

REV. DR. ETHELBERT DRAKE
Served First Church 1814–1815; 1824-1825

The Rev. Dr. Ethelbert Drake was born in 1787 to Richard and Louisa Drake of Chatham County, North Carolina. His father was a “descendant of the famous Sir Francis Drake, of English naval fame, who ‘singed the beard’ of the proud Philip, King of Spain.”¹ Dr. Drake was a local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church, admitted on trial in the Virginia Conference in 1809.

His first appointment was as junior preacher on the Banks and Islands Circuit in North Carolina. The next year he traveled with John Early, who would later become a bishop, on the Caswell Circuit in North Carolina. The Virginia Conference during this era encompassed Virginia as well as a large part of North Carolina. Dr. Drake was ordained deacon and admitted into full connection in 1811. For 15 years thereafter, he served the following appointments: Iredell Circuit; Guilford; Norfolk; First Church, Richmond; presiding elder, James River District 1815-16; Lynchburg; presiding elder, Norfolk District 1818-21; Newbern; First Church, Richmond, for a second time; and finally, Gloucester. During his last year of ministry in the Virginia Conference, Dr. Drake had as his assistant, William A. Smith, newly admitted on trial.

Dr. Drake was elected to the General Conferences of 1816, 1820 and 1824. He served on such committees as Ways and Means, State of the Itinerancy and the Episcopacy. He was also a member of the first Board of Trustees of Randolph-Macon College when it met April 9, 1830.

Dr. Drake married Mary Godwin Green of Norfolk, daughter of Rev. Richard Lee Green and Lizzie Cowper Green of Nansemond County, Virginia, January 9, 1818. They had three sons and four daughters; the last and youngest died at 92 years old.

In the days of Dr. Drake’s ministry, salaries were small and no provision was made for wives, not even a parsonage in which to live. By 1826 Dr. Drake’s increasing family responsibilities forced him to locate. Finding it impossible to support his family in the ministry, Dr. Drake undertook to publish a church paper, the *Christian Sentinel*, which became the *Christian Advocate*. “When that first issue went to press [in 1832] Randolph-Macon College, the oldest chartered A grade college, was one year old and was trying to get on its feet up at Boydton [Virginia].”² A year’s subscription to this weekly paper cost \$2.50, payable in advance. Dr. Drake owned the business and published the *Sentinel* as a service to the church. However, the lack of financial aid and support resulted in his selling the paper to the conference. He sought work where he could have less worry and take better care of his family.

One writer described it this way, “Now, about old Ethelbert – he single handedly started the Methodist Christian Sentinel in 1832. He owned it, he paid for it, he wrote it, he printed it, he sold it. This one-man operation was an unintentional precedent-setter that was to strike a pattern for most of Drake’s successors.”³

¹ “The Richmond Christian Advocate Editors,” S. A. Steel, *Richmond Christian Advocate* (Richmond, Va., May 26, 1932), p. 26.

² *Advocate*, p. 1.

³ “Evolution of the Virginia Advocate,” W. Hewlett Stith, *Virginia United Methodist HERITAGE* (Virginia Conference Historical Society, The United Methodist Church, Spring 1973), p. 16.

He returned to his local preacher duties, serving church charges in North Carolina until his death a few years later. He was buried in the churchyard of one of the churches he served in Elizabeth City, Pasquotank County, North Carolina.

Dr. Drake was recognized in his day as a brilliant writer and a strong defender of the Wesleyan faith.

OTHER SOURCES:

Joseph Mitchell, "The Richmond Christian Advocate: 1832-1840," *Methodist History*, October 10, 1963.
<http://hdl.handle.net/10516/1342>.

REV. MATTHEW MAZE DANCE
Served First Church 1815-1816

Matthew Maze Dance was born in Dinwiddie County, Virginia on January 29, 1790, the youngest of nine children of a local Methodist minister, Matthew Dance and his wife, Sarah Hill. "His great-grandfather was one of the earliest settlers of Virginia and assisted in building the first house in Jamestown colony."¹ Starting in 1799, Dance attended a private school in Charlotte County taught by Rev. William Spencer and continued at this and other schools until 1804. In 1807, he was converted "in a Prayer Meeting for colored people held on the farm of a brother-in-law."² In that same year, he began a five-year period of teaching, "making the Bible his specialty."³

Dance joined the Virginia Conference in February 1812 at its session at First Church in Richmond. For his first appointment he "was sent to Bertie County, North Carolina, where he had six churches and had to travel every four weeks 300 miles (on horseback, of course) and preach 28 times. . ." ⁴ In 1813 he became the first stationed Methodist preacher in the town of Manchester, now South Richmond. Reverend Dance was appointed private secretary to Bishop Asbury in 1814. When the Conference met in Norfolk that year, he was ordained deacon by Asbury and was assigned to the Raleigh Circuit. He served as secretary to the Virginia Conference from 1815-1822.

From the Conference in February 1815, Rev. Dance was sent to Richmond where he served First Church for a year. Within days of Dance's having been appointed to First Church, Asbury entered in his Journal on Sunday, February 26, "Thanks for the God of Peace! We are confirmed in the belief that a treaty has been made between the United States and Great Britain."⁵ Dance was the only Methodist minister in Richmond. "Although still quite a young man he maintained his position creditably."⁶

At the Conference held in Petersburg, February, 1816, he was elected to Elders orders, and was ordained by Bishop McKendree. By this Conference he was elected to the second delegated General Conference, which met the ensuing May in the city of Baltimore. He was stationed this year in the city of Petersburg, where he laid the foundation of a new church; and in 1817 he was appointed to the Cumberland Street Church in Norfolk.⁷

¹ W. D. Keene Jr., Ed., *Memoirs – 200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), p. 145.

² Arthur L. Stevenson, *Natives of Petersburg, Virginia and Vicinity in Methodist Ministry* (Brevard, N.C., published by author, 1973), p. 19.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, Vol. II, *The Journal 1794 to 1816* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 775. Footnote 15: "The treaty of peace with England had been signed at Ghent, Belgium, on December 24, 1814. Ratification by Congress occurred on February 17, 1815. For this a day of thanksgiving had been proclaimed."

⁶ Keene, p. 146

⁷ Ibid.

Dance was married around 1818 to Susan Truman Redd, daughter of John and Mary Redd of Prince Edward County. They had thirteen children, five of whom survived him.

When Conference met in Baltimore in 1820, he was elected a delegate to the General Conference for the second time, receiving all but two of the votes, one of which was his own. He was sent to the Brunswick Circuit that year, and in 1821 to the Mecklenburg Circuit.

In 1822 family circumstances dictated that he locate, and he settled in Prince Edward County, where he resided for fifty years. Dance was named to the first Board of Trustees of Randolph-Macon College when it met in Boydton, Virginia on April 9, 1830. At the first meeting of the Board, Rev. Dance was among the six members appointed to the first Building Committee. In 1840 he resumed his connection with the Conference, and for years he served "as a missionary to the colored people in his neighborhood."⁸

In later life he suffered much affliction. "Repeated attacks of paralysis so shattered his constitution that he had to desist from the active work of the ministry. The loss of his voice was a great trial to him, for he loved to preach; but the grace of God enabled him to submit so cheerfully, that others were constrained to glorify God in him."⁹

He died on March 8, 1873, at his home in Prince Edward County. Shortly before his death, "he said to a brother minister who visited him, 'I am dying, my limbs feel cold and dead, but my faith in God is stronger than ever.'"¹⁰

⁸ Keene, p. 147.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

REV. FLETCHER HARRIS
Served First Church 1816-1817

Fletcher Harris, the seventh of nine children, was a native of Granville County, North Carolina. He was born April 30, 1790, and raised in a Christian home where he was taught the scriptures from an early age. His parents, George A. and Keziah Earl Harris, were respectable and pious. The circuit riders were welcome at the Harris residence, and they counted it among one of their “preaching places.” Two of the Harris’s sons, Willis and Fletcher, became Methodist ministers.

Fletcher began to sense his call to the ministry after attending a camp meeting at age 21. Several years later, he was accepted into the Virginia Conference. His first two appointments were in North Carolina: the Terrel Circuit in 1813 and Neuse in 1814. About this time, Harris returned home for a visit and preached on several occasions. The congregation listened with astonishment that he proved himself “a minister that needed not to be ashamed.”¹ He was ordained deacon in 1815 and served both the Bedford and Lynchburg Circuits in Virginia.

In January 1816, Rev. Harris was appointed to serve First Church in Richmond. Within several months, he would experience a history making event – the delivery of Bishop Asbury’s last sermon at three o’clock on Sunday afternoon, March 24. Asbury was en route to Baltimore in anticipation of attending the General Conference that would convene May 2. Upon reaching Richmond, he made known his desire to preach in the old Methodist church.

“Perceiving his great weakness of body, some of his friends endeavored to dissuade him from preaching; but he resisted their discussions by saying that he must once more deliver his public testimony in that place.”² Bishop Asbury was carried from his carriage to the pulpit in a chair, where he was seated on a table and, frequently pausing for breath, preached for nearly an hour. The congregation was profoundly affected “. . . to see in the midst of these melancholy signals of decaying nature a great soul brightly beaming with immortality, and a heart kindled with fire from heaven’s altar.”³

After having rested on Monday, the party set out on the next leg of their journey but never made it any further than a friend’s home in Spotsylvania County. It was here that Bishop Asbury died a week later on Sunday, March 31, 1816. “Thus fell this great man (who in other fields might have been a Richelieu or a Caesar), leading an army of over two hundred thousand Methodists, which when he was ordained bishop, did not number fifteen thousand.”⁴

A plaque commemorating Bishop Asbury’s last sermon at First Church is mounted on the building occupying the northeast corner of 19th and East Franklin Streets, the site of the first Methodist church built in Richmond in 1799 – Trinity United Methodist Church’s first physical building.

¹“Memoirs of the Rev. Fletcher Harris,” Fletcher Harris, *Sermons on Important Subjects* (Granville County, N.C.: Willis Harris; Abraham Paul, Printer: New York, 1821), p.10. <http://hdl.handle.net/2007/nyp.334> (Google)

² Francis Hollingsworth, “A Short Account of His Death,” *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, Vol. III, J. Manning Potts, Editor-in-Chief (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 802.

³ Edward Leigh Pell, ed., *A Hundred Years of Richmond Methodism* (Richmond, Va: Idea Publishing Co., 1899), p. 34.

⁴ Ibid.

At the Virginia Annual Conference in 1817, Rev. Harris was ordained elder and returned to North Carolina to serve Newbern. He frequently rebuked himself for not staying in closer “communion with God.”⁵ In a paper dated Newbern, Thursday, June 25, 1817, he lays out a regimented plan in his quest for “growth in grace, knowledge, and general usefulness.”⁶

I design to rise early of mornings, (I cannot fix on any hour, because I cannot retire regularly; but I wish generally to allow about eight hours in twenty-four for sleep) and after the usual duties of the morning, I intend to commence the day’s labour by reading at least two chapters out of the Old and New testaments, as I may think proper; after this I purpose to read some spiritual or edifying book until breakfast, which we generally take about seven o’clock.

After this I intend to spend about one hour in perfecting my knowledge of the English grammar, and about as much in studying the Greek language, but never commenced it until yesterday. After this, I design to spend about one hour in the study of arithmetic, of which my knowledge at the time is superficial. This will bring the hour say, of eleven o’clock, from which time until four o’clock in the afternoon, I design to spend in writing and close study on the Holy Scriptures, which I design as a special preparation for the duties of the pulpit; reserving however, from the above space of time one hour to dine and for secret prayer.

The balance of the afternoon I design to improve in reading the writings of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Fletcher, or some other useful book, church history, or geography; reserving some little time from the above last-mentioned period to visit the brethren and friends.

I am resolved to guard my words more than I have done, and to watch against all sin. And now, in the strength of the Lord alone, and not in my own (for that is but weakness) I consecrate all the powers and faculties, both of my body and soul, to the services of God and his church. . . . Hence the maxim of Mr. Wesley, “Never leave that for tomorrow’s work which can be done to-day:” – similar to that of Solomon, “What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”⁷

[Signed] Fletcher Harris⁸

The following year he was appointed to Petersburg, Virginia, where he met with much success. They soon outgrew the old house of worship on North Market Street. The congregation undertook an ambitious campaign to raise funds to construct a splendid brick church on Union Street. While the new church building was under construction, Rev. Harris was stricken with a fatal illness and died September 18, 1818. He had served the Methodist church faithfully and diligently for five years. A family history described him as “a minister of great earnestness and power.”⁹

⁵ Harris, p. 15.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ecclesiastes 9:10 (KJV).

⁸ Harris, pp. 15-17.

⁹ Thurston Titus Harris (great nephew), *Sketches of William Hicks, Abner Hicks, Jasper Hicks, George Hicks etc.* (Henderson, N.C.: published privately, 1926). E-mailed from RosalieAnn Figge Beasley (Harris’ 4 x Great niece) January. 20, 2016.

REV. HENRY HARDY
Served First Church 1817-1818

It is not known when or where Henry Hardy was born or whether he married. In 1809, at the Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he was admitted on trial for the Virginia Conference and remained on trial at the 1810 conference. In 1811 he was admitted into full connection and ordained a deacon. In 1813 he was elected and ordained an elder.

The minutes of the Annual Conference record that Rev. Hardy served the following appointments: Williamsburg in 1809; Sussex in 1810; Suffolk, in the Norfolk District in 1811; Rocky Mount, North Carolina, in 1812; located in 1813; Richmond in 1817; Raleigh, North Carolina in 1818; Monumental Methodist Church in Portsmouth in 1819; Petersburg in 1820; and located in 1821.

While stationed in Richmond in 1817 and 1818, Rev. Hardy wrote two letters to the editor of a newspaper called *The Compiler*, taking exception to the statements and actions of Lorenzo Dow. Dow was an eccentric itinerant evangelist and Methodist in doctrine, although not officially a Methodist minister.¹

In 1822, *The Methodist Magazine* printed an account by Rev. Hardy of a series of camp meetings in which he participated in North Carolina between August and October 1821. At the two-day camp meeting in the town of Hillsborough, donations were gathered for the purpose of building a house of worship.² The Hillsborough Methodist Episcopal church had been organized in 1807 but met in the old courthouse until the 1821 camp meeting. After that, land was acquired and a wooden house on the lot was used as the first church building until about 1859, when a new church was built.³

Hardy wrote and signed his will October 25, 1825.⁴ It said in part, "I make this my last will and desire - in as much as I am weak in body and think I shall die . . . I wish my medicine disposed of to the best advantage - as my Executor may think most proper . . . if any thing is left after paying all my debts - I wish it to go into the hands of my father for him to dispose of as he may think proper. . ."

Hardy died soon after, on November 11, 1825, in Halifax, Virginia.⁵ A death notice published in the *American Beacon and Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser* November 15, 1825, referred to him as "the Rev'd Dr. Henry Hardy, for many years a Minister of the Gospel in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and recently a medical practitioner in that place."

¹ Peggy Dow, *The Dealings of God, Man, and the Devil as Exemplified in the Life, Experience, and Travels of Lorenzo Dow* (New York: Cornish, Lamport & Company, 1850), pp. 166-168.

² *The Methodist Magazine*, Volume V (1822), New York, published by N. Bangs and T. Mason, pp. 113-115.

³ Pauline O. Lloyd and Allen A. Lloyd, eds., *Hillsborough Methodist Church 1807-1961* (1961), pp. 13-14.

⁴ Wills and Probate Records of Halifax County, North Carolina 1825-1867, Vol. 4-5. Will of Henry Hardy, 25 October 1825.

⁵ *The American Beacon and Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser*, Vol. XXI (Norfolk, VA: Printed by Shields & Ashburn, 15 November 1825), p. 3, column 1.

REV. PEYTON ANDERSON
Served First Church 1819-1820; 1821-1822

Peyton Anderson's career as a Methodist minister was short; he died at age 28 with only 10 years as a clergyman. He was later remembered as a "man of good education, fine preaching abilities, and faithful laborer in the Master's vineyard."¹

Rev. Anderson was born February 9, 1795 in Chesterfield County, Virginia. He was the son of Nathan Anderson and Mariana Mayo, "parents who trained him to know the Lord from childhood."² While in school, he had a religious conversion. The last four years of his formal training were divided between seminaries in North Carolina and Virginia. Not yet fully persuaded that the ministry was God's will for him, he taught school for a brief period. Then, at age 19, Anderson applied for admittance into the Virginia Conference.

His first appointment, in 1814, was to the Bedford Circuit. As was the practice in those times, he travelled to a number of localities to preach. In 1815 he was sent to the Washington, North Carolina, Circuit, with the Swift Creek and Albemarle Sound Circuits soon added to his territory. In 1816, Rev. Anderson was appointed to the Raleigh Circuit, In 1817 to the Suffolk and Princess Anne Circuits and in 1818, he was assigned to she Sussex Circuit.

Rev. Anderson was then appointed along with Rev. William Peebles to the Richmond–Manchester Circuit from 1819 to 1820. This territory included First Church and the Methodist Meeting House on Shockoe Hill in Richmond, as well as Plank Church in Manchester, which would later be annexed by the City of Richmond. Shockoe Hill had not yet become a station. Anderson would spend the next year back in Raleigh before being reappointed to First Church from 1821 to 1822. Anderson strongly supported the Methodist Missionary Society. One author commented that he "earnestly recommended this noble enterprise [missions] to the people in his charge, and by his personal influence and the force of example, stirred them up to greater liberality."³

Anderson's years in Richmond were fruitful.

His standing with the people here was worthy of the true minister of Christ. While his labours were much blessed, his pious examples were admired by all who knew him. His skill in the regulation and management of church matters, was not the least of his excellencies. He endeavored to make himself well acquainted with his business and duty, and exerted himself for a faithful and punctual discharge of them.⁴

¹ *Richmond Christian Advocate* (Richmond, Va., May 26, 1932), p. 50.

² William W. Bennett, *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia* ((Richmond, Va.: published by the author, 1871), p. 703.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "Memoir of the Rev. Peyton Anderson," Hezekiah G. Leigh, *The Methodist Magazine*, Vol. 9. December 1826, p. 457. (Digitized by Google).

A memoir for Anderson stated "He was modest, unassuming and of excellent disposition. As a preacher he well understood and faithfully discharged his duty; as a Christian he conducted himself with so much circumspection, that no man... could say that his motives were not of the purest kind."⁵

In 1822 and again in 1823, Anderson was appointed presiding elder to the James River District, which included Richmond. He was held in high esteem and it was said that "The younger preachers of his charge esteemed him as a father, and the elder as an affectionate brother."⁶

Having recently travelled to Culpeper Courthouse from a quarterly meeting in Hanover, he fell ill with a fever and died August 27, 1823 in Culpeper, Virginia. Rev. Peyton Anderson was a young minister who died too soon, but in life he showed great potential.

Ironically, his younger brother, George M. Anderson, who had followed his brother into the ministry, had just been appointed to First Church, Richmond, in the March prior to his brother's death.

⁵ W. D. Keene Jr., ed., *Memoirs-200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), p. 84.

⁶ Leigh, p. 457.

REV. WILLIAM PEBBLES
Served First Church 1819-1820

William Peebles served First Church from 1819 to 1820, along with Peyton Anderson, as part of the Richmond-Manchester Circuit.

Peebles was born January 22, 1786, in Prince George, Virginia, when his father Lemuel was 40 and his mother Rebecca was 39. Peebles married Eliza Eldridge October 19, 1820, in Sussex, Virginia, when he was 34 years old. He and Eliza had one son, William Eldridge Lemuel Peebles. Rev. Peebles married Mary Baugh Hart May 6, 1828. Their son, George Washington Peebles, was born July 25, 1829, and their son, Benjamin John Hartwell Peebles, was born October 21, 1834.¹

Peebles was known as "Parson William" and lived on the old Peebles Settlement and in the original house built in the early 1700s until that house burned in 1828.²

Peebles' ministry in the Virginia Methodist Episcopal Conference began in 1816 when he was on trial. He was ordained as deacon in 1818 and appointed into full connection and ordained an elder in 1820. Among his appointments were Haw River; Caswell; Orange; Richmond-Manchester, which at that time included First Church; and Sussex, before he located in 1821. He then served Suffolk-Surry in 1825 and located a final time in 1826.

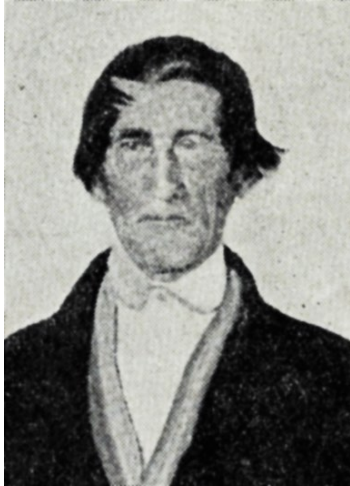
William Peebles died July 1, 1839, in Prince George, Virginia, when he was 53 years old.³ Probate records show that he left use of his land, slaves and other possessions to Mary as long as she remained his widow, with instructions to clothe and educate their two sons until the sons reached the age of 21. He left the plantation he had purchased from a Theron Gee and on which he was then living to his firstborn son, William E. L. Peebles. He also left money and slaves to his son William, which was to include money he had received from the estate of Susan Eldridge, his first mother-in-law. The remainder of his estate went to sons George and Benjamin upon their mother's death. His books were to be divided equally among his three sons.⁴

¹ Peebles Family Bible record, 1786-1834, <http://image.lva.virginia.gov/Bible/33053/index.html> Bible Record Image, The Library of Virginia, 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219.

² SusanHarrison139, Hull, Yorkshire, England, Ancestry.com, 16 September 2009.

³ Holt Family Tree, Ancestry.com, <http://person.ancestry.com/tree/12417862/person/13940979915/facts>.

⁴ Anne Bradbury Peebles, "Loose Wills of Prince George County before 1865", *Southside Virginian*, Vol. IX, No. 3, April-June, 1991. (Richmond, VA: 1991), p. 56.



REV. JAMES McADEN
Served First Church 1820–1821

At the time of James McAden's death in 1889, at "93 years, 9 months, and 15 days,"¹ he had the distinction of being the oldest minister in the history of the Virginia Conference. Oscar Littleton, the writer of his conference memoir noted, "He was perhaps the oldest preacher of any denomination on this Continent."² McAden, who had been born in Caswell County, North Carolina, August 15, 1795, was the grandson of a Presbyterian minister. In 1810, at the age of 15, he was converted when he attended a two-day Methodist meeting near what became the town of Milton, North Carolina. His mother, though raised a Methodist, had followed her husband into the Presbyterian Church. Once widowed, she soon became a zealous Methodist follower.

Little is known of his education, other than that a Presbyterian minister friend of the family, upon learning of McAden's calling to the ministry, offered to provide him with a good education and theological training for the Presbyterian ministry. After becoming more familiar with Methodist doctrine and policy, McAden never regretted having turned down the Presbyterian minister's offer.

At an 1812 Quarterly Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, he obtained approval to preach and became a local preacher at age 17. Two years later, with the Virginia Conference covering the larger portion of North Carolina, he applied for admittance and was received into the traveling connection. The conference that year was held in Norfolk with both Bishops Asbury and McKendree in attendance. Thus, McAden had the unique privilege of having had his first appointment jointly authorized by these two renowned bishops, the founders of Methodism in America. He was a witness to Bishop Asbury's sharp reproach when the minister at Norfolk led the preachers in an attack on the fine attire of the women in the church. It is recorded that:

Asbury took the part of the girls, and let fly at the dandies in the Conference. He arose amid the debate, and said that he preferred the women even in extravagant dress rather than to see a preacher walk into the Conference room "with fair top boots, red morocco straps hanging down to his ankles, and a great gold watch and seal dangling from a fob." . . . McAden, at his first conference, saw the grand old apostle of American Methodism, and saw too the mincing fellows in "fair top boots," badly routed by the batchelor [sic] Bishop while the belles in ribbons rejoiced at their discomforture.³

¹ "Death of James McAden," *Richmond Christian Advocate* (Richmond, Va., June 21, 1934), p. 50.

² W. D. Keene Jr., ed., *Memoirs – 200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998) p. 204.

³ John J. Lafferty, *Sketches of the Virginia Conference Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, (Richmond, Va.: Christian Advocate Office, 1880), pp. 9-10.

McAden's first appointment to Franklin Circuit in North Carolina necessitated that he travel extensively. "It was a six weeks' circuit with three preachers, thirty appointments extending from the Blue Ridge to Halifax County."⁴ As was customary at that time, it was a one-year appointment, his first of seven. The next, in 1815, was the Raleigh City Circuit, followed by appointments to Albemarle Sound, Mecklenburg, Portsmouth, Petersburg, and in 1820, to First Church, Richmond. First Church was one of two Methodist churches in the city at that time, with the other one its first offspring, Shockoe Hill.

The year 1821 brought two significant changes in McAden's life. First, he married Anne B. Simmons, of Mecklenburg County, Virginia. This union was to last 57 years and bless them with three children – William Baugh, Elizabeth Agnes and John Wesley McAden. The second change was an outgrowth of the first. The itinerant preachers of that time received such meager support that many of them sought location when they married, which was the case with Reverend McAden. Bishop Asbury had never failed to make his feelings known on the subject of the marital status of the ministers. At the Virginia Conference in 1809, he had proudly noted that of the 80 preachers in attendance "there are but three married men."⁵ He was even more explicit at a later conference when he stated, "I wouldn't give one single preacher for a half dozen married men."⁶ On still another occasion, he lamented "I believe the devil and the women will get all my preachers."⁷

When readmitted to the Virginia Conference in the travelling connection in 1826, McAden was appointed first to Greenville, then to Brunswick and to Greenville a second time in 1828. When readmitted in 1830, after locating again in 1829, he was appointed to the Brunswick Circuit; Mecklenburg in 1832; and to the Danville District from 1833 to 1836. He was appointed a trustee to Randolph-Macon College in 1835, and the following year, had the honor of serving as a representative from Virginia to the General Conference in Cincinnati, at which session the subject of slavery was the dominant issue. He returned to the Greenville Circuit in 1837, to Mecklenburg in 1838, Brunswick in 1839, and to Meherrin in 1840. He viewed a year during this time, when he served "as missionary to the colored people . . . as one of the happiest and most useful periods of his life."⁸

McAden located again and settled on a farm in Mecklenburg County, near the town of South Hill, Virginia. He preached while on location from 1841 until 1863, before being readmitted into the Virginia Conference for a third time. Twenty-two years of this final period in the Conference was as a superannuated member.

Delphine Hatch, in her article for the *Advocate*, wrote that her great-great grandfather "was a lover of nature and took frequent walks through the woods. There he would see so much beauty that he would often kneel under a tree and talk with his Master."⁹ She described this gentle and

⁴ Delphine Hatch, "THE LIFE OF THE REV. JAMES McADEN," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Richmond, Va., June 21, 1934, p. 6.

⁵ Lafferty, p.10.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ William W. Bennett, *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia* (Richmond, Va., published by author, 1871). p. 184.

⁸ Keene, p.205.

⁹ Hatch, p. 7.

kind man as being about six feet in stature with dark hair and blue eyes. He remained active and in good health until near the end of his life, the last few years of which he lived out in Brunswick County at the home of his son, John.

Despite being loved by his people and having accomplished good works, he regretted the years he was located. He was known to have said, "After I located I became worldly in my feelings, and it took me a long time to get back again my religious enjoyment" and with emphasis and tears, he said, "If I could live my life over again, I would never, under any pressure of temporal circumstances, abandon the Methodist itinerancy."¹⁰

He spent 77 years of his life in the ministry. In addition to Asbury and McKendree, his early years in the conference overlapped those of the noted Jesse Lee and the highly respected Thomas L. Douglass. Oscar Littleton, the writer of his memoir, surmises that McAden "perhaps preached more funeral sermons, and married more persons than all the preachers combined, of all churches, in the Circuit in which he lived."¹¹ The author further notes that, "The death of James McAden [on May 30, 1889] sundered the last link that bound the Virginia Conference, and perhaps the Methodism of this country, to the work and the men of the 18th century."¹²

¹⁰ Keene, p. 205.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid, p. 204.

REV. CALEB G. LEACH
Served First Church 1822-1823

Reverend Caleb Leach, son of Nehemiah and Mercy Bryant Leach, was born in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, around 1750. He married Molly Adams in Bridgewater November 18, 1780, and they had a daughter, Lydia, who was born October 15, 1782.¹ The early 1800s found him living in New York and Litchfield, Connecticut.

Rev. Leach applied for admission to the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1813. He was accepted on trial and remained on trial in 1814 while serving at Great Falls in the Baltimore District. The next year he was accepted into full connection and ordained deacon. His appointment was to Carlisle in the Baltimore Conference.

By 1822, Rev. Leach had transferred to the Virginia Conference and was assigned to First Church, Richmond. He was recognized by his peers for his leadership ability and elected a delegate to the General Conference that met in Baltimore in May 1824.

In February 1825, acting on the recommendation of the previous general conference “that each Annual Conference establish a Seminary of Learning, under its own regulations and patronage,”² the Virginia Conference appointed six ministers and six laymen to a committee to establish a seminary in Virginia. Rev. Leach and Rev. George M. Anderson, two recent past ministers of First Church were named to that committee. Randolph-Macon College was the result of their action, and Leach was a member of the college’s first board of trustees when it met April 9, 1830.

During the period from 1825 to 1833 (or 1834), Rev. Leach served Lynchburg, Bedford, Campbell County and Portsmouth, where he dedicated the new Dinwiddie Street Methodist Church. Leach was obviously playing an important role in the administration of the Methodist Episcopal Church as he was again elected a delegate to the General Conferences of 1828 and 1832.

Rev. Caleb Leach was the first presiding elder of the Currituck Mission in Currituck County, located on the Camden, North Carolina Circuit, when it was organized in 1839. However, the Quarterly Conference seem to indicate that Leach did not appear to be in attendance when it met on Roanoke Island because the minutes were signed by the preacher in charge.

Upon his death October 5, 1842³, the annual minutes of the conference did not publish the “Memoir” that was customary at that time, but Rev. Leach’s appointments and positions of high place in the church speak to his ability, devotion, and commitment to the Lord.

¹ Vital records from Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

² William W. Bennett, *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: published by the author, 1871), p. 709.

³ Samuel H. Riddel, *American Quarterly Register*, Vol. XV (Boston: American Education Society, February 1843), p. 346.

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REV. GEORGE MAYO ANDERSON
Served First Church 1823-1824

George M. Anderson was born in Chesterfield County, Virginia August 20, 1799, to Nathan Anderson and Mariana Mayo. "About the age of fourteen, he was deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly sought forgiveness through the blood of atonement."¹ He followed his brother, Peyton Anderson, into the ministry and joined the Virginia Conference in 1818. He was accepted in full connection in 1820, was ordained deacon and subsequently elected elder. From 1818 until 1825, he filled the usual circuits and stations, which included Bertie (1818), Williamsburg (1820), Edenton Street (1822), Richmond (1823) and Norfolk (1824).

Rev. Anderson was appointed to First Church, Richmond, in March 1823, along with Rev. John F. Andrew. "In the autumn of this year he lost his brother, Peyton Anderson, the Presiding Elder of James River District, whose death was the occasion of his removal to Petersburg to take the place of the appointed successor of his brother."² Andrew, evidently, served First Church alone for the remainder of the conference year.

Anderson married Martha Ann Rose of Richmond November 9, 1823. The wedding was performed by Rev. Andrew, with whom he had served at First Church..³

Like his predecessor at First Church, Rev. Caleb Leach, Rev. Anderson served on the committee appointed by the Virginia Conference in 1825 to make recommendations for establishing a seminary in Virginia. This action resulted in the 1830 founding of Randolph-Macon College at its original location at Boydton in Southside Virginia. "The college moved to Ashland in 1868 to escape the ravages of the Civil War."⁴ However, the railroad was a factor also, as it made Ashland more accessible especially to the students from the north. "Randolph-Macon remains the oldest Methodist-related College in continuous operation in the United States."⁵

Starting in 1825, Anderson "was victim of a physical disability."⁶ Thereafter "he sustained a superannuated relation to the Conference, and was a man of much suffering; but in the midst of all his afflictions he found God a present help in time of need."⁷

On February 1, 1827, Anderson was called as a witness before the Virginia General Assembly on an issue related to the separation of Church and State.

The committee [of Privileges and Elections] believing that the object of the 14th section [article] of the [1776 Virginia] Constitution is to prevent those who hold high and

¹ W. D. Keene Jr., ed., *Memoirs - 200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1988), p. 96.

² *The Christian Sentinel*, Vol. II, No. 28 (Richmond, Va., December 13, 1833), p. 110.

³ *Virginia Marriage Records 1700-1850*, Ancestry.com.

⁴ Randolph-Macon website, <http://www.rmc.edu/about/history>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Arthur L. Stevenson, *Native Methodist Preachers of Richmond, Virginia, and Vicinity*, (Brevard, N.C.: Published by author, 1975), p. 8.

⁷ Keene, p. 96.

influential stations in the Church being members of the Legislature, have adopted the following resolution: *Resolved, as the opinion of this committee*, That Humphrey Billups, a Delegate returned from the county of Mathews, is a Minister of the Gospel within the true spirit and intent of the 14th Article of the Constitution, and therefore not entitled to a seat in the present House of Delegates."⁸

Anderson was one of three witnesses called, although he did not appear to express any opinion about whether Billups was entitled to be a delegate. He testified that he was not acquainted with Mr. Billups's standing as a member of the Methodist Church. Then he was asked several questions about the distinction between a preacher and a minister. In the end, Billups lost his seat in the General Assembly.

"On the morning of the 7th of December, 1833, [George Anderson's] spirit left this abode of sorrow, as well as the tenderest ties of life, and doubtless took its flight to the paradise of God."⁹

⁸ *Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, Richmond, Va., 4 December 1826 (Richmond, Va., Thomas Ritchie, 1826), pp. 132-133.

⁹ Keene, p. 96.