a vote of greeting and welcome was unanimously passed by the brethren of the Conference. So brought to an end the North West Wisconsin Annual Conference. During those eight years these men increased the membership by over one thousand members; erected 18 Church Buildings and 16 Parsonages.

*Revealing glimpses of our
creative past*
FLASHBACKS
*United Methodist Historical
Society of Wisconsin*



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ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 28
Sun Prairie, Wis.

FLASHBACKS

Official newsletter of the United Methodist
Historical Society of Wisconsin

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Material of historical interest, church
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local historical committees and historians,
should be sent to her at the above address.

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