

REV. SAMUEL S. STEWART
Served First Church 1806-1807

Rev. Samuel S. Stewart was appointed to the Richmond- Hanover-Williamsburg Circuit, which included First Church, as a traveling preacher in 1806. He was an experienced circuit rider, who shared ministerial responsibilities with Garnett Lee, who had just been accepted on trial for what appears to have been his first and only year in the Virginia Conference.

Rev. Stewart was born around 1770 in Louisa County, Virginia, to Henry Foote Stewart and Mary Sale Stewart. Little information is available on his early life. In 1792 he was accepted as a minister on trial in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was ordained deacon and accepted into full connection in 1794, then ordained elder in 1796.

Rev. Stewart was a true circuit rider who would serve a series of 15 circuits throughout eastern North Carolina and Virginia. His first circuit was in Orange, Virginia, just after he was accepted into ministry and he continued until 1808 shortly after he married Elizabeth Smith Dabney in Goochland County, VA.¹

After initially serving in Orange, Rev. Stewart served the following churches (or circuits) for about one year each: Franklin, Portsmouth, Caswell, Tar River, Newbern, Sussex, Guilford, Orange (again), Greenbrier-Botetourt, Amelia, Mecklenburg, Sussex (again), Hanover (which included First Church), and finally Norfolk.² He located for one year in 1804, during which time he was not assigned to a circuit, and again in 1808 when he is thought to have left the active ministry.

Rev. Stewart's wife, Elizabeth, was born in 1789 in Albemarle County, Virginia. The couple had eight children. After leaving the ministry, Stewart evidently became a farmer in Charlotte County, Virginia. Records indicate that the couple lived with or around one or more of their children, who were also farmers, during this time. It is believed that Rev. Stewart died in about 1850. After his death, Elizabeth moved back to Albemarle County where she died in 1861.

Rev. Stewart, and the entire hardy band of Methodist ministers who rode a circuit, brought the message of Jesus to the remote regions of the new America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While we know few of the details of what many of these men did and what challenges they faced on a day-to-day basis, it is certain that all Methodists since have benefitted from the foundation constructed on their commitment, perseverance, and great faith.

¹ "Marriages of Goochland County, Virginia 1733-1815", Compiled by Kathleen Booth Williams. (Alexandria, VA: 1960. Reis. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2003)

² W. L. Grissom, *History of Methodism in North Carolina, from 1772 to the Present Time*, Vol. I (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Smith & Lamar, Agents, 1905), p. 210-211.

OTHER SOURCE:

Minutes of Annual Virginia Conference (February 14, 1806, Norfolk, VA. Francis Ashbury and Richard Whatcoat presiding).

REV. GARNETT LEE
Served First Church 1806-1807

Trinity's early years as First Church included a cameo role by Garnett Lee on trial as a traveling minister in the 1806 to 1807 appointment year, serving alongside Samuel S. Stewart. We have no record of a second appointment for Rev. Lee.

The son of William Garnett Lee and Avery Noel Lee, he was born on February 23, 1777, the fifth of 10 children. Judging from William Lee's will, the family was prosperous in land, slaves with other evidence of a successful small plantation. They were well established in the history and culture of Bedford County, Virginia, and the neighboring counties.

Garnett Lee's first wife, Mary Polly Robinson, brought a child, Emily (or Amelia) as her "dowry" to the wedding ceremony on June 11, 1814. A son, James Garnett, was born in 1817. One ancestry registry¹ indicates that Polly Lee was born in 1793 and died in 1836. The same registry lists daughter Emily's nativity in 1800, leading one to calculate that Emily was perhaps the orphaned child of one of the numerous Lee kinfolk. Rev. Lee married Elvira Thorp in April 1820. In 1824, they had a son, Lafayette Lee, who did not survive the Civil War. Bedford County census forms indicate that Lafayette had a younger sister.

Rev. Lee was ordained at the Virginia Annual Conference that convened February 14, 1806 in Norfolk. Conference minutes reveal that he "was proposed but had no recommendation from his Quarterly Meeting Conference as it was not convenient to obtain it. Nevertheless, as he was recommended by eight reputable official characters and his presiding elder (Stith Mead), he was admitted on trial as a travelling preacher." One year later, at annual conference in Newbern, North Carolina, it was reported that, "The case of Garnett Lee, who was admitted on trial last conference, was considered. Nothing is brought against him but as he desists travelling, his name is dropped off the ministry."²

Lee returned to Bedford County, where family and farm occupied his talents. He was authorized by the Bedford County Court to officiate the rite of marriage as a minister of the Methodist Church on June 11, 1811.

Calling "Garnett" at a Lee family reunion would have elicited several responses. It was popular as a first and middle name. When the New London Academy, a highly regarded school for boys, requested bids for a building, a Mr. Garnett Lee, perhaps the preacher-farmer or a relative, responded with a low bid. Brierfield, the preacher-farmer's property inherited from his father, William G. Lee, was slightly less than three miles from the Academy building site.³ Bricks were fired on site and construction initiated. Contractor Lee, according to community folklore, advised the Board of the Academy that the

¹ www.ancestryrecords.com/geneology/records/garnett.lee. Dates and relationships are "calculated."

² J. Manning Potts, ed., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, vol. iii, (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1893), p. 530.

³ Avie Lee Hicks, "Brierfield" in *Bedford*. Peaks of Otter DAR. 1998. p.106.

structure had no chimneys.⁴ A separate contract for the chimneys guaranteed that fair compensation for Lee did not "go up in smoke." The 1838 building, on the National Registry of Historic Places, has continued to serve the Bedford County Public Schools for many years, proudly displaying four Chimneys.

A successful Virginia planter/farmer of the early nineteenth century owned slaves. Garnett Lee was successful. Federal census forms itemize his slave holdings as ranging from 13 to 27 over the years from 1810 to 1850. These census forms list his profession as farmer. The 1860 report lists his son, Lafayette Lee as farmer with substantial real estate and 16 slaves. As an octogenarian, Lee is listed as owning four slaves, and is identified professionally as "gentleman."

There is mystery, or at least riddles, in the retrospective account of the Rev. Garnett Lee. His call to ministry and brief service therein; the dates of his two marriages relative to the ages of his children; the identity of the contractor of the New London Academy building all raise questions. Even his obituary in the September 11, 1862, edition of the *Daily Lynchburg Virginian* teases with a question. The author of the piece, identified only as "J. G. S." mentions that "Mr. Lee had long been a professor of religion." The location of a "long" professorship in education is not identified. A "professor of religion" describing one who lived virtuously and attested to a faith as proscribed by a church such as the Methodist Episcopal Church offers an alternative solution. But the riddle remains.

OBITUARY

Died, at his home in Bedford County, Va., on Monday, September 1st, Garnett Lee, Esq., in the 86th year of his age. Mr. Lee had long been a professor of religion, and a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His piety, humble and sincere, uniform and consistent, was evinced by the faithful performance of the duties of every relation that he sustained. In life and in death, his hope of future happiness was based solely on the sacrifice of the Redeemer. His end was peace. J. G. S.

Garnett Lee's rich, full life, effusively described in his obituary, perhaps was influenced positively by his one-year appointment riding the circuit that included First Church. His gravestone silently proclaims a final riddle: "He is not dead, but sleepeth."

⁴ L. L. Barnes, et al, *The Story of New London Academy 1795 - 1945*. (Forest, Va.: The Board of Managers of New London Academy, 1945), pp.9-10.

REV. HEZEKIAH MCLELLAND
Served First Church 1807-1808

Hezekiah McLelland was born in Chesterfield County, Virginia, on October 4, 1783, the year the Revolutionary War ended, and died November 7, 1832, 29 years before the start of the Civil War. As a result, both his life and his ministry were shaped by how our nation and Methodism evolved between these two wars – the first of which brought disparate states together into a union and the latter of which separated those states and the church largely over the issue of slavery or equality for blacks and whites.

We know little about McLelland’s time at First Church, but much about the man, who when confined to his sick bed for the final three years of his life, wrote a series of 10 letters to the *Christian Sentinel* in which he ruminated on his life and ministry. In his letters, all written the year he died, McLelland says that the Revolutionary War closed the doors of many churches and left many women, including his mother, widows – though his mother married again. With the absence of churches, any “formal” ministry seemed to come from itinerant preachers.

In 1784, after the Revolutionary War had ended, the Methodist Episcopal Church, with Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury at its head, became the first Protestant Church to organize in America. Asbury’s leadership as itinerant general superintendent succeeded the authority of John Wesley who had led the itinerant Methodist ministers from England for approximately 20 years. The organization of the church in America and Asbury’s “fervent” leadership helped increase the number of itinerant Methodist ministers.

The circuits these itinerant ministers covered overrode state, county or other natural boundaries and were often geographically extensive. Given the absence in many areas of church structures devoted to any one denomination, the itinerant ministers preached in private homes, at camp meetings or in the open air – wherever they could find a place to preach the Gospel. Individuals would likely have heard preaching from multiple sects, including the Methodists, but also perhaps the Baptists and Presbyterians.

Thus, for McLelland, early religious training took place in the home – reading the Bible and other good books, prayers, observation of the Sabbath, refraining from obvious sins and “hearing preaching whenever [he] could.”¹ After his oldest brother and a friend heard an itinerant preacher, McLelland learned of the Methodist concept of justification, but was left without any guide in that direction and a burden of guilt at his perceived failures. Finally, religious meetings began in his own neighborhood, and after what he described in his *Sentinel* letters as a lonely period of searching for Christ, McLelland found himself in a community of others searching for

¹ *Christian Sentinel*; Editor, Ethelbert Drake, Vol. 1, No. 16, September 21, 1832, “Sketches and Experiences” (Richmond, Va.: Publisher, Robert Nesbitt & James C. Walker, 1832), p. 62.

Christ as well. At a prayer meeting held in the home built by his grandfather and in which McLelland had been born, he felt a change in his spirit, and in his words, converted to Christianity.

For several years following his conversion, McLelland felt called to preach, but he resisted the call believing he was untrained and too “common” to preach. It may be important to note that perhaps because of the nature of itinerant preaching, the almost singular focus of these preachers and the one with which McLelland grappled was “a dispensation of the gospel [that] was committed to [his] trust.”² In April 1904, McLelland went for the second time to hear Lorenzo Dow preach. Dow was a well-known, but eccentric and evangelical itinerant preacher, Methodist by affiliation, but independent in behavior. Across the course of his ministry, it is thought that he “preached to more persons than any man of his time,”³ with rhetoric that could be dramatic, entertaining and provocative. He traveled to the Southern states where he preached against slavery and to Europe where among other things he introduced the American camp meetings. For McLelland, Dow was the decisive point in his struggle to answer the call to preach. In his letters to the *Christian Sentinel*, McLelland wrote that after hearing Dow:

... it seemed as though a voice said, that man is doing what God has given him to do; he will get his crown. You have been called to the same work; you have rebelled, you will loose [sic] your crown.

In the same year that he heard Dow, James Chappel invited McLelland to travel with him on his circuit. He preached some during these few months and was encouraged by others to continue preaching. Though still unsure of himself, McLelland attended the quarterly meeting of the Methodist conference in 1805 and committed to preach if the annual conference, which was held later in North Carolina, received him. The conference admitted him on trial, and he was appointed as the helper to Lewis Taylor on North Carolina’s Yadkin Circuit, the circuit farthest from his home. Thus began McLelland’s faithful journey as an itinerant Methodist minister.

Most circuits were so geographically extensive that it took four to five weeks to cover the entire area, with preaching every day. Preachers had no permanent residence and so were dependent upon the hospitality of converts and friends on the circuits they traveled each year. They were also exposed to the elements both as they traveled and as they preached. In addition, they traveled to conference annually over rough roads as appointments were made each year. Few itinerant preachers were married because of the job’s demands.

In 1806, McLelland remained on trial and was appointed to help John Weaver on the Haw River Circuit.

In 1807, he was admitted into full connection, ordained a deacon and appointed to the Hanover Circuit. Richmond had been a separate pastoral charge since 1799, and First Church (Methodist Episcopal) would have been served by McLelland as part of his appointment to the Hanover

² The *Christian Sentinel*.; October 19, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 20; “Sketches and Experiences;” p.78.

³ Appletons’ Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Volume 2, edited by James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, p. 218.

Circuit. Daniel Day was assigned to him as a helper in 1807; however, McLelland wrote in his *Sentinel* letters that Day never arrived. No other mention of Day is made in McLelland's letters, and Day was not appointed to a circuit in 1808. Thus, the extent of Day's service to First Church is unclear.

In 1808, McLelland was appointed to the Franklin Circuit with Robert Thompson assigned as his helper. This circuit encompassed five counties in Virginia plus two more in North Carolina and the town of Leaksville, North Carolina.

In 1809, McLelland was elected and ordained an elder for the Virginia Conference and appointed to the Mecklenburg Circuit with James Smith as his helper. When reflecting on his year on this circuit, McLelland wrote to the *Sentinel*:

My soul often mourned in secret places for Zion's sake; but to convert sinners was God's work, and that I knew right well. To preach the gospel was my business, and then leave the issue to Him.

In 1810, McLelland was appointed to the Buckingham Circuit without a helper. During the year and with the approval of the presiding elder, Jesse Lee, he combined his circuit with the Cumberland Circuit, creating a six-week circuit. He also gained another preacher in James Sandford. During his time on the Buckingham Circuit, McLelland preached at Ware Bottom Church in Chesterfield County, where he had been born. Ware Bottom was later destroyed during the Civil War shortly after the Battle of Ware Bottom, a battle that killed approximately 1,500 Union and Confederate troops.

McLelland passed away before he was able to write about his other appointments in his *Sentinel* letters. But, we have additional information on his life thanks to his letters, other documents, and conference records that show his ministry continued until 1823.

In 1811, he was appointed to the Gloucester Circuit, along with Thomas Cooper as his helper. The following year, he was appointed to the Amelia Circuit with J. R. Bradley as his helper.

McLelland married Mary Temple October 8, 1812, an event that would have encouraged most itinerant ministers to locate, or take a non-traveling position. Instead, he was appointed in 1813 to the Williamsburg Circuit with Abraham Trail as his helper.

In McLelland's second letter to the *Christian Sentinel* he wrote:

...my greatest consolation springs from these reflections, that the prime of my life was spent in preaching the blessed gospel of the Redeemer... Indeed, I knew I could no longer fill a circuit appointment with that fidelity and punctuality which I thought necessary. Therefore I located.⁴

⁴ The *Christian Sentinel*; August 10, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 10; "McLelland's letter to Ethelbert Drake, editor, following the publishing of McClelland's First Letter," p. 30.

From 1814 through 1819, he finally located, primarily in Gloucester. Conference minutes confirm that he first located in 1814, but do not specify a location. He is thought to have remained primarily in Gloucester through 1819.

In 1820 and 1821, the minutes list McClelland as “superannuated or worn-out.”

He located again in 1823, but once more the minutes do not specify where.

When McLelland married in 1812, he joined one of the most esteemed and land-rich families in Virginia’s King and Queen County. He and his wife, Mary, lived with her parents, Humphrey and Sarah Walker Temple, at Orange Grove. Mary’s immediate and extended family were among the slaveholders in the county. The church frowned upon slave ownership, but an examination of the church’s position on slavery between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War reflects the nation’s struggle with slavery from its birth through the Civil War.

John Wesley was firmly opposed to slavery. The “General Rules of Methodism” that Wesley produced in 1739 stated that those who desired salvation could neither buy nor sell slaves. In 1780, Francis Asbury encouraged passage of a statement that “declared preachers should preach to slaves but at the same time exert pressure on the masters to set them free.”⁵ Itinerant ministers such as McClelland were to own no slaves and preach against slave ownership.

Nevertheless, conference records also reflect the conflict with civil law. In the 1800s, Disciplines required that slaves be freed only in states where freedom was permitted. And, by 1816, the Conference’s commission on slavery wrote that “under the present, existing circumstances in relation to slavery, little can be done to abolish the practice so contrary to the principal of moral justice.”⁶

The tension between the races was not restricted to slavery. As early as 1794, segregation within churches drew Richard Allen to form the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Two years later, blacks walked out of John Street Church in New York. Walkouts occurred in other communities as well.

In 1844, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church told Bishop James O. Andrew of Georgia to desist from his duties until he freed slaves inherited from his wife. Bishop Andrew was willing to free the slaves, but under Georgia law could not do so. The following year, the church formally broke along a geographic line, creating the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (including what was now Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, South) locating in Louisville, Kentucky. The church’s struggle was a mirror of the nation’s struggle and the march toward a Civil War that would only partly solve racial tensions, but would at least abolish legal slavery.

⁵*The Bulletin of the King and Queen County Historical Society of Virginia*, “Hezekiah McLelland: Methodist Itinerant of King and Queen,” July 1977.

⁶ *Ibid.*

This division in the church and the nation's Civil War occurred after Hezekiah McClelland's death, but how did he preach and live as the church and the nation grappled with slavery and other inequalities between the races? While an itinerant preacher, he owned no slaves, consistent with the rule of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His preaching focused on conversion to Christianity and, when preaching in the open air and at camp meetings, he preached to whites and blacks alike. And yet, despite the church's position on slave ownership, through marriage, he inherited his wife's slaves. In December 1829, McLelland became seriously ill with a lung disease. He accused one of his slaves, Billy, of trying to poison him. The slave was condemned to be hung but reprieved for a sum of \$450, presumably paid by McLelland, then transported to another location. Perhaps McLelland, like Bishop Andrew, could not free his wife's slaves, but recognized a moral duty to them, and the need to correct his own mistakes.

After falling ill in 1829, McLelland was bedridden for the remainder of his life. In his last *Sentinel* letter, published shortly after his death on November 16, 1832, he wrote:

By the grace of God, be my days many or few, be my lot health or deep affliction, God is my Father, Christ my Saviour,[sic] the Holy Ghost my Comforter, and this *Three-one* Being is my all in all. By his aid I hope for salvation.⁷

McLelland died November 7, 1832. He was survived by his wife and five of their 10 children.

OTHER SOURCES, CONTINUED:

Ibid, November 16, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 24, "Letter to Brother Drake", p. 94.

Ibid, November 16, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 21, "Rev. Hezekiah McLelland is no more", p 95.

Ibid, November 23, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 25; "Reflections"; p.98.

<http://www.umc.org/>

The Bulletin of the King & Queen County, Historical Society of Virginia, "Postmasters at Walkerton", Number 16, January 1964.

Ibid, "Hezekiah McLelland: Methodist Itinerant of King and Queen", Bulletin 43 July 1977.

Rev. Alfred Bagby, A.B., D.D., *King and Queen County, Virginia* (New York & Washington: The Neale Publishing Company, 1908).

Rev. Joseph w. Shackford, "*Methodism in King and Queen*", p. 104 – 112.

⁷The *Christian Sentinel*; November 16, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 21; "Letter to Brother Drake;" p. 94.

OTHER SOURCES:

Ethelbert Drake, Editor, "Letter to Editor from Hezekiah McLelland dated July 12, 1832, *The Christian Sentinel Vol. 1, No. 7* (Richmond, Va.: Publisher Robert Nesbitt & James C. Walker, July, 20, 1832), p. 27.

Ibid, August 10, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 7, "McLelland's Letter to Ethelbert Drake, editor, following the publishing of McClelland's first letter," p.39.

Ibid, September 21, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 16, "Sketches and Experience," p. 62.

Ibid, October 12, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 19, "Sketches and Experience," p. 74.

Ibid, October 19, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 20, "Sketches and Experience," p. 78.

Ibid, October 26, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 21, "Sketches and Experience," p. 82.

Ibid, November 2, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 22, "Sketches and Experience," pp. 85 – 86.

Ibid, November 9, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 23, "Sketches and Experience," p. 90.

Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, For the Years 1773 – 1828, Volume 1 (New York: Published by T. Mason and G. Lane For the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840).

<https://LorenzoDow>, Snapshot created by the Distributed Wikipedia Mirror Project
(<https://github.com/ipfs/distributed-wikipedia-mirror>.)

<https://makinghistorynow.wordpress.com>, “They Called Him Crazy: the Eccentric Revivalist Preacher, Lorenzo Dow”; February 22, 2018.

Claudia L. Bushman, *In Old Virginia*, “Slavery Farming, and Society in the Journal of John Walker” (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press), pp 84 – 85.

“Making History: Transcribe,” a crowdsourcing project of the University of Virginia,
<http://www.virginiamemory.com/transcribe/scripto/transcribe/7249/26525>.

REV. DANIEL DAY
Served First Church 1807-1808

Daniel Day was born in 1778 in Amherst County, Virginia, to Peter Day and Mary Ann Daniel, one of seven children.¹ When Daniel was 9 years old, his father died. His mother continued to live in Amherst until her death in 1830 at the age of 86.

In 1807 Day was accepted on trial into the Virginia Conference. In his first year, he was assigned to serve with the more experienced elder Hezekiah McLelland on the Hanover Circuit, which included First Church, Richmond. In his letters, McLelland wrote that Day never arrived and little is known about Day's early ministry if indeed he served during that year.. Day declined to travel in 1808 and was, therefore, left off the minutes of the Virginia Conference meeting in Lynchburg. It appears he did not pursue his ministry further for several years.

The Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church provide information on Day's later ministerial career path. He was again accepted on trial in 1815 and assigned to the Banks Circuit. No explanation has been found for the unusually long lapse of time between his acceptance on trial in 1807 and his second acceptance in 1815. He continued on trial in 1816 and was assigned to Buckingham. Day was admitted as a deacon and accepted in full connection in 1817, assigned to the Bertie Circuit. In 1818, Day located in Amherst County, where marriage records list him as the presiding clergyman. Daniel's younger brother Solomon Day also followed a ministerial path: accepted on trial in 1816, admitted as a deacon in 1818 and located in 1819 before eventually moving to Missouri.

Judging by the US Census records, Day had a prosperous farm in Amherst County. According to the 1810 United States Federal Census report, his household consisted of eight free white persons. Twenty years later the household reported six free white persons and 18 slaves. Shortly before his death, the 1860 report showed Day having real estate valued at \$12,500 and personal property valued at \$57,000 which at that time would have comprised a significant proportion of the county's private wealth. At that time, only a younger cousin and a housekeeper were living with him. Clues to Day's character can be found in his will. Day made bequests to each of those two and left the bulk of the estate to a brother and to any children of his deceased siblings. Most interesting is the care he took in the disposition of his slaves. In summary, of the 35 slaves listed among his property, three were bequeathed to others, two were provided for and the others were given a choice: they could be resettled in the colony of Liberia or choose to stay in Virginia. If they stayed, they were allowed to select to whom they wanted to be sold, at a reduced cost. The estate executors were charged to ascertain that the new owners would treat them humanely. While the thought of a Methodist minister owning slaves seems wrong to us, especially in light of John Wesley's opposition to slavery, the Methodist Church had in 1845, broken along geographic lines over the issue of slavery. Virginia ministers, like Day, whether located or riding a circuit were serving in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, based in Kentucky. Day died in Amherst in September 1862, two years before slavery became illegal in Virginia.

¹ Ancestry.com. *1810 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA.

REV. STITH MEAD
Served First Church 1808-1809

In a letter to the 1833 Virginia Annual Conference, Stith Mead gives a brief summary of his life. He was now 66 years of age and "with 43 years in religion and Methodism, 40 years in the ministry," 10 years of which were spent as an itinerant preacher in Virginia and Georgia as he "opened and clear[ed] up and fitt[ed] for cultivation the worst of the ground in hopes of a copious and prosperous crop and increase [in] Wesleyan Methodism." Mead was born in Bedford County, Virginia, September 23, 1767. He was the son of Colonel William Mead, "a farmer of considerable wealth, and [who] served with distinction in the Revolutionary War. His parents were members of the . . . Protestant Episcopal Church . . . and although taken to church regularly . . .,"¹ young Stith received little support and encouragement for his early religious inclinations.

Mead's youthful thirst for religion was greatly quenched in the cabins of his father's slaves. "For hours he would sit among them in their cabins at night and listen to their talk about 'Heaven and hell', evil spirits and various punishments that would be inflicted on people guilty of . . . [various] crimes."² From these visits with the slaves, he would slip back to bed where he would experience dreams that would deepen his religious impressions. With these sojourns as his early religious teachings, young Stith "resolved to lead a new life, at least a moral one . . . [and] felt elated . . . that he was not as bad as others."³

Approaching age 18, Mead received formal education in private schools in Georgia after his family had moved there from Virginia. Although he continued to demonstrate a modest interest in religion, he was not a devout follower or practitioner. However, things changed in 1789 on a business trip back to Bedford, where he found a great revival in progress. After attending several meetings, Mead described one experience: "'The power of God came upon me, and cast me out of the chair on the floor...I found myself on my back on the floor, groaning for deliverance. I was carried out of the house by some friendly hands and laid under the shade of a tree...' Soon after this he found peace, and gave himself wholly to the work of God."⁴

Mead entered the Virginia Conference in 1792 and spent seven years in the hard fields. As a deacon, Rev. Mead served the Cumberland Circuit. He became an elder in 1796 and served the Hanover Circuit. In the ensuing years, he served Gloucester, Brunswick, Augusta and Burke. The people in these areas were extremely poor, and the living conditions were not good. Their homes were often overrun with flies, fleas, ticks and mosquitoes, resulting in the spread of many diseases.

Rev. Mead evidently maintained a close relationship with Bishop Asbury. On January 30, 1801, Asbury wrote to a presiding bishop in Virginia: "I have sold my carriage, and am on horseback... Perhaps you may find a young, strong, good-tempered, well-gaited, light trotting or pacing horse

¹ William W. Bennett, *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: published by the author, 1871), p. 301.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 302-303.

of moderate price I may be able to purchase. I have sold my carriage to Stith Mead, who is unable to ride upon horseback."⁵

In 1801 Bishop Asbury assigned Rev. Mead to Georgia where he served as the presiding elder of the district for three years. Not one to hold back his feelings, he reported back to the bishop, "I lament to say that this city [Augusta] is the seat and nursery of Infidelity, Atheism, Deism, Materialism, Fatalism, [and] Diabolism...In a census of about 4,000 souls, I know of none who knew their right hand from their left in religion." ⁶ Notwithstanding this opinion, he succeeded in building a church in Augusta.

Mead became known for being an effective camp meeting organizer. The historical milieu was the population growth in Kentucky, Missouri, and other areas west of Virginia. Methodist circuit Riders, their Presbyterian brethren, and competitive Baptist preachers followed and sometimes led the westward movement. The wilderness was perfect for what developed as the Camp Meeting: a several dayslong revival with bonfires, continual preaching, alcohol consumption for a few, and convulsive evidences of salvation, such as the "jerks," the falling exercise, the dancing exercise, and the laughing exercise. One witness commented that the "bodily agitations and exercises attended spiritual excitement, and were equally an offense to some and a wonder to all."⁷ The Presbyterians found the bizarre meetings difficult to control and dropped support of the events. The Methodists, on the other hand, had Discipline, a book and practices: love feasts, regular itinerant preaching, class meetings, rules, and reports.⁸ Asbury's response to criticism of Camp Meetings is revealed in a letter to Stith Mead:

A carnal world, a fleshly ministry, and people rise up against us. A spirit of persecution is worked up over the whole continent. All earth and hell is roused against field meetings, but we will endure fine, imprisonment, and death sooner than we will give them up. . . [There is] no law or justice for Methodists... Do all you can by fair means to keep order in your meetings in the woods, but we will not give up this ground, Satan will rage.⁹

In 1805, Rev. Mead was transferred back to Virginia to serve as the presiding elder for the Richmond District. In this same year, his popular camp-meeting song book *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* was published in Richmond. Historian Warren Sweet concludes that "Stith Mead ... may well be termed the father of the Virginia camp meeting."¹⁰

Richmond was permanently established as a station with 112 white members in 1808, and Stith Mead was named the pastor. Mead took advantage of every opportunity to bring the Good News

⁵ Asbury, Francis. *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury: in Three Volumes*. Edited by Elmer T. Clark. Vol. III. London: Epworth, 1958, p. 198.

⁶ Bennett, pp. 303-304.

⁷ Holland, N. McTyeire, D.D., *A History of Methodism*, etc. vol. iii. (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. 1893), p.491.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

⁹ J. Manning Potts, ed., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, vol. iii. (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1893), p. 491.

¹⁰ William Warren Sweet, *Virginia Methodism: A History* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1955), p.169.

to those in need. "During his pastorate in Richmond, he began regular preaching to the prisoners in the Virginia Penitentiary . . . and at the request of some of the prisoners, Mead established regular preaching in the prison every Sabbath."¹¹ They organized into a Methodist Society with 48 members. A letter of February 1, 1809, from one of the prisoners to the Virginia Conference reads:

Since we became a religious society under the care of Mr. Mead, he has continued to watch over our souls, with a ready mind; we are greatly comforted by our faith and hope, and prayer and praise have become a delightful exercise among us. . . .¹²

Rev. Mead was the founder of Methodism in Lynchburg, Virginia, and founding pastor of the first Methodist church in Lynchburg, which was the site of a remarkable story that demonstrates the true heart of Stith Mead.

Rev. Mead and a Negro slave, John Charleston, had become friends. Mead believed slavery was a sin against God and man (remember his early days in the cabins) and raised funds to purchase John from his former master with plan to free him. But the price was too much for Mead to bear by himself, so a plan was worked out that John Charleston should serve as the sexton for the Lynchburg church until the purchase price was cancelled. "Stith Mead, it must be noted... carried the case before the Quarterly Conference for advice and that body decided John Charleston ought to work seven years to repay the preacher for his freedom."¹³ Mead cut this period in half by soliciting funds from friends and soon John was a free man. It is not known how long John served as the church sexton, but evidence is sufficient to show that this ex-slave enjoyed Methodist religion along with his white brothers.

For nearly 40 years, Rev. Mead kept a manuscript journal that was in the possession of historian William Wallace Bennett, when, unfortunately, it was destroyed in the great fire of Richmond in April 1865.¹⁴ The labors of this man were significant. He was willing to go any place to preach the gospel. Under his zealous ministry, many were converted and not a few were later known as brilliant and successful preachers. Rev. Mead demonstrated perfect resignation to the will of God and died triumphantly in the faith August 1, 1834.

One of the most interesting memorial stones... is the Mead prayer rock, not far from the old Mead farm... It is known as the prayer and fasting place of the beloved



¹¹ Ibid, p. 164.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Methodist in Lynchburg", *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 11 October 1934, J. M. Rowland, D.D., Editor, (Richmond, VA: Published by W.A. Smith, M. Brock, and J. Early), pp. 4-6.

¹⁴ Bennett, Preface, p. 3.

Stith Mead. On the top of the stone these words appear: "S. MEAD. Fast and Pray to God."¹⁵

¹⁵ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, October 13, 1938, M. Rowland, D.D., Editor, (Richmond, VA: Published by W.A. Smith, M. Brock, and J. Early).

REV. CHARLES C. CALLAWAY JR.
Served First Church 1809-1810 and 1812-1813

Charles C. Callaway Jr. was born September 4, 1781, in Bedford County, Virginia. He was the fourth son among 11 children. His father, a Revolutionary War veteran, had served in the battle of Guilford Courthouse and at the Siege of Yorktown and, became quite wealthy through his business and farming after the war. Records show that Charles Callaway Jr. was given 300 acres of land by his father. However, he sold this land and moved to Newbern, North Carolina, for a time when assigned there by the conference. There he met his wife, Eliza Green, who came to him with a large dowry, including seven slaves, to ensure "the future comfort of his wife." His profession is shown as a minister on the documentation allowing him to transport them to Virginia.

Charles had been admitted on trial in the Virginia Conference in 1806. As the nation was building up to the War of 1812, he served in Mecklenburg in 1806 and in Tar River, North Carolina, in 1807. In 1808, he was received in full connection and ordained a deacon, serving that year in Iredell, North Carolina. He served alone at First Church from 1809 to 1810, and in 1810, he was elected and ordained elder. That same year, he was sent to Norfolk, Virginia. In 1811, the year that a War Congress was convened and the Battle of Tippecanoe was fought in November, he moved to Caswell, North Carolina. However, in 1812, he returned to Richmond, where he served First Church with Jesse Lee, a distinguished minister, until 1813. It is likely that a second minister was needed to assist Rev. Lee because First Church's offspring, Shockoe Hill Church, had been established. Shockoe Hill Church, now Centenary United Methodist Church, was not made a station to which ministers were appointed until 1827. On February 20, 1812, the Reverends Callaway and Lee hosted the first session of the Virginia Conference to be held in Richmond. Pastoral visitation was another duty shared by the colleagues. While at First Church, Callaway was also one of the ministers who worked with prisoners in the Penitentiary.

During his second pastorate at First Church, Rev. Callaway, together with Rev. Lee, was accorded the privilege of attending the General Conference of 1812, which met in New York City. It was the first time that representatives from each conference were chosen by ballot. In addition to being the first delegated conference, it was the first time that a General Conference had met outside of Baltimore. Of Virginia's 11 elected delegates, four would at some time serve First Church, the other two being Richard Lattimore and Thomas L. Douglass.

William Warren Sweet, in *Virginia Methodism, A History*, records that Charles Callaway was one of a committee of five appointed by the Virginia Conference to prepare a report on slavery to be presented at the Virginia Conference of 1813. Sweet goes on to state:

At the Virginia Conference of 1813 the following report on slavery was adopted:

- (1) The preachers shall instruct the colored people in the principles and duties of religion.
- (2) They were to search out and pay particular attention to all classes of colored people in the bounds of their stations and circuits, and,

(3) If any member of the M. E. Church be found guilty of carrying on directly or indirectly, the trade of slave speculation, he or she shall be expelled from the Church.¹

As the country went to war, the Church began to examine what was happening at home. It was at the end of his tenure in Richmond that Charles went on to Newbern, North Carolina where he married Eliza Green. He is shown as located from 1814. At that time, ministers were required to locate (cease traveling a circuit) when they married. It appears from some records that he was living in the Lynchburg area for a while after this.

Rev. Charles C. Callaway Jr. died February 1, 1855 in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. His final resting place is unknown.

¹ William Warren Sweet, *Virginia Methodism, A History* (Richmond, Va.: Whittet & Shepperson, 1955), p. 200.

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REV. RICHARD LATTIMORE
Served First Church 1810-1812; 1818-1819

It is not known when or where Richard Lattimore was born, when he died, or whether he married. The minutes of the 1803 Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church say that, "A recommendation in favor of Richard Lattimore, of Norfolk [to be received on trial], was presented, but owing to a general report of the loss of a relation of his at sea, it was thought best to refer him to the Presiding Elder, so that if the above report should prove groundless, and he should travel this year he shall be considered on trial from this Conference."¹ In any case, he was received on trial the next year at the 1804 Conference and was stationed in Brunswick, in the Norfolk District, along with William

Annual conference minutes records the following service for Rev. Lattimore:

- 1805 - Admitted into full connection, named a deacon and stationed in Sussex, in the Norfolk District, along with John Owen
- 1806 - Stationed along with William Atwood at Camden and Edenton in the Norfolk District. Newland Methodist Church in Elizabeth City, North Carolina was on the same charge but was served by Rev. Lattimore with William Steward.
- 1807 - Elected and ordained an elder and stationed in Newbern, in the Newbern District
- 1808 – Stationed in Gloucester, in the James River District, along with Alexander Sale
- 1809 - Monumental Methodist Church in Portsmouth, in the Norfolk District
- 1810-1811 - First Church in Richmond, in the James River District; in 1811 with Thomas Moore
- 1812-1813 – Named presiding elder for the Norfolk District
- 1814 - Located
- 1818 - Stationed again at First Church in Richmond
- 1819 - Located

Rev. Lattimore's appointment to First Church in February 1810 was Richmond's first two-year appointment. When he was reappointed in 1811, Thomas Moore was appointed to serve with him. Moore "undoubtedly was assigned to work with those of the Methodists who were forming a new church in the western part of the city ...,"² which was the Shockoe Hill Methodist Episcopal Church on what is now Marshall Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets.

The 1812 Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met in Richmond with Francis Asbury presiding and was hosted by First Church at the end of Lattimore's first pastorate in February. This session of the conference was the first to be held in Richmond "although it had been forty years since Methodism was first introduced into the state."³ At this conference,

¹ William W. Bennett, *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: published by the author, 1871), p. 407.

² *Early Methodism in Virginia*, undated manuscript by J. Manning Potts, D.D., pp. 12-13, cited in *Methodist Church on Shockoe Hill*, by Floyd S. Bennett, (Richmond, Va., 1962), p. 8.

³ *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia*, p. 575.

Richard Lattimore was one of the 11 representatives selected for a delegation to be sent to the General Conference in New York the following May.⁴

Over a decade later, in 1828, the Methodist Protestant Church was formed by members of the Methodist Episcopal Church who seceded, not because of differences over Wesleyan doctrine and worship, but out of dissatisfaction with the increasingly exclusive power of clergy and the exclusion of laymen from the councils of the Church.⁵ Subsequent to his second appointment to First Church, Rev. Lattimore was one of the ministers at the first Virginia Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, held at the Presbyterian church in Lynchburg in 1829. He was also one of the ministers at the second Virginia Conference held in 1830 in Suffolk.⁶ The Methodist Protestant Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church would reunite in 1939.

His last years of ministry were served in the Virginia Methodist Protestant Conference and included the following location or service:

- 1830 - Hampton
- 1831 - Petersburg
- 1833 - Missionary
- 1834 - President
- 1835 - Without appointment
- 1836 - Unstationed at own request

⁴ Ibid, pp. 574-575.

⁵ James Strong and John McClintock, *The Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1880).

⁶ Edward J. Drinkhouse, *History of Methodist Reform*, Volume 2 (Published by The Board of Publication of the Methodist Protestant Church, 1899).

REV. THOMAS MOORE
Served First Church 1811-1812

The Virginia Methodist Episcopal Conference, meeting in Tarboro, North Carolina, accepted Thomas Moore on trial in 1809. Both Bishops Asbury and McKendree were present. Asbury's Journal entry celebrated that 84 preachers were present,

"sixty of them the most pleasing, promising young men; seventeen preachers were admitted; in all the conference there are but three married men. The high taste of these southern folks will not permit their families to be degraded by an alliance with a Methodist travelling preacher; and thus, involuntary celibacy is imposed upon us: all the better; anxiety about worldly possessions does not stop our courses...."¹

Asbury's note suggests that Thomas Moore was a bachelor when he was ordained. His first appointment was at Yadkin in the North Carolina section of the Virginia Conference. Iredell was his next stop in 1810. Then he followed the "3-Rs of North Carolina: readin', ritin', and the road to Richmond," as he came to First Church, serving with Richard Lattimore in 1811 to 1812. Moore appears to have been charged with special responsibility for the infant Shockoe Hill Methodist Episcopal Church, later renamed Centenary.² Working cooperatively with a fellow travelling preacher in an established church and stimulated by the challenge of building a new congregation in a prosperous section of Richmond -- "It was all good; what could go wrong?"

Meredith Henne Baker's book, *The Richmond Theater Fire: Early America's First Great Disaster* answers that question.³ On December 26, 1811, Richmonders prolonged the celebratory mood of Christmas by attending the theater located just north of the State Capital Building. More than 600 citizens filled the venue beyond safe capacity to enjoy two productions: *The Father, or Family Feuds*, the main event, and *Raymond and Agnes, or the Bleeding Nun*, a melodramatic, lurid pantomime. The final act of the comedic pantomime was not seen. A candelabrum, hoisted by pulley and rope into the space above the backstage, ignited some elevated canvas backdrops. The burning canvas, unseen initially, morphed into a roaring conflagration. The theater, with narrow doors and hallways, and steep, twisting stairways was ill-designed for emergency exit. (RTF, pp. 24-26) The explosively expanding fire, the suffocating smoke, the trampling crush of too many people trying to exit through narrow passages and doors, and the trauma resultant of leaping out of upper-level windows brought the evening's entertainment to a tragic finale. Of over 600 patrons in the building, seventy-two were dead, and numerous others

¹ *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, Vol. II, *The Journal 1794 to 1816*, Elmer T. Clark, Editor-in-Chief, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p.591.

² Floyd S. Bennett. *The Methodist Church on Shockoe Hill, 1860 – 1960* (Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson, 1962), p. 4.

³ Meredith Henne Baker, *The Richmond Theater Fire: Early America's First Great Disaster* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2012). The detailed, extensively documented account of the fire and its social and religious aftermath is cited within the text as (RTF [followed by the page numbers]).

suffered serious injury. Many leaders of the community, including Governor George William Smith, were among the victims. (RTF pp. 30-55)

A civic committee organized a mass funeral and burial on the scorched site of the destroyed theater. Ministers of a joint congregation of Episcopalians and Presbyterians, who were the denominations most affected by the disaster, were each asked to prepare and deliver a funeral sermon at the public service. The ministers, John Buchanan and John D. Blair, served the more prestigious and affluent church people. Nonetheless, the Methodist preachers were put to work on New Year's Day 1812, the official day of humility and prayer. There was a scramble to find adequate space for the mourning worshippers. "... at least eight services were held at locations like the Henrico Parish Church, the Baptist meeting house, and the new Methodist church. Morning and evening services were held in the hall of the capital building and the old Methodist church, a modified stable on Main Street. Every service was filled to overflowing." (RTF p. 83) Another report itemized services at nine sites, including churches and public buildings, and the preachers who spoke. The list ended by mentioning "Rev. Courtney at the new Methodist meeting house on Shockoe Hill, and Rev. Ballieu and Rev. Moore at the old Methodist meeting house."⁴

On December 27, the Richmond Council had initiated the plans for the burial and commemoration of the dead. Also, "the citizens were requested to keep their places of business closed for 48 hours after the passage of the ordinance, and no person was permitted to have a show, spectacle, or dancing assembly for four months under penalty of \$6.66 for every hour."⁵ The carefully chosen amount for the penalty for unseemly behavior was indicative of almost universal theological and ethical interpretation of the tragedy. The theater and attendant activities were at best a frivolous waste of time; at worst, an evil "sign of the Beast." The fire served as a warning and/or a divine punishment. (RTF p.85) An 1812 Broadside featured a poem, excerpts of which express popular opinion on the tragedy's meaning:

May theatres all be done away,
Through all Columbia's shores.
The buildings put to better use,
And plays be seen no more.

* * *

Since life is so uncertain then,
Let's strive our ways to mend;
Forsake every vicious way
And God will be our friend. (RTF following p. 151)

⁴ W. Asbury Christian, D. D. *Richmond: Her Past and Present* (Richmond, VA: L. H. Jenkins, 1912). p.80.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.79. See also Revelation of St. John, ch.13, v. 18.

Many sermons and newspaper editorials were preached and printed nationwide on the theme of an inverted "prosperity gospel." Church membership benefited from the general interpretation of the meaning of the fire. Few, if any, Methodist casualties occurred at the fire. The *Doctrines and Discipline* of 1812 did not forbid attending the theater, but it would have been judged unacceptable by rules against frivolity and participation in questionable worldly activities. (RTF 183) The communal interpretation of the existential meaning of the tragic fire, plus a successful camp meeting in nearby New Kent County led to an increase in church attendance.

Buffeted by the tragic event and its questionable interpretation, First Church and her city moved on, as did Thomas Moore—to Portsmouth in 1812. Halifax Methodist Church in the Roanoke Circuit in eastern North Carolina was his charge in 1813 to 1814. He located in 1814 but was "back in the saddle" in Petersburg, Virginia, in 1815. Centenary Methodist in Lynchburg was his assignment in 1816. He also represented the Virginia Conference in the General Conference in Baltimore that year, when the funeral of Francis Asbury was solemnly celebrated.⁶ He served the next year in the Greenville Circuit and then was reassigned to Halifax in the Roanoke Circuit. After each appointment in Halifax, 1814 and 1819, Moore located. His former co-pastor in Richmond, Richard Lattimore, also located in 1814 and 1819.

Thomas Moore was enmeshed in a wide contextual web, involving personal relationships, geographical sites, political philosophy and history that centered on the split of the Methodist Protestant Church from the Methodist Episcopal Church and which was consummated in 1830. The contentious questions were not theological, but rather were matters of church polity and organizational governance. Three issues were stimuli for a growing reform movement: method of election of presiding elders, representation of laymen and local preachers in General Conference and the prerogatives of bishops. The American Revolution was only a generation removed. Halifax had been the site of the adoption of the Halifax Resolves, calling for severance from Britain three months precedent to the Declaration signed in Philadelphia in July 1776. The War of 1812 provided additional emotional heat for many Methodists, clerical and lay, seeking democratic representation in a monarchical church that, like the British government, was ruled from the top.⁷ Participants in the 1820 General Conference could see that the reform movement was gaining momentum. Moore and Lattimore were both located at the time and did not receive appointments for 1820; perhaps, even probably because of their standing among the reformers.

Lynchburg, Virginia, became a hotbed of reform sentiment and was Thomas Moore's appointment in 1816. Organized Reform Societies met in conference in that city in 1828. Richard Lattimore was a delegate. A letter from an observer to the editor of a reform publication, *Mutual Rights and Christian Intelligencer*, listed serious communication and

⁶ William Warren Sweet. *Methodism in American History* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, Revision of 1953), p. 174.

⁷ *Ibid*, pp.178-179.

relationship problems between the reform societies (formed in true Wesleyan fashion) and the mainline church. Free speech and free press had been denied the societies in conferences and official publications. Preachers, laymen, stewards and exhorters had been silenced by expulsion. Others had withdrawn in support. A communion was forming. Sympathetic Baptist, Presbyterian and Episcopalian congregations offered use of their facilities. Leadership was selected, money was raised toward a house of worship, and a new church was born. The author of the letter, John Victor, forecast: "Our cause is advancing daily. A number of our Methodist brethren are looking with anxiety to the convention, and should it be determined to establish an independent Church, and the foundation be well laid, we calculate on a very large addition to our communion."⁸ Thus spake Lynchburg!

In 1822 the Roanoke District Conference, meeting in historic Whitaker's Chapel in Halifax County, "voted to circulate a letter which emphasized that the prerogatives assumed by the church hierarchy were 'at variance with the refinement and liberality of the country and the age in which we live.'"⁹ A year later, that district conference petitioned the 1824 General Conference for "a voice in making the laws by which we are to be governed."¹⁰ The spirit of the Halifax Resolves could yet stir. The church in Whitaker's Chapel was one of several eastern North Carolina Methodist Episcopal Churches that voted to join the denomination-in-process as an entire undivided congregation. Ironically, the owner of the land on which the chapel stood, Richard Whitaker, had been ordained deacon by Francis Asbury, and Asbury had preached in the chapel. Whitaker's Chapel was also the site of the first North Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. "On December 19-20, 1828 nine ministers, five local preachers, and twelve laymen met and decided that they would govern and be governed as they pleased."¹¹ Thomas Moore was among the ministers present.

On November 2, 1830, at a called session at Baltimore's St. John's Church, the Methodist Protestant Church formally came into being. The episcopacy was gone, replaced by an elected president. Power was to be spread among general, annual, and quarterly conferences. Laymen, male and female, were granted membership in quarterly conferences. Lay representation in annual and general conferences was to be equal to clerical.¹² First Church, Richmond, remained a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Methodist Protestant Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which would form prior to the Civil War, once again united and formed the Methodist Church. Some of the Methodist Protestants, mostly in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi, were dissatisfied with the terms of merger and the perceived liberalism and "social gospel" emphasis and thus, eschewed union and maintained their

⁸ James R. Williams, *History of the Methodist Protestant Church*, p. 263
<http://archives.org/stream.emory.edu>.

⁹ William K. Quick. *Whitaker's Chapel, Historic Locations Recently Recognized*. By authority of the 1970 General Conference of the United Methodist Church. <http://archives.gcah.org/handle/10516/1594>. p. 38.

¹⁰ Ibid.

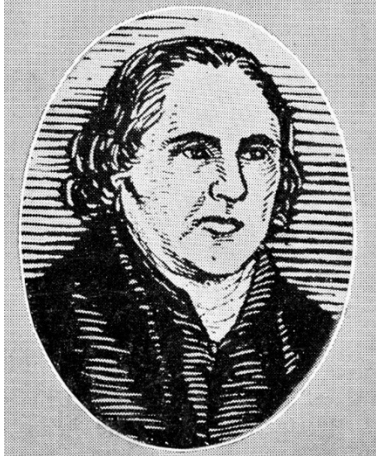
¹¹ Ibid, p.39.

¹² Ibid.

conferences and churches. An official "Historical Sketch of the Origin of the Methodist Protestant Church," revised in 1964 explains and justifies the action of Thomas Moore and his ilk: "But because they did not believe it was necessary for the lovely and free spirit of Methodism to be cast in the mold of absolutism, and because they could not consent to the suppression of free speech in behalf of free suffrage, they sorrowfully took up the task of organizing a new Church, which should hold fast to all the distinctive features of Methodism. . ." ¹³

Thomas Moore was in Halifax, a village situated on the Roanoke River, in 1818. Across the boundary river was Northampton County. The North Carolina Index to Marriage Bonds, 1741-1868, lists the wedding of Thomas Moore to Judith Mason in Northampton County, December 7, 1818. The Federal Census of 1840 itemizes Thomas Moore's family as consisting of two adults and six children. Also listed are 45 slaves. The Methodist Protestant Church did not officially endorse or forbid slavery. A careful examination of the number, genders and ages of the slaves suggests that perhaps three generations of two or three families were being kept together as family units on the Moore property.

¹³ T. H. Davis, D.D. ed. [www.themethodistprotestantchurch.org/about us](http://www.themethodistprotestantchurch.org/about-us).



REV. JESSE LEE
Served First Church 1812-1813

One of Methodism's early pioneers, Jesse Lee, was born to Nathaniel and Elizabeth Lee in 1758 in Prince George County, Virginia. He had two brothers – Abraham and John. Like his brother Jesse, John became a Methodist preacher, as did Abraham's son, Leroy Madison Lee. Jesse, however, had the distinction of being the first native Virginian to become a Methodist minister.

Before Lee was ordained in the Virginia Conference, he was sent in 1782 with Edward Dromgoole to map out the Camden Circuit in North Carolina. Over the years of his ministry, Rev. Lee served in North Carolina, Maryland, New England and Virginia. He was twice appointed to serve as chaplain to the United States House of Representatives where he preached every Sabbath and served one year as chaplain to the United States Senate.

Rev. Lee was admitted on trial in the Virginia Conference in 1783. He was admitted into full connection in 1785 and elected elder in 1790. For 10 years, Rev. Lee served in New England, where he established the first Methodist Church in Stamford, Connecticut, in 1789. In 1798, he traveled with Bishop Asbury after serving as a presiding for three years.

In 1801, Rev. Lee was appointed as the presiding elder of the Norfolk District in the Virginia Conference. In addition to various appointments in Virginia, he served as the presiding elder of the Meherrin District in 1810.

Along with Charles Callaway, Lee was appointed to Richmond's First Church in 1812. In 1813, he was appointed to Brunswick, then served three other appointments before being appointed to Annapolis in 1816. He died there that same year, on September 12, at age 58 after serving 33 years in the ministry.

Rev. Lee's journal from his years in ministry served as the basic material for the first history of Methodism in this country. He was not seminary educated but read broadly in theology and the classics of Greek philosophy. He did not preach from a manuscript but talked plainly and passionately to people who heard him gladly.

Although some of his colleagues regarded Rev. Lee as overly politically motivated, Bishop Asbury regarded him as a fit candidate for the episcopacy and promoted him as such. Lee was obviously disappointed when he was not elected. Most of his colleagues viewed his ambition as within the bounds of appropriate Christian humility.

Rev. Lee was also possessed of a clever wit as illustrated below:

One of the choice episodes in the life of Jesse Lee is the story of him and John Charleston at the meeting of the Virginia Conference in Lynchburg in 1808, which was the first time this body met in Lynchburg. It will be remembered Jesse Lee pulled down the scales at nearly 300 [pounds]. The story goes he was trying to cross what is now Main Street and

reach the church. The mud was very deep and very red, and the preacher wore his Conference clothes. While he was pondering what to do, John Charleston, the faithful sexton, appeared and proposed to take Lee across on his back. About the middle of the street John paused to try to shake this distinguished load higher up on his back. At the same time he spoke forth some Scripture he had learned from his association with the Methodists, and the text was well suited to the occasion. "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" From the white burden the black man was bearing on his back came the responsive reading, "Ye do groan being burdened."¹

While serving in New England, which was largely Congregationalist and whose ministers were seminary educated and formal in their preaching, Rev. Lee frequently encountered people who challenged his credentials. On one such occasion, he encountered a group of Presbyterian lawyers who asked him if his lack of a prepared manuscript led to mistakes. When Rev. Lee admitted that such would occur on occasion, the lawyers asked if he stopped to set the record straight, to which he replied,

Why that depends on the character of the mistake. If the mistake is a bad one, and liable to lead the hearer to any essential error, or a misconception of the subject, I recall the word and correct the mistake immediately; but if it be only a slip of the tongue, and very near the truth. . . I let it go. For example, I was about to say the other day, the devil is a liar, and the father of liars, and by a mere slip of the tongue I said, the devil is a lawyer, and the father of lawyers. But the thing was so near correct, being in fact the truth . . . that I passed right on, not thinking the mistake worth correcting.²

His sense of humor no doubt enabled Rev. Lee to rise above many difficult situations.

Some have regarded Rev. Lee as second only to Francis Asbury in importance to the development of Methodism in America. As Nathan Bangs, D.D., states in his *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, in describing Jesse Lee, "He stands enrolled among those early Methodist preachers who contributed by their deep piety, their sacrifices, and labors, to lay the foundation of that super structure which has since risen in such beauty and grandeur in this western world."³

¹ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, October 11, 1934, p. 5.

² William W. Bennett, *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: published by the author, 1871), p. 200.

³ Nathaniel Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Vol. 3 (New York: G. Lane and C. B. Trippett, 1845), p. 64.

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REV. THOMAS LOGAN DOUGLASS
Served First Church 1813-1814

His voice was clear, full and melodious, his articulation distinct. Thomas Douglass was born to be a pulpit orator.

Thomas Logan Douglass was born in Person County, North Carolina in 1781, but little is known of his early life. It may be assumed that during his early years his needs were adequately met, as he received a significant inheritance upon his father's death. Most of his formal schooling focused on preparing him for a life in the mercantile trade, which was his occupation during his teens – serving as a clerk.

Records are lacking as to what factors influenced his religious growth and conversion, but Douglass joined the Methodist Episcopal church in 1798 and three years later, at the age of 20, began his career when the Virginia Conference admitted him on trial in 1801. His first assignment was to be the junior colleague of William Davis and Daniel Ross of the Hanover-Williamsburg District.

Douglass's training in the mercantile industry assisted him during his itinerant travel and preaching, as many were aware of his appearance. One account describes the following encounter:

In the afternoon he [Philip Courtney] observed a gentleman riding toward the house. He stopped at the gate and dismounted. ... On his head he wore a broad brimmed, black wool hat; his coat was of light blue cloth, cut scant after the shad style; his vest was of olive color velvet with long skirts; he wore short breeches of the same material and color, not more than two spans in length, his legs being very short. His costume was completed by the addition of tight fitting deep blue yarn stockings, shoes and buckles.¹

The growth and spread of Methodism in the South is greatly attributed to the quality of itinerant preachers, especially those who preached with zeal and ability. As Douglass possessed these qualities, he was often in demand. Not only was he a popular preacher, but he also had remarkable success in the conversion of thousands of Virginians and Tennesseans to Christ and the Methodist Church.

During this period, North Carolina was also part of the Virginia Conference. After one year in Hanover, Douglass was asked to go back to North Carolina, and he served various districts there from 1802 through 1808. In 1805, he was ordained an elder, and was appointed as the Presiding Elder to the Salisbury District in 1807. Thus, after only six years in the ministry, he was placed in charge of a large and important district within the Virginia Conference. Douglass had been able to gain the confidence of his elder brethren and bishops, and although young, he had occupied many of the most important fields of the ministry in Virginia and North Carolina.

¹ William W. Bennett, *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: published by the author, 1871). pp. 390-391.

In 1809, Douglass returned to Virginia to serve as the Presiding Elder for the James River District, which included Richmond. With a cheerful spirit and a pleasant and delightful manner, he was frequently sought out to preach. On one occasion, he was asked to preach in Richmond by the stationed preacher, the Rev. Alexander McCaine. Douglass chose as his text Ezekiel's vision of the waters. After the sermon, Douglass asked McCaine, who was over six feet tall, how he liked the sermon. McCaine responded, "Very well, but I could have waded where you had to swim."² Since Douglass was only 5'6", this response might have had a double meaning.

In 1812, the first delegated General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was held in New York City. Douglass was elected as one of 11 to represent the Virginia Conference. Thus, his opinions were not only recognized in Virginia, but he was soon considered a prominent member of the General Conference and later assumed various leadership roles.

Although his leadership role continued to increase, in his heart he remained an itinerant preacher. He continued to attract great attention as a preacher and large crowds assembled to hear the eloquent young Virginian. In fact, records indicate that many remembered his sermons from the 1812 meeting in Baltimore for many years.

Douglass served along with Thomas W. Burge as the stationed preacher at First Church for in 1813. The next year, he transferred to the Tennessee Conference to be a leader among the itinerant preachers. After 20 years of hard labor, when the horse rides were long, and open air or camp meetings were numerous, his health began to deteriorate. In 1831, he was elected secretary of the Tennessee Conference and later became the treasurer of the Tennessee Conference Missionary Society. When he was unable to perform effective work in his ministry because of bodily afflictions, he worked on his small farm.

The night of April 8, 1843, it was suggested that his labor and exposure as an itinerant preacher had possibly made him prematurely old. Douglass replied, "That is quite possible; yet if I had my life to pass over again, I would take the same track. Any suffering I have endured, any sacrifice I have made for Christ's sake, is now my glory. I glory in the cross of Christ!"³ Thomas Logan Douglass died the next day – April 9, 1843.



He was buried in a cemetery near Franklin, Tennessee.

Almost the entire top of Douglass's raised tablet is inscribed, but little remains legible.

Thousands in Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee claimed Douglass as their spiritual father.

² Bennett, p. 391.

³ J. B. M'Ferrin, "Thomas Logan Douglass," *Biographical Sketches of Eminent Itinerant Ministers Distinguished For the Most Part, As Pioneers of Methodism*, Thomas O. Summers, ed. (E. Stevenson and F. A. Owen, Agents for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1858), pp. 225- 226.

REV. THOMAS WILLIAM BURGE
Served First Church 1813-1814

Thomas William Burge served the Virginia Methodist Episcopal Conference for 10 years, including one year at First Church, Richmond.

He was born in Sussex County, Virginia, November 25, 1786. His obituary in *The Christian Sentinel* stated that he came from a pious family and embraced religion when he was 15 years old. Rev. Burge became a member of the Virginia Annual Conference in 1808, was ordained deacon in full connection in 1811 and ordained an elder in 1813.

During the 10 years he served in the Virginia Methodist Episcopal Conference, Rev. Burge filled a number of important appointments, beginning with Haw River in 1809, followed by Bedford, Franklin and Yadkin. He was appointed to First Church in 1813, serving under Thomas Douglass. His remaining appointments were to Norfolk in 1814, as presiding elder of the Meherrin District from 1815 to 1817 and to Lynchburg in 1818. In 1816, he was a delegate from Virginia to the General Conference.

Burge's marriage to Rebecca T. Staples in November 1817 is recorded in the handwritten Burge family archives. This record shows seven children born to the marriage – four sons and three daughters.

After he wed, Rev. Burge was placed on location at the ensuing conference in 1819, as was required for married clergy at this period of the church. He actively continued his ministry until 1831, when he reportedly suffered a recurrence of hemorrhage. He preached only occasionally from that time until a final hemorrhage in 1833. He died a few months later at his residence in Buckingham County, Virginia, on May 29, 1833, at age 47.

Although their graves are unmarked, Burge and his wife are believed to be buried in Appomattox County on property inherited by his wife from her father's estate.

Rev. Burge is praised in *The Christian Sentinel* obituary as an upstanding friend, husband, father and neighbor and as an exemplary Christian. In his ministry, he showed intelligence, sound judgment and a deep and genuine faith. His preaching was far above average, and he was known for expounding on God's word in a clear, logical and conclusive fashion.

SOURCES:

Burge Family Record, Virginia State Library website: <http://image.lva.virginia.gov/Bible.III/51692.pdf>

"Find A Grave Memorial #103169258, created by Brett Martin, record added January 06, 2013.

"Rev. Thomas Burge," *The Christian Sentinel*, Ethelbert Drake, ed., September 13, 1833, Vol. II, No. 15 (Richmond, Va.: Printed & published by Robert Nesbitt & James C. Walker).