

Central Pennsylvania's Northern Tier The Wellsboro District

The Genesee Conference was formed in 1810 by Bishops Asbury and McKendree in accordance with discretionary authority granted them by the 1808 General Conference. The conference was created from the Cayuga (western New York state) and Upper Canada (southern Ontario) districts of the New York Conference and the Susquehanna (north central Pennsylvania) district of the Philadelphia Conference. More specifically, the Susquehanna district included all Pennsylvania drained by the Susquehanna River above its junction with the Juniata River.

The General Conference of 1820 transferred the Bald Eagle, Lycoming, Northumberland and Shamokin circuits to the Baltimore Conference. Peck's 1860 history of the Genesee Conference, page 339, describes that event as follows:

The large tract extending from the mouth of the Juniata up to Wyoming on the north branch of the Susquehanna, and embracing Buffalo Valley, Penn's Valley, the Bald Eagle country, and the valley of the west branch, was taken from the Genesee Conference without its consent, and attached to the Baltimore Conference. We doubt if there has ever been such a case in the history of Methodism, and there certainly has been nothing like it since 1820. When large portions of annual conferences are detached it has always been done by the concurrence of the conference.

It was a matter of no special importance at that time to the Genesee Conference, for she had territory enough, and too much. In addition to the territory now contained in five annual conferences, she had both provinces of Canada under her supervision, and little reason for instituting a quarrel about four circuits on her southern wing. This is probably the reason why the thing passed off so quietly.

In 1829, the eastern portion of the Genesee Conference became the Oneida Conference. In Bradford county Pennsylvania, this division occurred along the Susquehanna River and proved to be a decision that would determine conference boundaries to the present day. In 1852 the southern portion of the Oneida Conference became the Wyoming Conference.

The first division of the Genesee Conference to affect present Central Pennsylvania territory occurred in 1848 when the Genesee Conference was divided into the Genesee and East Genesee Conferences. In Pennsylvania, the Genesee Conference kept Potter county and the East Genesee Conference was awarded Tioga, Sullivan and western Bradford counties.

In 1864, the General Conference transferred Laporte and southern Sullivan county from the East Genesee to the East Baltimore Conference, the latter being a short-lived (1858-69) intermediate step leading to the ultimate 1869 formation of the

Central Pennsylvania Conference from its parent Baltimore Conference. It was also in 1869 that the Oneida Conference made some boundary adjustments in New York State and became known as the Central New York Conference.

In 1872, the East Genesee Conference was dissolved. Its Pennsylvania charges became the Troy District of the Central New York Conference. In 1876, the Troy District was transferred to the newly re-formed Genesee Conference. This left the Genesee Conference with approximately the present Wellsboro district plus the northwest corner of Sullivan county.

The next change occurred when the General Conference of 1880 awarded the territory along and east of US route 15 to the recently created Central New York Conference. In the language of 1880, it was the territory east of "the railroad running from Lawrenceville to Blossburgh, to include Mansfield and Blossburgh charges." The nature of the problem and the intensity of the debate are illustrated by the following portions of the 1880 (and final) report of the superintendent of the Troy district of the Genesee Conference. As noted above, the Troy district was approximately the present Wellsboro district.

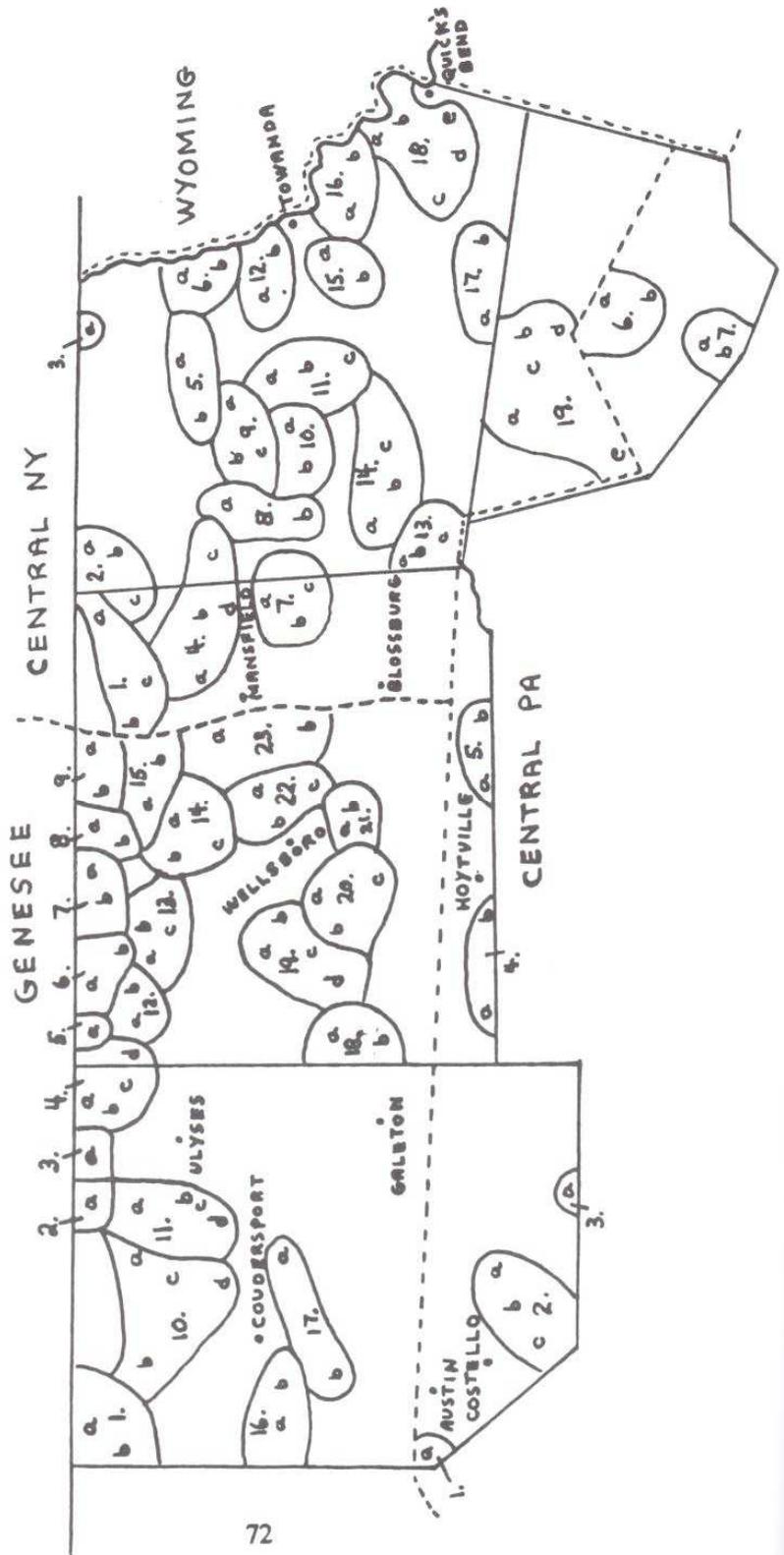
The Troy district is about 100 miles long east and west: 30 miles wide in the western portion, and about 50 miles at the eastern. It contains a great deal of splendid country, and some that is at least picturesque. It has four railroads running through it from north to south, in which direction the principal valleys extend. The district is however largely inaccessible by railway, and as the principal lines of travel for a presiding elder are east and west, it necessitates the frequent crossing of the ridges.

Our brethren have generally performed their work faithfully and loyally; and though somewhat distracted and annoyed by the agitation concerning Conference boundaries, have patiently awaited the issue, prepared to serve God and the Church whenever the lines might be drawn, devoutly praying that the time may soon come when this question may be settled amicable, justly and forever.

For over 70 years, the northern tier west of US route 15 remained in the Genesee Conference while the eastern portion was part of the Central New York Conference. The following map illustrates this long-standing arrangement. It is taken from a larger map entitled "Map of the Fifteen Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church Located Wholly or in Part within the State of Pennsylvania" that was constructed by W.A. Carver for the denomination's 1900 Pennsylvania State Convention. While the map does contain a few inaccuracies, it is the only such definitive presentation of turn-of-the-century Pennsylvania Methodism. Station appointments are named on the map. Circuit appointments are numbered and explained on the two-page key that follows.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCHES, 1900

Potter, Tioga, western Bradford, and Sullivan counties



Key to Map: Methodist Episcopal Churches
in Potter, Tioga, western Bradford, and Sullivan counties, 1900

* This charge also includes appointments in New York state or in other Pennsylvania counties

Genesee Conference: 23 rural charges

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Honeoye <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Honeoye b. Shingle House 2. *Standards and Genesee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Genesee 3. *Whitesville <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. North Bingham 4. Harrison Valley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. North Fork b. Mills c. Harrison Valley d. Potterbrook 5. *Troupsburg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Brookfield 6. Knoxville <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Austinburg b. Knoxville 7. Elkland and Osceola <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Elkland b. Osceola 8. Nelson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nelson b. Pleasant Valley 9. Lawrenceville <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Lawrenceville b. Tompkins 10. Oswayo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ellisburg b. Oswayo c. [unnamed] d. Colsburg 11. Gold <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Keech b. Newfield c. Gold d. Raymond 12. Westfield <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Westfield b. Cowanesque | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Little Marsh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. [unnamed] b. [unnamed] c. Little Marsh 14. Keeneyville <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Middleburg b. Keeneyville c. Niles Valley 15. Tioga <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Farmington b. Tioga 16. Roulette <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Roulette b. Mina 17. Sweden Valley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sweden Valley b. Odin 18. Gaines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gaines b. Marshfield 19. Ansonia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Asaph b. March Creek c. Ansonia d. Pine Grove 20. Delmar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Delmar b. Middle Ridge c. Stony Fork 21. Round Top <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Coolidge b. Round Top 22. East Charleston <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. East Charleston b. Catlin c. Cherry Falls 23. Covington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Lamb's Creek b. Covington |
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Note: The northwest corner of Potter county covered by the Honeoye and Oswayo charges was placed with the Erie Conference when the conference boundaries were adjusted effective in 1962 to coincide with state lines.

Central New York Conference: 19 rural charges

1. Millerton
 - a. Millerton
 - b. Tioga Junction
 - c. Jackson Centre
2. Daggett's and Webb's
 - a. Mosherville
 - b. Judson Hill
 - c. Daggett's Mills
3. *Chemung
 - a. Wilawana
4. Rutland
 - a. Lawrence Corners
 - b. Rutland
 - c. Austinville
 - d. Rutland Hill
5. East Smithfield
 - a. East Smithfield
 - b. Big Pond
6. Ulster and Milan
 - a. Milan
 - b. Ulster
7. Mainesburg
 - a. Elk Run
 - b. Mainesburg
 - c. State Road
8. Troy
 - a. Columbia Cross Roads
 - b. Troy
9. Leona and Wetona
 - a. Wetona
 - b. Leona
 - c. Mt. Pisgah
10. East Troy and West Burlington
 - a. West Burlington
 - b. East Troy
11. Burlington and Fairview
 - a. Burlington
 - b. Fairview
 - c. West Franklin
12. North Towanda
 - a. Luther's Mills
 - b. North Towanda
13. Canton
 - a. Ward
 - b. Canton
 - c. Rockwell Memorial
14. East Canton
 - a. West Granville
 - b. East Canton
 - c. West Leroy
15. Monroeton
 - a. Monroeton
 - b. Greenwood
16. Liberty Corners and Asylum
 - a. Liberty Corners
 - b. Asylum
17. New Albany and Overton
 - a. Overton
 - b. New Albany
18. New Era and Hollenback
 - a. Terrytown
 - b. Sugar Run
 - c. New Era
 - d. Wilmot
 - e. Hollenback
19. Forksville
 - a. Center
 - b. Bethel
 - c. Estella
 - d. Forksville
 - e. Hillsgrove

Central Penna Conference: 7 rural charges

1. *Gardeau
 - a. Keating Summit
2. Nelson's Run
 - a. Hull
 - b. Logue
 - c. Wharton
3. *Cross Fork
 - a. Cross Fork
4. *Blackwell
 - a. Leetonia
 - b. Blackwell
5. Liberty Valley
 - a. Nauvoo
 - b. Liberty
6. Laporte
 - a. Cherry Grove
 - b. Laporte
7. Muncy Valley
 - a. Sonestown
 - b. Muncy Valley

Note: The 1948 NE Jurisdictional Conference moved Hollenback of the New Era charge from Central New York to Wyoming Conference. Wilawana remained with

the Chemung NY charge as an exception to the 1962 re-alignment along state lines.

The southeasternmost portion of the above area came into our conference effective June 1, 1952, when the Northeast Jurisdictional Conference transferred all Central New York Conference churches in Sullivan county into the Central Pennsylvania Conference. Specifically, this included the Forksville charge of Bethel, Estella, Forksville and Hillsgrove. Interestingly, one of the Central New York Conference's two camps was Camp Loyalsock, which was in Sullivan county. Even though the camp was within walking distance of the Forksville church, and now within the bounds of the Central Pennsylvania Conference, it remained the property of its former conference until it was sold to Central Pennsylvania in 1960.

This arrangement was finally ended by further 1960 Northeast Jurisdiction Conference action that fixed most conference boundaries to coincide with appropriate state boundaries effective June 1, 1962. It was then that the Genesee and Central New York Conferences surrendered their last Pennsylvania churches (west and east of US route 15 respectively) to the Central Pennsylvania Conference. With the addition of former EUB congregations in the Sweden Valley and Liberty areas, and the Morris and Austin-Costello area charges that were part of Central Pennsylvania Conference's territory since 1820, these churches form the present Wellsboro district.

The debate at the 1960 jurisdictional meeting regarding fixing the conference boundary at the state line, however, was considerable -- mostly in the form of protests from the New York conferences. In their annual sessions a vote of non-concurrence with the proposed transfers was narrowly defeated by the Genesee Conference and passed by the Central New York Conference. The following are typical of comments made in support of an amendment to stop the transfer of Pennsylvania churches from the Genesee and Central New York conferences to the Erie and Central Pennsylvania conferences:

page 98: *I happen to represent several thousands of Methodists that are in that section below the New York and Pennsylvania boundary and which is also north of the Allegheny Divide. Long before Methodists thought of drawing a line, God drew a line, the Allegheny Divide. (laughter) Francis Asbury and his successors recognized the wisdom of that line and it has served well in the years since...*

In talking with the laymen in our own church, a church of 1,300 members, I have yet to find one member who is in favor of this transfer. Every one of them have indicated that they much prefer to stay with the Genesee Conference, in our case because all our relationship and dealings are with those communities across the state line -- economically, culturally, traditionally, socially, and psychologically. For one reason the state line puts us in Pennsylvania, but I have been preaching the separation of Church and State for all my ministry (laughter), and I see no reason to change that now, Thank you. (applause)

page 101: *As a layman, I have examined this report with slight amazement. In my business activity, I have to do with marketing and marketing areas and trading areas. I am unable to understand why Conference boundaries should be set on the basis of what some surveyor made out, based on what the King of England granted to*

so-and-so 200 years ago. (applause)

In the end, reasons supporting the wisdom of the transfer prevailed and the move was approved. Two factors that helped sway the body into accepting the original report. (1) The fact that it was not blindly committed to state lines and recommended preserving the historic two-state Wyoming Conference. (2) The spirit of the Erie Conference, which came to the jurisdictional meeting with an unselfish proposal to sacrifice its own existence for the greater good of Methodism.

The original report proposed rearranging the Erie, Central Pennsylvania, Genesee and Central New York conference boundaries along state lines and so that each conference would emerge with approximately the same membership as before the transfers. Since Erie would be giving up so many New York churches, the original report placed the Erie-Central PA boundary quite a bit to the east to compensate the Erie Conference in two ways. (1) All the Genesee Conference churches in Potter county, and Brookfield and Potter Brook in northwest Tioga county, were to transfer to the Erie Conference. (2) All the Central Pennsylvania Conference churches in Potter, Cameron and most of Clearfield (as far east as Wallaceton) counties were to transfer the Erie Conference.

At the jurisdictional meeting of 1960, the Boundary Committee presented an amendment to their original report that kept the Erie-Central PA boundary approximately as it was -- transferring only the Elk county charges of St. Mary's and Benezette (which also reached into the northwest corner of Clearfield county) from Central PA to Erie and awarding Central PA all except the northwest corner (Shinglehouse charge) of Potter county. Appearing on page 106, that statement reads as follows:

I should like to say a word on behalf of the Committee. This is probably an oversimplification of this amendment, but it comes to this: that the Central Pennsylvania and Erie delegations have gotten together and have agreed to a redrafting of the line between Central Pennsylvania and Erie Conferences in Pennsylvania... It favors Central Pennsylvania, which Erie graciously conceded to on the assumption that it will be authorized to merge with Pittsburgh. And the subject of the ultimate will of this body the Committee is quite willing to accept.

The actual Wellsboro district, however, was not formed until the 1968 union that created the United Methodist denomination, and the manner in which northern tier Methodism was incorporated into the existing Central Pennsylvania Conference makes an interesting story. In their New York conferences, the transferring congregations had been parts of three districts. It was first decided that their equity in their former district parsonages would be determined using the ratio of the transferred membership of the churches involved to the total membership of the districts from which these churches would come. That formula generated a total of \$15,709.96 to be received by the Central Pennsylvania Conference from the Genesee and Central New York bodies.

This amount would be applied toward the new district necessitated by the influx of the former New York churches. In recent years the Central Pennsylvania Conference had consisted of four districts: Altoona, Harrisburg, Sunbury and Williamsport. Geographic considerations made it obvious that the new district should cover the northwest portion of the conferences. A "Memorandum from the District Superintendents" in the conference archives includes the following items:

4. With the exception of three charges in the northwestern corner of Potter County, all of the new churches coming into the Central Pennsylvania Conference will be included in the Williamsport District. The three charges, Coudersport, Roulette and Shinglehouse, have as close ties to the Emporium-Clearfield area as they have to the Williamsport area. We feel this constitutes no serious problem of morale.

5. Clearfield has been suggested as the center of the new district because it is closer to all points of the new district than any other center suggested. Living conditions in Clearfield area are good and considerably less expensive than in the State College-Bellefonte area.

The official resolution presented to the 1961 annual conference, however, recommended only that one new district be created and noted that the *Discipline* assigns to the bishop the responsibility of determining district boundary lines. The final report to the 1962 annual conference introduced the new district as follows:

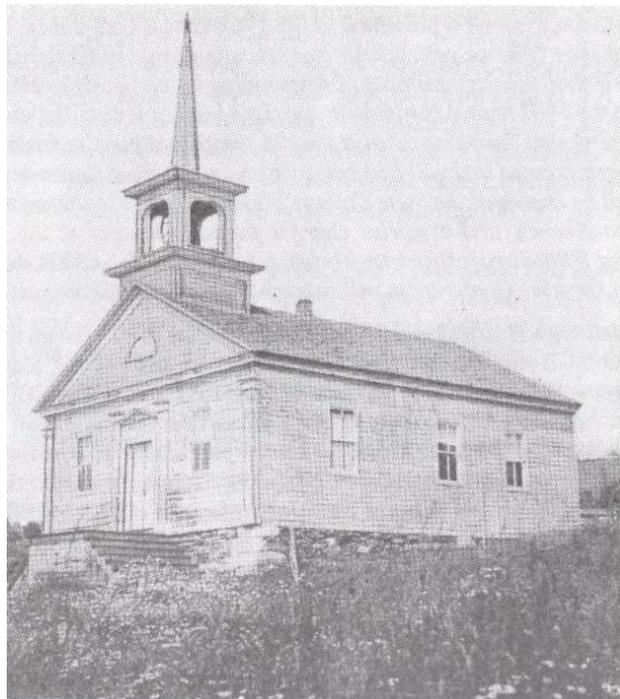
In keeping with the action taken at the 1961 session of our Conference, a fifth district has been created and will become operative upon the adjournment of this session. It will be known as the State College District, located in the north central part of the conference, and comprise charges formerly located in the Altoona, Harrisburg and Williamsport Districts. The churches coming to us from the Central New York and Genesee Conferences will become part of the Williamsport District.

The Wellsboro District formally came into existence in 1970 when the former Methodist and EUB conferences first met together as the present nine-district Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. The EUB (former Evangelical) charges at Liberty (Tioga county) and Grover (Bradford and Sullivan counties) joined their northern tier Methodist counterparts under the superintendency of D. Rayborn Higgins. In 1982 the United Methodist Church transferred the former EUB congregations (originally a part of the Erie Conference of the United Brethren denomination) at Prouty and Sweden Valley to the Wellsboro District from the Western Pennsylvania Conference. Well within the boundaries of our conference, and surrounded by Central PA congregations, these two churches appear to have been misplaced during the re-alignments caused by the 1968 Methodist-EUB union.

The conference and denominational dynamics outlined above can make tracing the histories of individual Wellsboro District congregations challenging. While the 1900 map of Methodist Episcopal congregations shows a Tioga County Liberty charge with congregations at Liberty and Nauvoo, for example, those are not the present Liberty and Nauvoo United Methodist congregations of today. The

Methodist work in those communities died out, and the surviving congregations are those from the Evangelical side of the EUB denomination. But because of a split in the Evangelical denomination, the church in Liberty is not even the original congregation of that denomination. The present United Methodist church is the former United Evangelical building. Below is a rare picture of the original Evangelical Association building, which stood by the cemetery behind B&D Trucking. It was moved by the Association to South Union Center following the 1894 split, did not prosper, and is now the town hall.

While an accurate rendering of the development of the Wellsboro district requires the full text of the preceding paragraphs, the story is usually summarized by stating the churches west of US route 15 came from the Genesee Conference and those to the east came from the Central New York Conference. Following this simplification, THE CHRONICLE presents a mini-collection of interesting stories from those two conferences.



Evangelical Association Church at Liberty, Pa.

Genesee Conference

A. Gilbert Anderson: The Sleeping Preacher

[The following account is taken verbatim from F.W. Conable's History of the Genesee Conference 1810-1872. It is attributed to Rev. William D. Buck, the preacher appointed to the Lewiston (NY) Circuit in 1837. Even though none of the characters involved have any connection to Central Pennsylvania, the material is presented as an interesting bit of early nineteenth century Methodism. It concerns Gilbert Anderson, former leader of a Methodist Episcopal class in Vermont. Having moved to New York, he drifted into and was reclaimed from "a fearfully backslidden state" to become leader of a class near Wilson NY.]

His own sister, with whom he boarded, a truthful and pious member of our church, stated the following remarkable facts to me concerning her brother Gilbert. He used to preach every night in his sleep! People from all parts, within twenty miles, came and crowded the house to hear him preach in his sleep. Many were awakened under his sermons, who soon gave their hearts to God. After preaching he usually held a class-meeting, which he led in his sleep. He always had something appropriate to say to each one speaking. For the purpose of testing him some would advance an erroneous sentiment, but he always refuted it, and left not a vestige of the error unscathed. God spoke through the sleeper as though he were awake, and his class meetings were times of refreshing. "And," said his sister, "some of the happiest class-meetings I ever attended were led by Gilbert while he was asleep."

Moving from Vermont into the neighborhood where I met him, there being no meeting there, and no Christian society, he wandered from God, and ceased to preach in his sleep. But in our glorious revival he came out bright and clear in the grace of God, and was a gifted and efficient leader of the new class.

No sooner was he restored to the favor of God than he began to preach again in his sleep. But preaching in the posture of a sleeper, with his heavy voice and vehement manner, injured his health, and his sister used to wake him when he began to preach.

One night after meeting, while walking by his side, I said to him, "Gilbert, you have heard me preach a number of times when I was awake, and I am going to hear you preach once while you are asleep." On retiring to our sleeping-room I requested his sister not to awaken him if he began to preach, for I must hear him.

I intended to keep awake, but, being much fatigued, I fell asleep. It was not long, however, before I was awakened by his strong voice: he was offering his first prayer. He devoutly thanked God for permitting him to see another Sabbath day, and besought him to bless the congregation assembled before him.

After prayer he gave out a hymn; then, after waiting long enough for it to be

sung, he announced the text, Proverbs 21:12,13: "The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness. Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall also cry himself, but shall not be heard."

Then he went on to preach a solemn, earnest sermon. There lay his body by my side, still as a corpse, except the tremor which his heavy voice produced, and yet all the powers of his soul were awake: now gathering facts from ages long past, then describing scenes of coming judgment, or picturing the fearful state of a sinner lost; then ending the sermon with solemn appeals that should make the stoutest heart to quail. Never shall I forget the impressions that sermon made on my own heart. If up to that hour I had doubted the immortality of the human soul, my doubts would have fled under that sermon like the mists of the mountain before the rising sun.

After the sermon he gave out a hymn, then all was silent for a few moments. Then he gave out an appointment to preach there in two weeks from that day, and the meeting was ended. But as if someone had said to him, "Stay to class," he said, "No, I must go," and began to move his feet like one starting on a walk.

In the morning while he was dressing he groaned and looked tired, like one who had worked hard during the night. He knew he had been preaching. I took the Bible and hymn book to find the text and hymns he had used. I turned to the book, chapter, and verses that he had mentioned, and there was his text just as he had read it. I turned to the pages in the hymn book he had named, and there were the hymns just as he had paged and read them in the darkness of our sleeping room.

"Gilbert," said I, "do you know what text is in Proverbs, twenty-first chapter, and twelfth and thirteenth verses?"

"No," he said.

"Do you know what hymns are on such and such a page?"

He said, "No."

How strange! He could see and read them correctly when his eyes were closed in the darkness of sleep, but knew nothing about them when awake! Well, he was a pure, conscientious young man, and a faithful and successful class leader. He would never consent to take license to preach or exhort in Vermont; but when I urged him to accept it, telling him if he would only preach when he was awake perhaps the Lord would not require him to preach in his sleep, he accepted of a license, appointed meetings, drew crowds, and gave great satisfaction and much promise of usefulness in the future.

But how mysterious are the ways of Providence! While I was gone to Conference my precious friend Gilbert was taken ill, and suddenly died. But his death was more than peaceful; it was glorious, it was triumphant.

B. Owen Goodman: The Reading Preacher

[This paper is selected sections of a remarkable letter written August 7, 1903, by an unnamed elderly lady in Mifflinburg to her male cousin in Chicago. It tells of their uncle, Rev. Owen M. Goodman, who moved from Columbia in Lancaster County to Pike's Mills (now Galeton) in Potter County to be the superintendent of the first lumber mill in that northern tier county. A local preacher, he started the Methodist work in the region by reading Wesley's sermon's to congregations consisting of his mill hands and their families. Rev. Goodman is buried in Wellsboro. The entire letter of 17 full-sized pages is on file at the conference archives, but the identity of the author and how the letter was obtained are not known. Four Goodman siblings are mentioned in the portion of the letter here reproduced -- the mother of the author, the father of the recipient, a female who married a Mr. Davis, and Uncle Owen.]

Mr. James B. Goodman
Corner, Van Buren and Dearborn Streets
Chicago, Ill.

Mifflinburg, Pa.
August 7, 1903

Dear Cousin,

At last, I have an opportunity of writing you the historical letter that I promised you some years ago. The first I remember of Uncle Owen was he moved to his house on Front Street in Columbia by the lumber yards of Mr. Abraham Brunner. The front was a flower garden, as he was fond of flowers, and he had roses cultivated in the yard. I remember him cultivating those roses, and when Cassy was a little girl she played in that yard with your father.

As I remember uncle he was a lumber inspector for the firm while living in Columbia, and he had his office in the front of the lumber yard. He had been a teacher. As summer was a dull time, he had a school house built to the rear of his office. There he taught private school during the summer. I would go in, too, and sometimes I would be in the ABC class. Little by little I learned to read by the time I was five years old.

Sometimes he had to leave his school and write for business men who came into the office. He had a smooth plain handwriting, and I know he had a great deal of writing to do for them. He must have had some knowledge of the law, too, for I remember that he would "talk law" for other men when he was engaged to do so. He was also called upon to speak in the ME Church in Columbia when the minister was away. I remember he had a volume of Wesley's sermons and stood inside the railing and read one to the congregation, as that was the custom at that time. He was the leader of the choir in the choir-loft in the rear of the church, and the first time I saw your mother she was with him and her sister Mary, afterwards Mrs. Robinson, in the choir. Thus you may know that he was a prominent man, both in business and in the church affairs, and he became the leading man in the whole eastern part of Potter County. He was often called to the county seat to speak at political meetings.

I must tell of Oxford where uncle was educated. It was an old-fashioned select school carried on by Friends, as the Quakers were then called. I saw his manuscripts of essays, and they seemed all to be written in a fine hand. He must have been very well educated, and for that reason I think we was selected to go to Potter County to take charge of the business there. He chose his brother-in-law, Uncle Davis, for his foreman to assist him.

I was away from home when cousin Cassy died, and when I returned home and found her gone I could hardly be comforted. After moving to Front Street, right in the ague section, we were all ill with that disease as long as we were there. I think the unhealthy condition of that part of the town was one reason why your mother was wanting to go to Potter County with uncle. As we would be together more by moving there, Aunt Susan insisted that my mother must go to that lonely country with her. It certainly would, in these days, seem as if one were going to Alaska. It was in the deep woods, and Columbia was then a prosperous town of about 8000. Your father and my mother were raised in Reading and knew very little of the country, and still less of the woods.

They moved earlier than your mother could go, it being the first week of April 1839. The weather was cold and the trip a long one, for we had to go in a boat called a packet. If I explain some things that seem irrelevant, it is to show what kind of a life we had to live then and the sacrifices your father and mother had to make in changing from Columbia to the wilds of northern Pennsylvania. It was something to see the people that came to us when we were leaving, for they never expected to see us again, and they had to bring presents for the little children. They brought us cups to drink the "canawl" water, as they called it.

It took six days to go from Columbia to the place called Pike Mills, on the line between Tioga and Potter counties. We started in the evening. The next morning at Harrisburg we found the boat covered with ice. It was Saturday before we reached Williamsport. There we had to stay over Sunday, and we nearly all had the ague. We stayed in Williamsport until Tuesday. Then we took teams and traveled to Covington. The only thing I remember was lying in the wagon with a chill. I had several days of fever. I remember taking dinner in Wellsboro at a hotel, and we had to stand around the table. We had only a few minutes, for if we wanted to reach Pike Mills that evening we had to hurry.

It was nearly dark when we reached there, and the only sign of life was a dog with his head reaching out of a hole down below the latch of a door. The men that were working in the old mill were all that were in the place. There were only two houses and a couple of shanties for us to live in, and for the carpenters who had then commenced your father's house. Mr. Abram Metsgar who had moved from Darrstown (now called Lewisburg) was one of the carpenters. It was a clap-board shanty with a slab floor that we went into that evening, and one having a hole in the side of it large enough for the back log to be drawn in to the fire. But for some reason the one that was in would not burn, and as the evening was chilly the teamsters heaped on hemlock branches. That scattered sparks all around, and

therefore none of us could get near enough for warmth. We were so tired and sleepy that we lay down on the rough floor, and I do not think that we got anything for supper.

Having two rooms, that shanty was supposed to be better than the others. It had a narrow rough porch in front with a flight of steps. I remember we were awakened and saw mother and Aunt Davis taking some bed clothes and putting them on the bed the teamsters had helped uncle to make, the entire length of the inside room, of rough boards. In the night we were awakened by a commotion and found that sparks from the fresh branches the men had put on the fire before they retired had set fire to their bed. But it was soon put out, and we were not disturbed again until morning. While mother and aunt were getting breakfast and we children were playing on the long bed, a bear came in through the open window. We all screamed with terror, and its owner came in and took it out.

For a long time we had no store or farm to go to for supplies. Everything had to be brought in from Wellsboro, 25 miles away. But soon after we got there, a fish box was rigged out on the chute of the mill dam and we had a supply of trout from then on -- if we could keep the old man with the bear from taking them. Trout was something new to us, and it was considered a treat. When we children wanted a piece, we were given baked trout -- it had few bones and made a very nice lunch. I remember when the raspberries were ripe that they were all we had for dinner one day -- with milk and maple sugar. Then the team returned that evening with supplies from Wellsboro, and we tasted molasses for the first time since leaving Columbia.

In the latter part of July your father came up with furniture and other things, and after that we were more comfortable. But Aunt Davis was so discouraged that once when the teams came she quietly got herself and the children ready and returned with them. It was her only chance, for as yet there were no horses at the place -- only oxen. Uncle Davis could not go until someone would come to take his place.

Then the new house was ready to move into, and we never occupied the shanty again. Another new house went up, so the foreman who came after Uncle Davis could live in it. Then it seemed not more than a year before other new houses, a blacksmith shop, a store, and a barn -- the largest the people there had ever seen -- were erected. Uncle's first pair of horses were not safe, for an attempt was made to steal them. When that failed, the shed door was broken open and they both were stabbed. One died, but the other one -- your mother's riding horse -- recovered and was there yet when I left in the fall of 1845.

All that summer we never had any church services. The people seemed not to know anything of Sundays. Little by little the people came to respect uncle's views, and before another year a building was put up on the hillside for a church and school house. Then, at his own expense, he had a Methodist minister to come there and hold services. He himself drilled the choir of young people to sing.

Previous to that time a minister would come and preach in one of the houses. The rooms would all be full. Aunt had a very pretty lounge in the front room, and the women would all crowd around that. It was amazing to see the women make a

run for the Boston rocking-chair. Many of them had never known anything of a splint-bottom. When you would see how they lived in their own homes with few comforts of life, you would not wonder at their actions in a house carpeted and with cushioned seats. Certainly we were disgusted with such shiftless people, and we could not think that we were there to stay as long as we did. Every few months we would talk of going back. But it was difficult to get away, for the business was paying well.

The post office was given to uncle that first summer. Before that the only farmer in the neighborhood -- and a very poor one at that -- had had the only post office for about twenty miles around. The mail delivery was only once a week each way. Most of the contents of the mail bags were for uncle as manager of the mills. Being postmaster, he received many sample papers from all over the country. He took quite a number of papers himself and had a good library, and so there was plenty of reading matter for the whole family.

I think you remember something of the rafting that was done at your father's. The lumber was put together in squares that were called rafts. Sometimes the creek would be covered with them before the water was high enough to carry them. Six men with long poles would get on. Sometimes the straps would open as they went over whirlpools and spill all the men into the water. I remember one very tall man with a very red head. He had been clerking at your father's store and thought he would like to take a trip down the river. Soon he was over a shoot and in the water. One man saw his red hair and pulled him out. He said that was enough for him, and he returned to go on his travels some other way.

When these rafts would get to the main river, they were joined together till there were six or eight on one large raft on the smooth surface of the Susquehanna. I do not know how long it took them to get to Columbia. It must have been some trouble for your father to oversee all those workmen. When the rafts were ready he had to go with them, leaving the clerk in charge of the store.

Uncle had to go back and forth to Columbia frequently, and I think the trips must have been hard on him. In the spring he would go down on the rafts -- where there were no comforts, no blankets and no fire. There may have been times when he could have tied up at night and gone to a hotel, but there was not a tying up place everywhere they went. In the summer he went only as far as Covington with his own team. From there he would take the stage for Williamsport. Sometimes I remember the men had to get out and walk, for the stage itself was enough for the four horses. The roads should have been called stone-pikes instead of turn-pikes, for they were rocky and full of ruts.

I left in the fall of 1845, for there had been so few children that the schools could not be kept up. You were not yet old enough for school, Robert was a little fellow, and Mary was quite a baby.

In the spring of 1898 I passed through what once was Pike Mills, now Galeton, which about a year ago became famous on account of the oil wells opening there. I was on my way to Cleveland and asked the conductor to tell me when we

reached the county line. Imagine my surprise when he said we would stop there, and I found out that it was Galeton. I had about 20 minutes to wait while they took on water. All I saw was a large factory with some small works attached to it and operated by steam. They were so extensive that they took up all the space that was once the mill pond. The hills around seemed not to be cultivated, and there were very few buildings around. The depot was the only good building there.

Nothing was there that showed what kind of place had been in existence. Three miles west, where the Metsgar mansion was, there was nothing but grazing land. The railroad had not passed through Coudersport, but went south to Emporium -- so that was all I saw of Potter County. If you would only come east I would like to go with you to see uncle's grave. Wellsboro is a much busier town than it was then.

Your Cousin

C. Caleb Boyer: The Disappearing Preacher

It is sometimes interesting to examine a prominent group of historical figures, for example the signers of the Declaration of Independence, to determine what happened to them after and/or because of the particular phenomenon that brought them together. Such is the case of the famous Christmas Conference of 1784 that created the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Who were these first itinerant preachers that gathered in Baltimore's Lovely Lane Chapel to organize a new denomination and elect Francis Asbury as its first bishop? and what happened to them?

One of them was Rev. Caleb Boyer, who was formally ordained along with Bishop Asbury at the Christmas Conference. This means that he was one of the first elders ever ordained in American Methodism. For some reason he left the itinerant ministry and located in Tioga County. Shortly after 1800 he was one of the first white settlers in Delmar township, near Wellsboro.

It is not known how long he stayed in the area or what was his ultimate fate, and no church records document his religious influence here. It is safe to assume, however, that he shared the gospel as a self-appointed local preacher. R.C. Brown's 1897 history of Tioga County states the following:

From the meager records that have been preserved, it appears that Rev. Caleb Boyer and family came from Delaware, together with several other families, and settled near where Wellsboro now stands about 1802. They belonged to the Delaware contingent attracted by the Pine Creek Land Company.

History informs us that Rev. Boyer was one of the fifteen ordained ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church then in North America. He did the first preaching in Wellsboro and vicinity. Meetings were held in private houses, but it was some years before an organization was effected. Mr. Boyer, however, may be

regarded as the pioneer Methodist preacher in what afterwards became Tioga County.

The "History of Methodism in Wellsboro 1820-1984" produced by the congregation for the Methodist bicentennial states Mrs. Hannah Jackson, still living in 1870 at the age of 87, said that about the year 1801 or 1802 her father, James Dixson of Cantwell Bridge in Maryland, came with Rev. Caleb Boyer of Delaware and several other families to make a permanent settlement in Delmar, which they named for the two states from which most of the families originated. This was before Tioga County was formed from Lycoming County in 1804, and there was reported to be but two small parcels of cleared land in the entire future county -- one at Lawrenceville and one in the Cowanesque Valley.

The official record of Caleb Boyer is as follows, bearing in mind that the Methodist Episcopal denomination and ordination was not instituted until 1784.

1780 - admitted on trial as a preacher agreeing with Methodist doctrines

1781 - listed equally with Francis Asbury, Freeborn Garrettson and others as a preacher "now determined, after mature consideration, close observation, and earnest prayer, to preach the old Methodist doctrine, and strictly enforce the discipline, as contained in the Notes, Sermons, and Minutes published by Mr. Wesley."

1782 - officially "admitted into connection" and assigned to Pittsylvania circuit

1783 - assigned Hanover circuit

1784 - assigned Annamessex circuit

1784 Christmas Conference - in the first class of ordained elders

1785 - presiding elder over 4 circuits in Delaware

1786 - presiding elder over the Philadelphia and Little York (PA) circuits

1787 - presiding elder over 2 circuits in Virginia

1788 - one of 6 receiving "partial location on account of their families, and are subject to the order of Conference"

Almost all the early itinerants were unmarried. It was not uncommon for an itinerant to be "located" and settle down once he was married. Such persons typically engaged in an occupation to support their family, were not a part of the appointment process, and continued to assist during the absence of the assigned elder in their own and nearby congregations. Although no definitive records have been located, Caleb Boyer seems to have remained in this "located elder" status the rest of his life.

D. William Armstrong: The Reconsidering Preacher

[Admitted to the Conference in 1854, Rev. Armstrong was a proper and hard-working Scotsman unfamiliar with life in mid nineteenth century northern Pennsylvania. Following is his own account of several incidents on his first appointment -- at Brookfield, Tioga County. His reconsideration of a sermon on proper Methodist dress depicts the difference between urban and frontier Methodism. It is taken from Hibbard's 1887 History of the Late Genesee Conference.]

I lived at Westfield, in one room, with a large fire-place in one end and two beds curtained off at the other. I had ten preaching appointments, preaching in each once in two weeks. These were: Westfield, Lower Northfork, Upper Northfork, Plant School-house, Potter Street, White School-house, State Road, Creek, Harrison Valley, and the school-house south of Brookfield.

The country was very new and the people very poor. I was a verdant Scotchman, unused to the wilds, fond of romance. There was plenty of labor to do among these noisy Methodists. One Sabbath afternoon about Christmas, going home to dinner with one of my stewards, he informed me that he had been collecting quarterage. He took me into another room and uncovered a bushel-and-a-half basket, which was heaping with more kinds than a Scotch *hotchpotch*. There was beef *intil't* [Scotch: "into it"], and mutton *intil't*, and pork *intil't*, and chicken *intil't*, and sausage *intil't*, and venison *intil't*. The country was wild, especially at the south. Several times I heard the wolves howl, and venison was cheaper than pork. There was not much need of study. A good warm exhortation was sure to strike fire.

I tried once to preach on dress, or rather, as the Discipline recommended, read Mr. Wesley's sermon on dress. The only attempt was on Saturday evening, when I preached to the poorest class on the charge. We always had a happy time at that meeting. That evening the people were out as usual in force. No storm ever kept them in. It was in the summer, and half of the men were in their shirt sleeves, some of the grown boys barefooted, and the costliest dress of the women was of calico, even their bonnets. That evening there were no responses. Everything was dead. In the midst of the sermon the folly of the whole evening struck me -- So the people don't dress well enough; what folly to read this to them! I shut the book and gave them a good exhortation. Presto, what a change! "Amen!" and "Praise the Lord!" and "Glory to God!" went up all over the house.

Next year, anxious to take that country for God and Methodism, at my request a young married man was sent to my help. We had 18 preaching places, and held that winter 6 protracted meetings, beginning in October and ending in April. Many souls were converted, and some of them became leading members of the church. That year I kept an account of the kind of things I received in the name of salary. Only about \$25 in money was given, and the rest was in various kinds -- among them 200 bushels of buckwheat, which I traded at the store, there being no cash market for it.

Central New York Conference

A. The Carbon Run Church

The following statement is taken from the 1881 report of superintendent CC. Wilbur of the Elmira District, of which all the conference's Pennsylvania churches were members.

A church at Carbon Run near East Canton charge, formerly of the Evangelical Association, on their own motion applied for admission into our Church, having taken legal steps to transfer to us their church property, consisting of an edifice nearly new. This work having been satisfactorily accomplished, they have been received, and will hereafter constitute a new charge.

From 1881 to 1884, the conference journals contain the following information about the charge.

<i>year</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>assigned pastor</i>	<i>churches</i>	<i>members</i>
1881	Carbon Run	To Be Supplied	[new charge, no report]	
1882	Carbon Run	C.E. Ferguson	1	31
1883	West Franklin	C.E. Ferguson	2	55
1884	[not a charge, no assignment]		1	45

Behind those statements, however, lie some interesting stories.

Who was C.E. Ferguson? When the eastern portion of the Genesee Conference's Troy district was given to the Central New York Conference in 1880, Colson E. Ferguson was a licensed local preacher living in Ulster. In 1881 his new conference began listing him as a local deacon, even though he does not appear to have been formally elected or ordained to that office. In 1884 he was elected and ordained as a local elder, but not given a formal assignment. In 1885 and 1886 he was assigned to supply Chemung. Beginning in 1887 he no longer appears on the conference rolls -- with no mention of his death, transfer or change of status.

[Note: C.E. Ferguson is not to be confused with John L. Ferguson, as was done in the 1978 "75th Anniversary History of the Burlington United Methodist Church." The latter was a local pastor living in Granville Summit who was first licensed in 1885 and who assisted C.M. Adams on the Burlington charge that year.]

What was the second church added to the charge? Sometime during 1882 C.E. Ferguson established an appointment at the union church in West Franklin and organized a congregation there. It soon became clear that West Franklin and not Carbon Run was destined to be the stronger congregation, and the name of the charge was changed accordingly. Because a significant number in West Franklin embraced non-Methodist doctrines and practices, however, meeting in a union church building was not ideal. A 1962 paper on "Early Methodists in Bradford County" by Miss Clara A. Smiley contains the following statement.

The West Franklin Methodist Church has had an interesting history. The church first built there was open to any congregation who wished to worship. Under

these conditions things did not work so well, and in 1884 a new church was built by the Methodists. Furniture used in this church came from the old Barclay Church.

What happened to the charge in 1884, and why did the report include only one church instead of two? The church at Carbon Run was also known as the Barclay Church. In 1884 the Barclay Church was closed, its furniture given to the new building at West Franklin, and West Franklin was attached to the Burlington charge. The 1884 report of superintendent W.R. Benham of the Elmira District reported the events as follows -- and spared no words describing the union situation at West Franklin that "did not work so well."

At Carbon Run, the coal being nearly exhausted, the miners were obliged to desert their loved church, so generously sustained by them, and seek new homes. Now the mountain church has been taken down and rebuilt in the valley, some eight miles away, on the east [sic] border of the Burlington charge. Then the new church at Franklin burned, and only for a few great hearted people led by a wise and earnest pastor, our cause was ended there. Now, in the ashes, stands a new edifice, beautiful and commodious, and dedicated free of debt. Its cost was about \$2000. The gospel here has now a certain sound. No noise jarring sects will echo in this temple, for not only are its acoustics perfect, but it is a Methodist Episcopal church, and distant be the day when our heritage shall be marred by another ecclesiastical Babel baptized a union church.

That still leaves one unanswered question. At what location "in the valley some eight miles away" was the Carbon Run church, the former Evangelical Association building described as "an edifice nearly new" in 1881, reconstructed? The Methodist Episcopal erected a church in West Burlington in 1857, at which point worship in the still standing 1822 "Old Burlington" church was discontinued. In 1882 the Methodist Protestants erected the Hickory Grove church, near the school



Hickory Grove Methodist Protestant Church
in use approximately 1882-1891

house of that name a short distance southeast of West Burlington. Even though it was close to West Burlington, the Hickory Grove area showed promise -- and, of course, the Methodist Protestant presence had to be answered. It was in this area that the Carbon Run building was reconstructed as the Fairview Methodist Episcopal Church.

The first page of Sunday School records for the Fairview Church, as reported in 1978 when they were in the possession of the Marvin Darrow family, states:

August 2, 1885, a meeting of citizens convened at the new Hickory Grove ME Church to consider the propriety of organizing a Sabbath School, even at this late date in the season. Called to order by brother W. Spencer. Brother James Vroman was elected chairman and C.T. Swain, secretary pro tem. It was decided to organize Sunday School. The following named were duly elected officers for the ensuing year: superintendent, W. Spencer; secretary, R.E. Griffith; treasurer, Helen Thacker; librarian, C.T. Swain. Teachers: Orvill Fanning, Elvira Spencer, Josie Griffith, Charlotte Spencer, Mary Griffith, R.E. Griffith, H. Spencer, C.M. Fanning and C.T. Swain. ["This late date in the season" refers to the fact that it was customary to reorganize Sunday School each spring when the weather broke, continue meeting until the first snows of the late fall made travel impractical, and then disband for the winter.]



Fairview Methodist Church at Hickory Grove,
formerly the Evangelical Association building at Carbon Run

Fairview was part of the Burlington charge from 1884 until 1953. The 1978 "75th Anniversary History of the Burlington United Methodist Church" summarizes the story of the appointment as follows:

Preaching did not take place every Sunday. The pattern seems to be regular services at Burlington (originally in the Union Church -- at the rear of the lot now occupied by the Kenneth Case home) with alternate services at West Franklin and Fairview, weather permitting. The regular services ceased at Fairview Methodist Church in 1953. Old churches die much like others of God's servants. The only observable evidence in the conference journal is that of charge arrangements. In 1953 the Burlington charge lists Burlington, Fairview and Mountain Lake. In 1954 the list reads Burlington, Luthers Mills and Mountain Lake. Thus is the end of Fairview's services -- simply no mention.

But such is not the case of the people who shared memories of the years between 1884 and 1953 -- some 69 years. The memories sketched in this material, still viewed in the minds of living participants, tells us how important the Fairview Church was to the Hickory Grove community.

When the church was closed, many of the furnishings were dispersed. The bell disappeared, the kneeling pads are the one now used at Burlington, the communion set and the bookcase are in the parsonage.

But there remains one final question. What ultimately became of the church at West Franklin? It was on the following charges: Burlington 1884-ca1910, Monroeton ca1911-1944, East Troy 1945, Monroeton 1946, and East Canton 1947-1972. To say that the church struggled over the years would be putting it kindly. In a 1970 "Report to the Cabinet," Wellsboro superintendent D. Rayborn Higgins noted the following.

The West Franklin Church, East Canton Charge, wanted to close due to a lack of attendance. They had no services since about Thanksgiving until January 4th, when 3 people came. They called a special meeting for January 11th with the idea that they would close the church and cut out expenses, for they had not paid their conference apportionment for last year. (I was told the pastor had paid it for them.)

I suggested that their church was too beautiful to close, and after some discussion we found out they felt that a Sunday School was absolutely necessary if they were to continue. We were able to get a volunteer Sunday School superintendent, a volunteer teacher for the adults and for the children, and we persuaded a youth there to teach the youth. They had no Sunday School there for 3 years, but they will start one Sunday.

In 1972, however, the church was officially declared "discontinued" and in 1980 it was officially declared "closed." The building was offered for sale, and a bid for \$2600 was received in August 1981 from an area resident. But the conference cabinet, at their September 11 meeting, supported the recommendation of the new Wellsboro superintendent J. Carl Williams to re-open the building. Accordingly, the

trustees sent a letter to the bidder stating:

At the meeting of the Trustees of the Annual Conference, in response to a request from the Cabinet and Superintendent of the Wellsboro District, it was decided not to accept any of the bids on this church property.

We appreciate your interest in the property. But we believe at present that the best use of it... is to propose some new ministry through this church.

At the 1988 annual conference, the church was officially removed from the closed list and a congregation was organized June 12, 1988, to be supplied by a part-time pastor. In 1991 the church was declared an extended ministry of First United Methodist Church in Troy. On June 21, 1996, the following "Resolution for Discontinuance of West Franklin United Methodist Church" was prepared by Wellsboro superintendent Sharonn Halderman.

Whereas the West Franklin United Methodist Church located in Bradford County was founded in 1884 and has had a long and proud history; and,

Whereas the Charge Conference of the West Franklin United Methodist Church voted on May 19, 1996, to discontinue the church; and,

Whereas the consent of the presiding bishop, a majority of the district superintendents, and the district Board of Church Location and Building has been granted;

Therefore be it resolved that the West Franklin United Methodist Church be discontinued effective July 1, 1996, and that the local church trustees be authorized to dispose of any property necessary, settle all outstanding debts, and continue to pay the insurance premiums in order to maintain the building for occasional worship and for the operation of a clothing distribution center.

approval dates:

West Franklin Charge Conference -- May 19, 1996

Cabinet -- May 24, 1996

District Board of Church Location and Building -- June 20, 1996



Mountain Lake Methodist
Church destroyed by fire September 12, 1967

B. Early Bradford County Methodism

[This paper has been compiled from the journal of William Colbert, notes prepared by Methodist pastor-historian Charles Berkheimer, Peck's 1860 History of the Genesee Conference, Bradsby's 1891 History of Bradford County, and several other sources from the Central Pennsylvania Conference archives.]

Much of the original settlement across Pennsylvania's northern tier was done by veterans of the Revolutionary War, many of them having been officers who received grants of land for their service. In addition, some bought their land from the Connecticut Company, which had claimed the upper third of Pennsylvania as part of the State of Connecticut by a grant which they believed had precedence over the one held by William Penn. In the end there was mix of settlers from southern Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware with true "Connecticut Yankees." This accounts for the region's New England style of villages, churches, and homes.

It accounts also for many of the region's characteristics and practices that are quite distinct from those of the Pennsylvania Germans that predominated in the southern and central parts of the state and of Conference. In particular, the chief opponents of Methodism were different across the northern tier from the rest of the state. While Baptists (followers of Roger Williams from Connecticut and Rhode Island) and Universalists provided the primary competition in the north, Methodists in the rest of the state were dealing with Lutherans, Reformed and Presbyterians. The northern tier was also greatly affected by the various groups -- Mormons, Millerites, Wesleyan Methodists and Free Methodists -- that arose in the mid 1880's in New York state's famed "burned-over" district.

By the year 1792, Methodism had divided the settled frontiers into designated areas to be served by its missionaries. One such area was the area west of the Wyoming Valley -- most of the present Bradford, Sullivan and Tioga counties in Pennsylvania and Seneca and Cayuga Lake counties in New York. John Hill was the first to serve this region -- which the Methodists called the Tioga Circuit. He was aided by William Colbert, who arrived for duty in the fall of 1792 and kept a diary of his travels. He "continued on the circuit four months and received a compensation of three dollars and fourteen cents." Summing up his labors at the end of the year, Colbert said, "I have been four months and eight days on the Tioga Circuit, one of the most disagreeable places for traveling I was ever in, among a refractory sort of people. I have labored hard, lived hard, but I fear did little good. I joined but three to our society while I was there, but I think there is a prospect of good being done. May the labours of my successors be blest more than mine were."

Colbert's account of his 1792 trip up the Susquehanna from Wyalusing to Suffield's Flats (Asylum), Mr. Samuel Cole's in Macedonia and Captain Clark's in Ulster is the first documented visit of a Methodist circuit rider to western Bradford county. As he was keeping established appointments and meeting with at least organized class, however, others had certainly preceded him.

The "Father of Methodism" in Bradford County is considered to be Rev. Elisha Cole. Virtually every church organized or built in the western part of the county in the early 1800's profited from his preaching. At one time he was the only resident preacher in the county. Elisha was the son of the Samuel Cole in whose house Colbert preached. Samuel cleared a large farm shortly after the Revolutionary War in the region between Towanda and Asylum known as Macedonia. He had come from Connecticut and was a faithful Methodist, although Colbert says he was little too much attracted to Universalism.

The Coles fled the area, and nine-year-old Elisha lost a brother and a brother-in-law, during the Wyoming massacre of 1778. For the duration of the conflict the family retreated to their native Connecticut, returning to Macedonia at the close of the war. Elisha was probably converted under the circuit riders that visited his father's house. He established himself as a tanner, currier and shoemaker before entering the ministry.

While the early records are not clear, it appears that Elisha was granted an exhorter's license in 1794. He rode circuits in Maryland and Virginia, apparently as an assistant to the appointed preachers, before returning to Monroeton in 1796 to establish regular preaching services in the home of Henry Salisbury. In 1798 he married Miss Amy Salisbury, at a time when marriage typically eliminated men from the Methodist ministry. Although he bought land along the Towanda-Monroeton road, opposite the Cole cemetery, and "settled," Elisha continued to function as a local preacher and to maintain his official status within the denomination. He was elected to the office of deacon but not ordained in 1798, and finally ordained in 1802 -- although he never returned to the itinerant ministry.

Regular services were held in the Elisha Cole home, with quarterly meetings in the log barn. He continued to preach effectively in his home and throughout the region. About 1835 the Monroeton meetings were moved from Cole's home to the school house, and Rev. Cole lived to see the present church building there erected in 1839. The journals of circuit riders assigned to the area and the histories of the area churches attest to the great contributions of "Father Cole."

One who undoubtedly had contact with Rev. Cole, and who testified to the ruggedness of the area at that time was presiding elder George Harmon -- superintendent in 1812 of the Susquehanna District of the Genesee Conference. He wrote about his territory as follows: "It commenced on the south end about 100 miles north of Baltimore. It extended north to within twenty miles of Utica in New York, and from the Delaware River on the east to the Genesee on the west. It was at least one thousand miles around it. Such roads! Such mountains! Such hills! I broke down several good horses during my term of service on this circuit." The Bradford County portion of Tioga Circuit would have been near the center of this district.

Near Canton in the southwest corner of the county are the heads of both Lycoming and Towanda creeks -- the former emptying into the North Branch of the Susquehanna and Towanda, the latter into the West Branch at Williamsport. This natural route connecting Williamsport and southward to Maryland with Towanda and northward to New York was called the Lycoming Trail. The more treacherous part is from the head of the Lycoming to its mouth -- about thirty miles and thirty-four fords of the creek, a deep and rapid stream which was used to run small rafts lumber in the spring. Rev. Harmon described one of his trips through the region as follows:

I held a quarterly meeting on the north part of my district, and started for the south. I had to pass through sixty miles of wilderness. I took what was called the Lycoming Trail. It was winter, the snow being between two and three feet deep. I lodged all night at Spaulding's Tavern near the head of the Towanda. I started early the next morning, riding some eight miles to Brother Soper's on the Lycoming and took breakfast. Then I set out for Williamsport. When I came to what was considered the most dangerous crossing place on the route, I found the river was frozen over about one third of the way on each side. The snow, as was stated, was two to three feet deep and no one had passed to open the road. I paused but for a minute. I could not go back to Brother Soper's some ten to fifteen miles, which was the last house I had passed. The sun had gone down! If I could cross, there was a log tavern within about one mile. I knew the greatest danger would be in getting on the ice on the other side, for should the ice break, I and my horse would both go under. I must venture it. I saw no other course. I was on a very spirited and powerful horse. I urged him forward and when his feet touched the bottom his head went under water. As he rose on his hind feet, I put spurs into his flanks and he at once bounded off into the river. The river was so deep that it ran over the tops of my boots as I sat on his back. I got through without further difficulty. When I reached the tavern, my first care was to have my horse attended to. When I attempted to take off my boots they were frozen to my socks. I succeeded after a while in removing them. I had not long before read Dr. Rush on the use of spirituous liquors. That great man acknowledged they had their use in certain cases, but there could be no case in which it would not be better to pour them into a swill-pail, and put both feet in, than to drink them. I bought half a pint of rum and bathed myself in it. I slept comfortably and took no cold. But my poor horse! The fatigue of worrying through the snow, and so often fording the river, had so affected his limbs that I had to part with him at great sacrifice.

No account of early Methodism in Bradford County would be complete without reference to the "Old Burlington" Church, east of Towanda on US 6. This building is a living symbol of Methodism's missionary and church-building policy. The present edifice was erected in 1822 and is the third structure used by Methodists on that land. A conference historic site, it is the only remaining example of this type of church architecture within our Conference. While its site was once the focal point for Methodists in the Sugar Creek Valley, by 1857 the settlements at Burlington and West Burlington were established and built their own meeting houses. Unused for

regular worship for over 140 years, the building has been preserved to be used for special services.

In 1790 Isaac DeWitt, Abraham DeWitt and James McKean came down from Chemung NY and were the first white men to explore the Sugar Creek Valley. The history of the Methodist society there goes back to the following year -- 1791, the year in which John Wesley died. In that year the wives of some of the first settlers started to have regular prayer meetings among themselves. These continued for several years before any circuit rider began to hold regular services in the area. The story is told that one day a group of young people got together to stage a mock prayer meeting, as a form of amusement and to make fun of their mothers. They sang hymns, read scripture and had several prayers when suddenly they were struck with a sense of shame and conviction. Their mothers, instead of rebuking them, wisely came to join them and several were converted. No preacher was there to guide them, but it certainly qualifies as the beginning of the society.

The first church building was erected in 1794 on ground given by James McKean. Originally from Cecil County MD, McKean had settled in Huntingdon County PA and Chemung NY before opening the Sugar Creek Valley. His son Samuel McKean became a US Senator from Pennsylvania and is buried in the cemetery at Old Burlington. After the first building burned in 1799, a second one erected in 1800. It was in this log structure that the noted semi-Methodist Lorenzo Dow preached on one of his journeys through the region. One account states:

Late one June afternoon in 1806, a queer-looking Quaker-dressed traveler rode into the neighborhood and put up at the house of Mrs. John McKean. He immediately announced there would be a meeting in the church that evening. The appearance of the odd-looking creature helped fill the house; he was a total stranger in a strange land. When the people had assembled, he rose brusquely and said, "My name is Lorenzo Dow. My business here is to save souls from hell. My credentials are these (producing a Bible) which says, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature...'"

It is interesting to note that Samuel McKean's daughter Julia Ann married Lorenzo Dow Taylor, one of literally thousands of children across the Eastern US named in honor of this famed but eccentric preacher.

When the people tore down the log church in erected the present structure in 1822, the carpenter who built the pulpit and supervised the construction was William McKean -- a grandson of the original settler James McKean. For a period of over 50 years most of the class leaders at Old Burlington bore the McKean surname, and the family produced several local preachers and one itinerant.