Semi-Centennial Program
of the Central Pennsylvania Conference
by the Semi-Centennial Committee, 1918

[editor’s note: The Semi-Centennial Program of the Central Pennsylvania Conference was held at the opening of the 50th annual session of that body and took place at the Newberry Methodist Episcopal Church at 7:30 pm on Wednesday evening, March 20, 1918. The two papers that follow, by Alfred S. Bowman and Milton K. Foster, were delivered as part of that program. The material in this article was prepared by the Semi-Centennial Committee after the fact as an explanatory preface to the two papers read at the program, and all three items were bound together in a booklet preserved in the conference archives.]

At the Annual Conference in Altoona, 1916, a Semi-Centennial Committee was named as follows.
Lay: W.H. Schwartz, Altoona; J.J. Brown MD, Bloomsburg; J.S. Bursk, Carlisle; Gruber Bell, Lewistown; H.T. Ames Esq., Williamsport.

The report of the Committee at Lewistown in 1917 emphasized the historical features of the Semi-Centennial and provided for its observance a year later with a fitting program.

In 1918, the “Great World War” had been raging for more than four years and Germany had just launched an offensive in the hope of a final decision. A year had passed since the United States of America had entered the struggle and about two and a half million of her soldiers and sailors were “overseas” – typically in France and Belgium, ready to do their full part in driving Germany and her allies to utter failure and defeat. Patriotic fervor and enthusiasm marked every session of the Conference and was signally manifest at the Semi-Centennial Anniversary Wednesday evening, March 20.

A great throng was in attendance, every available seat in the church filled. The congregation stood in eager expectancy, then broke into applause as nine veterans who had seen fifty winters or more since they entered the ministry marched down the aisle carrying “Old Glory” to the platform. They were Milton K. Foster, John B. Mann, John B. Polsgrove, William A. Houck, George Leidy, Richard Mallalieu, Owen Hicks, Alfred S. Bowman and Ezra H. Yocum. William A Houck, a chaplain in the Civil War (1861-65) was flagbearer, and seven in his immediate family were seeing service at this time in the “World Conflict.”

Applause was several times repeated as, from different parts of the church, the audience caught sight of the marchers and the flag. The veterans and speakers having mounted the platform, the long meter Doxology was sung, after which the congregation took their seats and the exercises began.
1868 ----  PROGRAM ----1918

Organ Prelude

Processional

Hymn

“I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord”

Prayer

Rev. William A. Houck, D.D.

Scripture Lesson

Rev. Richard Mallalieu

Anthem

Church Choir

Offering

Presentation of Gavel

Dr. Benjamin C. Conner

Address – Beginnings and Early Developments of Methodism
in the Territory Now Comprised by
the Central Pennsylvania Conference

Rev. Alfred S. Bowman

Song

“Battle Hymn of the Republic”

Address – Growth of the Central Pennsylvania Conference
In the Fifty Years of Its History

Dr. M.K. Foster

Greetings from the Baltimore Conference

Rev. J.F. Heisse, D.D.

Response

Dr. Foster

Hymn

“Faith of Our Fathers Living Still”

Address

Bishop William Frazier McDowell, LL.D.

Hymn

“My Country ‘Tis of Thee”

Benediction

Informal Reception

The President of Williamsport Dickinson Seminary, in presenting the
Presiding Officer with the gavel, said that it had been procured by Rev. Alfred S.
Bowman from wood taken from the Old Stone Church, still standing four miles
from Berwick, built A.D. 1808 largely through the influence of the Rev. Thomas
Bowman Sr., grandfather of the late Bishop Thomas Bowman of the Methodist
Episcopal Church. This gavel, having place among the archives of the Historical
Society, will be available for use at the “Conference Centennial in 1968” and
other “Jubilee” occasions.