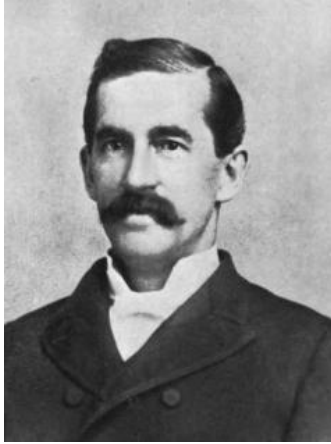




REV. JOSEPH RODGERS STURGIS
Served Trinity 1887-1890

Born May 19, 1844, in Baltimore, Maryland, to William Parker and Catherine Cutler Sturgis, Joseph Rodgers Sturgis was brought up with the teachings of the Bible beginning early in his life. He joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1869 and was licensed to exhort in 1870. He married Alice E. Bradshaw the next year, and in 1874 the couple moved to Virginia.

Rev. Sturgis was licensed a local preacher in 1875 and became a member of the Virginia Conference in 1878. His assignments included Ettrick, Ashland, Pungoteague and Richmond, where he pastored Trinity Methodist Church from November 1887 to January 1890. Rev. D. G. C. Butts took Rev. Sturgis under his wing of “brotherly interest” counseling him “with warm personal appreciation.”¹ Rev. Butts helped to lead him on his journey of divine calling.

While serving at Trinity in Richmond, Rev. Sturgis’ health declined and forced him to seek a superannuated relationship. In three years, he regained his strength and returned to pastoring with appointments to Wachapreague, Guilford, Nottoway, West Brunswick, Wakefield, North Pittsylvania, Bedford Springs, Brookneal, West Charlotte and Crittenden. Because of his health he again had to retire.

Rev. Sturgis and his family moved to Blackstone, Virginia, where a daughter lived. He became active in “the church, the Institute and the community,”² even preaching occasionally. He was assigned to Charlotte County, but after a year was forced to retire again because of his poor health. After being assigned to Saxe in Charlotte County, Rev. Sturgis then retired a third time for his health.

Moving to Brookneal, Virginia, where another daughter lived, in December 1920, Rev. Sturgis was as active as his health allowed. He preached, taught Sunday school, held prayer meetings, visited the sick and became beloved by the community and mourned by them.

Rev. Joseph Rodgers Sturgis, though short in stature, was full of zeal and perseverance for God’s call. “A big brotherly heart beat beneath his gentle breast, and a kindly spirit looked at you through his clear black eyes and spoke to you through his soft smooth voice. A gracious manner gave him easy approach to men, women and children, and enabled him to make enduring friendships out of passing fellowships.”³ His talent for poetry and music, his love of nature, his love of

¹ W. D. Keene Jr., ed., *Memoirs – 200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), p. 459.

² Paul Rogers, “The History of Our Ministers, Joseph Rodgers Sturgis 1903-1904,” Church Bulletin, Rocky Hock Church, Wakefield, VA, October 2, 2011.

³ Keene, p. 459.

God, and his evangelical spirit allowed him to always give glory to God in all ways and in everything he did. "As a husband and father he was affectionate and thoughtful, gentle and easy to be entreated, and his household rises up and calls him blessed."⁴

On April 19, 1921, Rev. Joseph Rodgers Sturgis heard his final call home after a brief illness. His wife and four of his five children accompanied his body to a small cemetery in Brookneal, Virginia, for burial.

⁴ Keene, p. 460.



REV. DR. JESSE THOMPSON WHITLEY
Served Trinity 1890

The Rev. Dr. Jesse Thompson Whitley served Trinity Church for almost one year, 1890, in a ministerial career that lasted almost 60 years. He began as a licensed minister in the Christian Church in 1869 at about age 20. As a minister, he was noted for his thoughtful scholarship, edifying sermons and inspiring writings; and as a man, he was admired for being faithful, high-minded, tolerant, and kind.

Jesse T. Whitley was born in Nansemond County, Virginia, February 6, 1850. He was the son of Mills W. and Margaret A. Whitley, who were religious individuals of different denominations. At age 15, under the ministry of Rev. W. B. Wellons, he made a profession of faith and joined the Christian Church.¹ The Christian Church denomination to which he belonged was an offshoot of Methodism.² For several years, Whitley assisted Rev. Wellons as assistant editor of the *Christian Sun*. When he felt called to ministry, he entered Richmond College to help equip himself for this vocation. Although he did not quite complete a full college education, he was licensed to preach in the Christian denomination in 1869 and was ordained an elder in 1871.

In November 1872, Whitley married Mattie S. Cathon of Suffolk. They later had two daughters.

After entering the ministry, Rev. Whitley distinguished himself both as a preacher and a writer and apparently continued working for a number of years on the *Christian Sun* as principal editor. This publication was known to advocate for union among Protestant churches. Rev. Whitley came to embrace this idea and ultimately concluded that the Christian denomination with which he was connected added one more to the already too numerous branches of Methodism.³ Therefore, in November 1879, he formally connected himself with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which was the parent body of the religious family to which he had always belonged.⁴

As a Methodist minister, Rev. Whitley was originally received in the Baltimore Conference in March 1879, but he was transferred in November of that year to the Western Virginia Conference and stationed in Parkersburg. By 1881 he had been appointed chaplain to the University of Virginia and transferred to the Virginia Conference, in which he served with “conspicuous ability.” His appointments in the Virginia Conference included Salisbury, Maryland; Elizabeth City, North Carolina; Broad Street and Trinity Churches, Richmond; Queen Street, Centenary and Larchmont in Norfolk; Calvary, Danville; Centenary, Lynchburg; Duncan Memorial and Ashland, including as chaplain to Randolph-Macon College; First Church, Hampton; and Main Street, Bedford. For

¹ W. D. Keene, ed., *Memoirs—200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), p. 529.

² John J. Lafferty, *Sketches and Portraits of the Virginia Conference Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Richmond, VA: Christian Advocate Office, 1890), p. 121.

³ Find a Grave Memorial #62462893, Created by Allison Stec Bell. Record added: December 2, 2010.

⁴ Lafferty, p. 121.

seven years, he also served as presiding elder—one year in the Farmville District, two years in the Charlottesville and four years in the Rappahannock.⁵

Rev. Whitley served Trinity Church from January to November of 1890. Although most ministers are appointed by the bishop at an annual conference, Rev. Whitley was appointed to serve Trinity by the presiding elder at a quarterly conference held at Trinity in January 1890. He was appointed to replace Rev. Joseph R. Sturgis, most likely because of Sturgis' declining health..

In 1904, Randolph-Macon College conferred on Rev. Whitley the honorary degree of doctor of divinity, in recognition of his conspicuous ability and faithful service.

In 1915, Dr. Whitley retired from active preaching because a throat condition with which he had been struggling for some time. He and his family moved to Norfolk, where he remained for the rest of his life. There, he found that, even though his ability to speak was limited, he could effectively use the written word to communicate with large numbers of people. Beginning in March 1916, he wrote a weekly column in the *Virginian-Pilot* newspaper "in the interest of righteousness." By April 1929, Dr. Whitley had written 657 such articles for the newspaper. He felt that this medium enabled him to "bear fruit," even in his old age, to a larger audience than he had ever before reached.⁶

Dr. Whitley also served the conference as assistant secretary for four years and as its editor and publisher for eight years. In 1920 he became secretary-treasurer of the Preachers' Relief Society, where he became known and loved for his compassionate distribution of the society's funds to needy claimants.⁷

On July 20, 1919, Dr. Whitley delivered a sermon at First Christian Church in Berkley, Virginia, where he had preached his first sermon 50 years prior. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his ministry, the Richmond Christian Advocate noted, "No man among us is held in higher esteem for his faithful service. Scholarly, an analyst and expounder of the scriptures of unusual ability, a faithful pastor and administrator, a man of irreproachable character, Dr. Whitley holds a place of commanding influence among us . . ." On this occasion, the Norfolk preachers' meeting passed a resolution in his honor.⁸

Even in his advanced years, Dr. Whitley tried to accept invitations to preach whenever he was physically able. On the last Sunday of his life, he preached in Suffolk, where he had formerly lived and worked. When he returned to his home in Norfolk that evening, he was exhausted, took to his bed and never rose. Pleurisy set in, and Whitley died Friday, November 1, 1929, with his wife and daughters by his side.⁹

A close friend said of Whitley, "Honest, true, faithful, high-minded, refined, he cannot stoop to a littleness or a baseness . . . He is the most faithful of friends, the most tender of husbands and fathers, and a true, earnest, high-souled Christian gentleman."¹⁰

⁵ Keene, p. 529.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Richmond Christian Advocate, Vol. 17, July 31, 1919.

⁹ Keene, p. 530.

¹⁰ Lafferty, p. 132.



REV. DR. PETER ARCHIBALD PETERSON
Served Trinity 1890-1893

In 1945, when Trinity moved the church from downtown Richmond to Forest Avenue in western Henrico County, a large, heavy slate-colored tablet moved west too. The name of Peter Archibald Peterson is inscribed on the tablet. Dr. Peterson was in his third year of service to Trinity when he passed away October 6, 1893. For nearly 70 years, the tablet could be found leaning against a wall in one of the Eaton Hall mechanical rooms below the sanctuary. Peterson was born in Petersburg, Virginia, September 28, 1828. His father, William, died early, leaving his wife Martha to raise their seven children. At age 14, Peter gave his life to God at a meeting in nearby Ettrick. Because of the family's financial circumstances, he had limited educational experience. From an uncle, he learned carpentry and building skills, and through this diligence and discipline, he also developed an appreciation for the value of hard work.

At age 18, Peterson enlisted in an Army company formed in Petersburg for the Mexican War. He was commissioned as a lieutenant and during this time had his first experience as a public speaker, addressing a crowd with a patriotic message. His company spent 18 months in Mexico but saw no fighting. After the war, he returned home and married Lucy A. Williamson December 28, 1848.

Eventually, Peterson could not deny the tug of the Lord and obtained a license to preach. In 1852 he was admitted on a trial basis to the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Fredericksburg where he was assigned to the Dinwiddie Circuit as a junior preacher. During the next eight years, he had five appointments as a preacher. In this time, his standing in the conference was becoming known, and in 1860 he was assigned to Dinwiddie Street in Portsmouth. The Civil War forced Rev. Peterson to relocate his family to Petersburg, where he served as the chaplain of the Twelfth Virginia regiment in the field until the annual conference in 1862.

During this conference, Rev. Peterson was appointed as the presiding elder to the Lynchburg District. He next served in the same capacity for the Norfolk District, and in 1875, Rev. Peterson took several important church assignments culminating with Trinity in Richmond in 1890.

Unfortunately, his tenure in Richmond was marked by a decline in health. Rev. Peterson's well-being had never been an issue for him, but severe colds, influenza and eventually what was perceived to be a dangerous tumor in his digestive track wore him down mentally and physically. By the second Sunday of September 1893, Rev. Peterson had preached his last sermon, and he made his last appearance at the preachers' meeting on Monday. Late on the afternoon of Friday, October 6, Dr. Peterson took his last breath.

A crowd that overflowed onto the grounds of Trinity attended Rev. Peterson's service Monday, October 9. The presiding elder for the district and assorted clergy friends conducted the service. After the service, his body was transported to Petersburg where he was laid to rest beside his mother at Blandford Cemetery.

During his 41 years of service in the Methodist Episcopal church, Rev. Peterson clearly used his gifts. An extensive summary of his life by Paul Whitehead indicates Peterson was the complete package. He was gifted in delivering sermons, had a great singing voice for Sunday services, was diligent in meeting the needs of his congregations and was a tactful administrator and manager of the churches he served in each district.

Rev. Peterson held a variety of positions in the general and annual conferences. Never afraid of extra work, he established himself as a powerful debater, writer and statesman. His skills did not go unnoticed as he was placed on the board of missions, elected to seven general conferences from 1866 to 1890 inclusive, considered for bishop, and elected to the board of trustees of Randolph-Macon College. Because of his dedicated service to the college, he received an honorary doctor of divinity degree in 1887.

From 1860 until the time of his death, he held the office of assistant secretary of the annual conference and established the practice of publishing its minutes.

Perhaps because he came from a family of seven children, or maybe because of his interaction with his own children and grandchildren, Rev. Dr. Peterson was gifted in communicating with children. Humor, tenderness and good-natured teasing are referenced in Paul Whitehead's biographical notes. In fact, the tablet stored in the Eaton Hall mechanical room for all those years was given by the children of the Trinity Sunday School program in 1893 as a tribute to Dr. Peterson. At the time of this writing, the tablet has found a new home mounted to the wall in Connection Alley just outside of the entrance into the children's Sunday school area.

SOURCES:

John J. Lafferty, *Sketches and Portraits of the Virginia Conference Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Richmond, Va., Christian Advocate Office, 1890) pp. 46-47 and pp. 73-75.

Paul Whitehead, "Memoir- Peter Archibald Peterson," W. D. Keene Jr., ed., *Memoirs-200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), pp. 237-241.



REV. DR. RICHARD HEBER BENNETT
Served Trinity 1893

With the sudden and untimely death of Dr. Peter Archibald Peterson in October 1893, Trinity needed a minister. Rev. Richard H. Bennett was sent to supply the pulpit until the annual conference met, resulting in Bennett only serving Trinity for three months. The annual conference did not consider the urgent request for Rev. Bennett to stay with Trinity, as Bishop John C. Granbery believed his services were needed more in Baltimore where he served at Calvary. A year later, Rev. Bennett requested a transfer back to Virginia despite protests from the board at Calvary.

Richard H. Bennett was born March 16, 1866, in Nottoway County at Blacks and Whites (now known as Blackstone, Virginia). His father was Dr. W.W. Bennett who had served as a president of Randolph-Macon College. At age nine, the future Rev. Bennett was accepted into Park Place Church in Richmond. He graduated from Randolph-Macon College in 1885 with a master of arts degree. He was an outstanding student who taught as an assistant professor in the departments of mathematics, French and English, while pursuing the study of theology and Hebrew in post-graduate courses.

In 1887 Rev. Bennett was licensed in the Charlottesville District of the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South but did not immediately accept any appointments to a church for financial reasons. After serving as a teacher and principal in Virginia and Tennessee, Bennett was licensed for a second time in the spring of 1889, this time in the Louisa Circuit. His first trial appointment was to Washington Street in Richmond. While there, despite his inexperience, Bennett built a church that had only a Sunday school program into a congregation that totaled 193 members. In 1895 he was appointed to McKendree, Norfolk, where he served for four years, followed by St. James, Richmond.

Rev. Bennett took a variety of conference assignments, including the general board of education. He developed a reputation as a much sought after speaker, with speeches highlighting traditional references and humorous stories. At some point, he became an extreme conservative in theology. Research by Arthur L. Stevenson revealed that Rev. Bennett could be outspoken and harsh on liberals. This approach resulted in requests for his removal from his position with the general board of education. During this time, Rev. Bennett left the church to become president of Lander College in South Carolina for five years, where he was successful in raising the enrollment and endowment significantly.

In 1925, accompanied by his wife, Bennett represented the Methodist Episcopal Church, South at the Life and Work World Conference in Stockholm. This same year, Hampden-Sydney College awarded him the Doctor of Divinity degree.

Eventually, Dr. Bennett returned to Virginia where he served three short pastorates before requesting retirement in 1936 while serving Lawrenceville Church. Bruce Bennett and his wife, Mamie

Bruce Bennett, raised three daughters and a son, who each followed their father's love of learning by earning their degrees. Dr. and Mrs. Bennett retired to a home in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, where he lived until his passing May 12, 1945. He is buried in Richmond at Hollywood Cemetery.

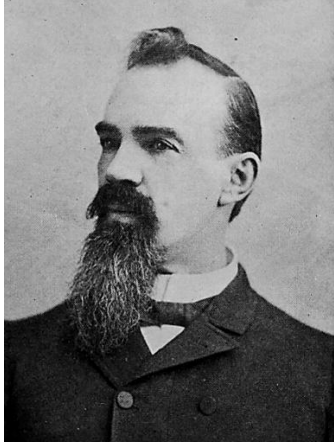
Although his tenure at Trinity was short, Dr. Bennett made significant contributions in his work as a Methodist minister, educator, and community activist. From 1907 to 1911, while serving at Court Street Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, the congregation raised \$20,000 as a foreign mission offering to build the D. L. Anderson Memorial at Soochow, China's Boston University. This offering was a significant achievement for Dr. Bennett and his congregation, and it reaffirms his skills as a leader.

SOURCES:

Arthur L. Stevenson, *Native Methodist Preachers of Richmond, Virginia, and Vicinity* (Brevard, NC, published by the author, 1978), pp. 10, 11.

John J. Lafferty, *Sketches and Portraits of the Virginia Conference, Twentieth Century Edition* (Richmond, Va., 1901), pp. 333, 335, 337.

Bernard S. Via, "Memoir-Richard Heber Bennett," W. D. Keene Jr., ed., *Memoirs - 200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), pp.689-691.



REV. JOSHUA SOULE HUNTER
Served Trinity 1893-1895

Several written accounts tell us Joshua Soule Hunter was a man you wanted as your preacher, pastor, counselor and friend.

Born August 26, 1844, and raised in Appomattox, Virginia, Hunter was the son of Robert Hunter and Pauline A. Slaughter. He received his training for the ministry at Union Theological Seminary, which was then located in Hampden-Sydney.

In February of 1869, he married Arrissa E. Elliott. They were blessed with seven children. Hunter turned to the ministry after fighting for the South in the Civil War.

"The fierce and fiery struggle of 1861 to 1865 did not soil his spirit or debase his feelings," George Booker wrote in *Memoirs – 200 Years!* "Sectional bitterness and prejudice found no place in [Hunter's] magnanimous heart, but with renewed loyalty to his country, he went forth to promote its interests and to contribute to the establishment and development of a common brotherhood."¹

Rev. Hunter applied for admission into the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1870 and was appointed to the Bedford Circuit. Following a two-year stay on the Bedford Circuit, he went to the Prospect Circuit and then to Louisa.

He fit the bill of the itinerant Methodist minister, serving churches in Norfolk, Lynchburg, Farmville (twice), Ashland, Mount Vernon and Danville in addition to Trinity in Richmond. He also served the Farmville and Charlottesville Districts over the course of his career.

Rev. Hunter was the presiding elder of the Farmville District in 1891 when he led the push for the establishment of Blackstone College for Women in Blackstone, Virginia.

In 1895, during Rev. Hunter's pastorate at Trinity, an Epworth League, forerunner of the Methodist Youth Fellowship, was organized for the young people. According to *A Hundred Years of Richmond Methodism*, the first league in Richmond had been formed at Clay Street Church in 1892, followed by Fairmount in 1893. Before the end of 1895, 14 leagues were represented in the newly organized Local Council.

Information printed under a picture published in the *Richmond Christian Advocate* included, "Behold a Christian gentleman never known to do or say an unkind thing."² The picture caption also noted Rev. Hunter was instrumental in bringing the Methodist Publishing House to Richmond. The publishing house was established in 1912 and was a direct result of John Wesley's skill as a publishing agent. Wesley established his creed by having his workers spread the word through

¹ W. D. Keene Jr., ed., *Memoirs – 200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), p. 501.

² *Richmond Christian Advocate*, (Richmond, Va., May 26, 1932), p. 19.

good books and papers. An article in the *Advocate* noted, “The Publishing House was the natural outcome of this spirit that had possessed our people from the beginning.”³

In 1905, Rev. Hunter became superintendent of Colportage for the West Richmond District and held that position for several years. In the nineteenth century, colportage referred to the work of traveling to sell books and religious publications, especially Bibles. Rev. Hunter and Richmond layman J. Lee Davis were key figures in establishing the Publishing House in Richmond, and Rev. Hunter remained connected to it until his death.

Rev. Hunter was remembered as a “man of constructive genius and of far-seeing vision, devoted to his church and anxious to advance its interests. He was always on the lookout for a chance to increase its efficiency and enlarge its boundaries.”⁴

Booker wrote in *Memoirs* that, as a preacher, Hunter was “original and unique, and therefore engaging and fascinating.”⁵

Rev. Hunter did not rely on stereotyped plans or forms. Instead, he preferred careful analysis, patient study, and thorough research. He also interpreted his ordination vow to visit from house to house strictly and literally. As Booker observed, “No man was ever more diligent in his efforts to reach the people, to assure them of his interest and sympathy and to impress them with his readiness to serve them in all times and under all conditions.”⁶

Booker added that Rev. Hunter was “unsurpassed as a counselor and friend...One could not have fellowship with Brother Hunter without being impressed with the sublimity and grandeur of life, its privileges and opportunities as well as its relation to the life to come...With invariable and unconquerable faith in God and his fellowmen, he was naturally an optimist, and had the ability to awaken this spirit in others.”⁷

Booker wrote, “Jesus Christ was undoubtedly the model after which [Hunter] patterned his useful and blameless life. Patience, cheerfulness, gentleness and unselfishness were among his loftiest attributes. Humility was one of his crowning virtues. With rare endowments and varied gifts, with splendid achievements and with marked success, he had no vestige of vanity or inordinate self-esteem.”⁸

Joshua Soule Hunter died in Richmond October 7, 1927.

³ “Virginia Conference Activities,” *Richmond Christian Advocate* (Richmond, Va., May 26, 1932), p. 79.

⁴ Keene, p. 500.

⁵ Ibid.

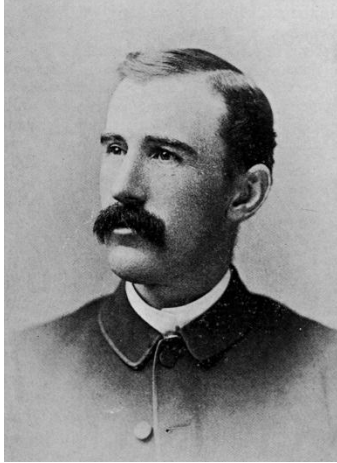
⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, p. 501.

OTHER SOURCE:

Edward Leigh Pell, ed., *A Hundred Years of Richmond Methodism* (Richmond, Va.: Idea Publishing, Co., 1899), p. 68.



REV. DR. JOSEPH THOMAS MASTIN
Served Trinity 1895–1899 and 1923–1926

Joseph Thomas Mastin was born May 2, 1855, in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. His father, James Mastin, died when Joseph was four years old. He then moved with his brother and mother, Catherine, to live on the farm of his maternal grandfather, Joseph Field, in Culpeper County, Virginia. Both sides of his family were early Colonial planters. The Field family had arrived in Virginia with Governor Spottswood and received a land grant in Culpeper County. Mastin primarily attended private schools there until age 18, when he entered Randolph-Macon College planning to pursue a medical career.

At Randolph-Macon, he was deeply influenced by Dr. James A. Duncan, then president of the college. Dr. Duncan was editor of the Richmond Christian Advocate during the Civil War, had become a noted Southern preacher and at Randolph-Macon was an esteemed teacher and leader. Already deeply religious and with Duncan's inspiration, Mastin changed his career and devoted his life to the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Within 15 years of leaving Randolph-Macon, Mastin had pastored 10 pulpits and become recognized throughout the conference for his missionary work. He was first appointed junior preacher on the Culpeper Circuit, serving Culpeper and Rappahannock Counties. He was then admitted on trial into the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and assigned to the Woodville Circuit, which required him to serve four widely scattered churches in Culpeper, Madison and Rappahannock Counties. As a junior preacher he had lived at home, but now he traveled and lived among his congregations.

After only one year, he was appointed to Orange County, Virginia. While serving in Orange, Mastin perhaps felt his first distinct call to missions as illustrated by correspondence with his bishop. In that correspondence, he requested an appointment on a frontier circuit in the Midwest. Though Mastin prepared for the appointment, the presiding bishop died in the interim and the appointment never materialized.

After two years, Mastin moved to the Wakefield Circuit, where he served four churches in Sussex and Surry Counties, Virginia. Over the four years from 1875 to 1878, he had progressed from a junior preacher earning \$70 and living at home to a full appointment serving four churches and earning \$480 annually. Shortly thereafter, he married Fannie Cowles Nottingham, who would share his life and ministry for almost 50 years.

In 1881, the Mastins moved to Bowling Green in Caroline County, Virginia, where his salary again increased, and for the first time, he was provided a parsonage. Under his leadership, Shiloh Church was built and dedicated in lower Caroline County. During this time, Mastin also began the social missionary work that would define his life. He extended his ministry to communities of Indians, Negroes and illiterate whites who lived within the Bowling Green Circuit. On a more personal level, the Mastins also adopted their only child, a daughter named Blanche, during their stay in Bowling Green.

In 1885, Mastin went to Bethany in Northumberland County, where he had a single church—his first station charge. But he soon discovered that nearby Reedville was not served, and he and his wife organized a Sunday School there. Reedville developed into a separate charge. Similarly, in 1888, Mastin was assigned to the Nottoway Charge, but when the Mastins found that the larger Crewe community had no Methodist church, they established their residence in Crewe. A year after accepting the Nottoway appointment, Mastin had not only served the charge to which he was assigned but also established a Methodist church in Crewe as well as the first YMCA on the Norfolk and Western Railroad line.

In 1892, Mastin undertook not only a significant ministerial assignment, but perhaps his first notable financial challenge. He was appointed to a new church in Norfolk that had an indebtedness of \$13,000 remaining from its \$25,000 construction cost. Mastin reduced the debt to \$4,000 in three years. This achievement demonstrated a financial acumen that would contribute to the missionary work which continued throughout his life. In Norfolk, Mastin and his wife also reached out to work with the Florence Crittenton Home. Florence Crittenton was part of a national network of homes for unwed pregnant girls established in 1883. The National Florence Crittenton Mission was the first U.S. national charter ever given to a charitable organization. The Crittenton Mission has today evolved into the National Crittenton Foundation focused on empowering “girls and young women impacted by violence and childhood adversity.”¹

Mastin was first appointed pastor of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1895. It was during this tenure at Trinity that he began his relationship with The Methodist Institute. The Methodist Institute was created in the 1890s as a Home mission, a social outreach of Methodist churches, by the Virginia Conference and upon Trinity Church’s recommendation. With Trinity again taking the initiative, Mastin also led the celebration of the Centennial of Methodism in Richmond. The commemoration spread to include the Methodist churches in what were at that time the separately incorporated areas of Manchester, Highland Park and Barton Heights. The Centennial gave birth to increased social involvement on the part of all the Methodist churches, and the Centenary Fund, collected from all the churches, was used primarily to support missions. Mastin served four years at Trinity, before returning to Norfolk to serve the Berkley station for one year.

In 1899, the Virginia Conference passed a resolution, authorizing the construction of an orphanage for the white orphan children of the Methodist Church. Mastin was named a charter board member of the orphanage in 1900, and when the first cottages were ready in 1902, he was appointed superintendent of the Virginia Conference Orphanage. The committee appointed by the conference proposed that he be paid a \$2,000 salary, equal to the salary of his Norfolk appointment. But, Mastin refused the salary for the first three years of the six that he served the orphanage. In those early years, the Mastins accepted only an allowance for boarding, clothing and travel. Because of his missionary commitment to the children, the orphanage opened with a debt of \$27,500 but was debt-free when Mastin left in 1908. During that time, the number of children housed at the orphanage grew from seven to a total of 97.

¹ nationalcrittenton.org

In 1908, Mastin was elected the first secretary of the Virginia State Board of Charities and Corrections, another entity which he helped form. He led this board for 14 years. In a “reflection” on Mastin’s life, E. J. Nottingham, III, noted the successes achieved by Mastin and the governors and legislators with whom he worked, overcoming the separation of church and state to “better life [for] the hungry, dependent, delinquent, and imprisoned.”² Based on the writings of Arthur W. James in *Virginia’s Social Awakening – The Contributions of Dr. Mastin and the Board of Charities and Corrections*, Nottingham said improvements for juveniles, the poor and the mentally insane, and better living conditions and health care for all prisoners derived perhaps from the personal visits that Mastin made to the “almshouses and jails in the 100 counties and some 20 independent municipalities (James, p. 10)”³ during his first year in office.

During Mastin’s tenure, jail reform separated children from adult prisoners and established boards of commissioners to improve distribution of the relief available to the non-institutionalized poor. In addition, he investigated and forced jails and state hospitals to improve conditions for mental patients. In 1910, the Virginia General Assembly created the Southwestern State Hospital for white criminally insane and the Central State Hospital for the Negro criminally insane. In the same year, the assembly established juvenile and domestic courts. Mastin also focused attention on the health care and living conditions of prisoners in the State Penitentiary in Richmond. In 1920, the assembly appropriated funds for a physician at the facility and health care for the convict road camps throughout the state.⁴

In January 1922, the Virginia state legislature converted the Board of Charities and Corrections into the State Board of Public Welfare. Mastin resigned the following year, after training his replacement. Unfortunately, his replacement resigned, and Mastin briefly returned until a new secretary could be appointed in 1926.

He had in 1922 already been appointed by the Virginia Conference as pastor of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the second time and superintendent of the Methodist Institute. By this time, the Methodist Institute had become one of the South’s oldest Home missions, but it was not financially sound. The Institute had survived because individual men had paid the interest on its properties. In 1920, prior to Mastin’s arrival, the Centenary Fund, which had been created during the Centennial celebration in 1893, had satisfied all the Institute’s mortgages. For his part, as he had done so many times before, Mastin refused a salary to support the work of the mission. Nevertheless, the Centenary Fund’s financing was not a long-term solution, and in October 1923, Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Institute under Mastin’s leadership united as Trinity Institutional Church.

It is important to understand that the Trinity Institutional Church maintained a parish of members with their own distinct spiritual needs throughout its approximately 20-year history, while Trinity Episcopal Church, South maintained a parish with distinct needs as well. Although, officially, the conference sometimes assigned a pastor to serve as director of the Institutional Church, at other times the pastor of the Trinity parish fulfilled both roles. Serving both roles from 1923 until his

²“Reflections Concerning the Life of the Rev. J. T. Mastin, Pastor and Leader in Virginia’s Social Awakening,” E. J. Nottingham, III, *Virginia United Methodist Heritage*, Vol. XX, Number 1, Spring 1994, p. 21.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid

official retirement as an active pastor in 1926, Mastin played a pivotal role as a leader in the social outreach of the Trinity Institutional Church throughout much of its history. The activities of the TIC reflected the social and economic events of its time – primarily the Depression, World War II and segregation. At the outset, the social and evangelical programs of the TIC were carried out by the Men’s Board and the Women’s Board of the Women’s Missionary Societies guided by Mastin. Mastin’s leadership role was assumed by other ministers, especially as his own health began to falter. Still, the work of TIC included a camp that bore his name and that was offered in the summer months to underprivileged white boys and for several weeks to underprivileged white girls. In the 1934 to 1935 Foreword to the Annual Report of the Trinity Institutional Church, Mastin wrote:

... Too often we have forsaken our church buildings in or near the slums and rebuilt in prosperous sections with result that underprivileged classes have to a great extent gone without the gospel...The Methodist Church through the instrumentality of Trinity is making the first real effort to cooperate with the relief and social agencies in the city and is having remarkable success. It is now in sympathetic contact with nearly every center in the city and the response has been remarkable. Thus, a great field of home mission work has been opened to the Church.⁵

Records of the Institutional Church’s work continue until May 1944, less than a year after Mastin’s death.

In addition to the Trinity Institutional Church, Mastin was an active member of both the Richmond social and faith communities during his retirement. He was a trustee of Randolph-Macon College; a founder of the Interdenominational Religious Work Foundation, “which undertook religious work in state institutions”⁶; and a trustee of the Board of the Citizen’s Service Exchange, “which provided training and work relief for the handicapped during” and after the Depression.⁷ During World War II, Mastin served as chairman of the Law Enforcement Committee under Governors Stuart and Davis. This committee’s role was “to supervise law enforcement in the communities contiguous to the training camps in Virginia.”⁸

His wife, who had been an active companion in his ministry, died in 1933. His daughter also preceded him in death.

For the last four years of his life, Mastin resided and was cared for at the Methodist Orphanage Infirmary. He was 89 years old when he died there September 2, 1943. His funeral was held consistent with his preference at Trinity, which was still located at 2000 East Broad Street. He is buried at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond. Two grandchildren survived him.

Having given most of his salary back to the churches and missions he served during his lifetime,

⁵ Bulletin, Board of Managers, Trinity Institutional Church, Methodist Episcopal, South (Richmond, Va., 1934-1935).

⁶ “Joseph Thomas Mastin, D. D.,” Henry Lee Robison, Director, Interdenominational Religious Work Foundation, Inc.

⁷Ibid.

⁸ Special Staff of Writers, *History of Virginia*, Vol. IV, Virginia Biography (Chicago & New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1924), pp. 89-90.

Mastin, not unlike John Wesley died penniless. At his death, the Virginia Public Welfare bulletin wrote:

Dr. Mastin's contributions to the spiritual well-being of his people were always gladly and unstintingly given, just as he often toiled long hours for little or no pay in order to improve the physical and material well-being of the underprivileged. He died rich in years and in the esteem and love of his church, his State and his fellow men, but poor in the worldly goods. He was a great Virginian.⁹

Following Mastin's death, Dr. Douglas S. Freeman, editor of the Richmond News Leader and a long-time friend of Dr. Mastin wrote:

... No man of his generation in Virginia, or of any other generation, did so much for those who failed in the battle of life or strayed in ignorance or folly from the way of righteousness. ... His life was gentle, and his impulse was to love; but he had absolute dedication of spirit, and when he put his hand to the plow, he never looked back ... Not once did he abandon a cause to which he had given himself, or say of a goal that it was not worth attaining. Of such as he is the kingdom of heaven.¹⁰

The conference commission on social welfare, upon learning of his death, paused to remember Mastin at its September 3, 1943, meeting. The minutes from that meeting read:

.... He believed in a gracious God who is the Father of all men and in the ideal Jesus presented of a society in which men live together in love and co-operation. To this end he dedicated all his resources.¹¹

⁹ Nottingham, p. 23.

¹⁰ Robison.

¹¹ 1943 *Virginia Conference Annual*, "Commission on Social Welfare, Report No. 1," p. 111.

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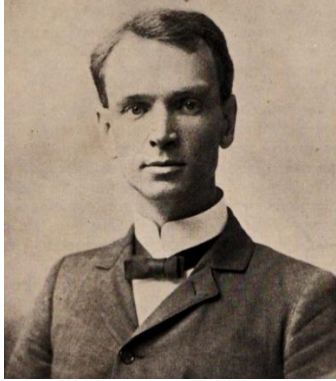
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REV. DR. GEORGE HANSFORD SPOONER
Served Trinity 1899-1903

George Hansford Spooner was born in Charlottesville, Virginia, February 12, 1864. Reared in an atmosphere that cherished “lofty aspirations and exalted ideals,”¹ these were reflected in his life and character. After completing high school in Charlottesville, he attended Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (now commonly known as Virginia Tech) where he studied engineering with the expectation of pursuing this profession. Upon returning home, Spooner underwent a change of heart and had a strong conviction that he should preach the gospel. He consulted his uncle, the Rev. Jacob Manning, who confirmed Spooner’s belief that it was his duty to preach.

To prepare for this important work, Spooner attended the University of Virginia and undertook coursework in support of this sacred calling. Upon completion of his university work, he was licensed to preach. In 1891, Rev. Spooner joined the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and was assigned to the Rappahannock Circuit.

In 1893 he married Prudence E. Allen of Culpepper, Virginia. Her gracious, cordial spirit won her a host of friends. Mrs. Spooner was so finely equipped for the position of mistress of the household that none of the annoyances of the household reached Rev. Spooner’s study. She absorbed or sidetracked them. A congregation does not always know that the brilliant sermon had genesis in a regulated dining room and in the serenity of the “Mistress of the Manse.” The wife can make or mar the pulpit.²

The Spooners’ union was blessed with four children. Morris Allan, who became area supervisor with the U.S. Army headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida; George Hansford Jr., who was assistant general passenger agent of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad with offices in Wilmington, North Carolina; Prudence Hains, who was head of the English department and librarian at Reedville High School; and Dorothy (Mrs. Harry Garber), who was dean of freshmen at Madison College, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Randolph-Macon College, Ashland, Virginia, conferred on Rev. Spooner the honorary degree of doctor of divinity, a distinction to which he was considered eminently entitled.

At the expiration of his term on the Rappahannock Circuit in 1894, Dr. Spooner began serving the following appointments in succession: Amherst; Princess Anne and Lambert’s Point in Norfolk; Trinity and Broad Street in Richmond; Monumental in Portsmouth; Market Street, now Trinity in Petersburg; Mount Vernon in Danville; Farmville; Bedford; Franklin and Chester. At Trinity in Richmond, Dr. Spooner had to fill the “big shoes” of Dr. Joseph Mastin who preceded him in the first of Dr. Mastin’s two appointments to Trinity.

¹ W. D. Keene Jr., Ed., *Memoirs – 200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), p. 745.

² John J. Lafferty, *Sketches and Portraits of the Virginia Conference, Twentieth Century Edition* (Richmond, Virginia: Christian Advocate Office, 1901), p. 369.

While at Chester, ill health forced Dr. Spooner to retire from active ministry. With his wife and daughter Prudence, he made his home for one year with his other daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Harry E. Garber in Harrisonburg. While there, plans were completed for him to reside in Bedford, Virginia, where many members of the Methodist Episcopal Church asked him to live. As a preacher, Dr. Spooner was forceful, dramatic and eloquent. He was frequently asked to speak at high school and college commencements. He was a gifted speaker with “no vestige of egotism or self-conceit.”³ As a pastor, he carried the master key that unlocked every human heart. He was an engaging conversationalist and his parishioners looked forward to his pastoral visits, which might hear him relate the experiences and incidents of his useful life and then invoked for them the guidance and blessings of God.⁴

In facing the trials and responsibilities of life, its victories and defeats, he did so with the courage and fidelity of a loyal and valiant soldier of Christ. Dr. Spooner manifested a special interest in the young people of his congregation. He persuaded many of them to enter the various fields of Christian service and led some into the ministry. He educated two young men for the ministry at his own expense.

As a husband, he was considerate and devoted; as a father, he was kind and indulgent; and as a friend, he was loyal and sincere. He was true without pretense, generous without ostentation and consecrated without hypocrisy.⁵ He was fond of reciting poetry in his sermons and addresses.

The last years of his life were spent in the home of his daughter, Mrs. Garber, and it was there that he died December 9, 1949. His funeral service was also held there. His body was interred in Woodbine Cemetery, Harrisonburg. His glorified spirit dwells with his Saviour – “in a land upon whose blissful shore, there rests no shadow, falls no stain. Where those that meet, shall part no more and those long parted, meet again.”⁶

³ Keene, p. 745

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, p. 746.

⁶ “There is a Land Mine Eye Hath Not Seen,” a hymn by Gurdon Robins, found in the *Psalmist* (Boston, Mass., 1843)



REV. DR. JOHN HANNON
SERVED TRINITY 1903-1904

Dr. John Hannon served Trinity for one year of his 47-year ministry. Trinity is fortunate, however, to count Hannon among the gifted preachers to have graced its pulpit. Throughout his ministry, he was a zealous and loving Christian pastor, orator, poet, humorist, environmentalist, healer and family member. Some referred to him as “John, the beloved.”¹

John Hannon was born in Montgomery, Alabama, November 8, 1845. His long-time friend, W. W. Royall described Hannon as well-born, his family being among the most prominent in Montgomery. On his maternal side, his family line ran back to Virginia, where, by “long residence and loving assimilation,” he later became “thoroughly a Virginian.”²

Hannon attended private schools in Montgomery until 1862, when he entered the University of Alabama as a cadet. In the fall of 1863, he entered the Confederate army as sergeant-major in the Twenty-fourth Alabama Battalion, Hannon’s Brigade of Wheeler’s cavalry.³

At the close of the war, Hannon became bookkeeper in the banking house of Micou & Morgan. After two years, he entered Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, where he earned his A.M. degree and joined the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South on trial in 1871.⁴

Rev. began with a one-year appointment at Culpeper Station but then was sent to Baltimore, where he remained for four years. He was then transferred to New Orleans as pastor of St. Charles Avenue Church where he served for four years.⁵

While Rev. Hannon was stationed in New Orleans, an epidemic of yellow fever occurred. His friend, the Rev. Richard Ferguson, observed that Rev. Hannon stood at his post with Christian courage, faithfully ministering to others until he himself was stricken down. Once he recovered sufficiently, he came to the mountains of Virginia to recuperate.⁶ After returning to Virginia, he was appointed to Park Place Church in Richmond and served four years. During this time, the University of Alabama conferred on him the degree of doctor of divinity.⁷

¹ W. D. Keene, Jr., Ed., *Memoirs – 200 Years! Soldiers of the Cross 1785-1987* (Decorah, Iowa: Amundsen Publishing Co., 1998), p. 463.

² John Hannon: Preacher, Essayist, Wit, Humorist, Christian. Edited by Mrs. John Hannon and Rev. D. G. C. Butts, 1924; in “Memoir of Rev. John Hannon, D.D.,” by W. W. Royall, p.78. (Hereafter, Hannon & Butts)

³ John J. Lafferty, *Sketches and Portraits of the Virginia Conference, Twentieth Century Edition* (Richmond, Va., 1901), p. 265.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hannon & Butts, p. 21.

⁷ Lafferty, p. 265.

Rev. Hannon was described during his years at Park Place Church as follows:

He was everybody's friend and everybody was his friend. He carried sunshine wherever he went and his presence in the home where there was sickness was a benediction of good cheer and liveliness that seem to carry a therapeutic value. . . All of Richmond loved and honored him; no preacher in Richmond was so much talked of as was he. He was eccentric to the last degree—but his eccentricities were never a handicap to him. They added to his personality an attractiveness that made him to be sought after by all classes.⁸

Large crowds attended Rev. Hannon's services at Park Place, and often it was difficult to accommodate everyone. From Park Place, he became in 1884 the first pastor of Memorial Church in Lynchburg. In 1887, Rev. Hannon was transferred to the Pacific Conference, where he served four years in San Francisco, four years in San Jose, three years in Ukiah and two years in Alameda. While he was in San Jose, in 1893, he married Lucy Haile, who was then a student at Stanford University.⁹ Rev. Hannon said: "A little brown sparrow has crept down into the extinct volcano of my heart and built her nest."¹⁰ They had a daughter, Helen, and a son, E. Carroll Hannon. The Hannonns enjoyed a long and affectionate marriage.

In 1900 Rev. Hannon received a transfer from the Pacific Conference back to the Virginia Conference, where he was appointed to Union Station Church, Richmond.¹¹ From Union Station, he was appointed to Trinity in 1903. In 1904 he was posted to Cabell Street Memorial in Danville, then to South Boston, then to Wright Memorial in Portsmouth and finally to West End in Lynchburg, from which he retired.

At first blush, it seems contradictory that Hannon, the man of God, was also Hannon the soldier in his early adulthood. John entered the Cavalry Service under "Fighting Joe Wheeler" from his studies at University of Alabama, serving until the end of the war in the Western Army. While in the Army, Hannon always found a place to read his Bible, and when the opportunity afforded, he would give his fellow soldiers talks on their religious duties.¹²

Rev. Hannon's long-time friend, the Rev. Richard Ferguson, noted that Hannon was preeminently a man of prayer, "unique in speech and thought." His public speeches were "profuse with figures of speech, tropes, and metaphors and hyperbolic phrases, hard to imitate or describe," and yet Rev. Hannon was a simple and pure man of God.¹³

The concluding chapter of the conference-commissioned book of Rev. Hannon's sermons, sayings and writings is devoted to "Hannonisms"—quotable quotes uttered by this good and lyrical

⁸ Hannon & Butts, in "John Hannon As I Remember Him in 1883," by Rev. A. G. Wardlaw, p. 30.

⁹ Lafferty, p. 265.

¹⁰ "John Hannon, The Preacher Who Thought in Metaphors," H. H. Smith, *The Richmond Christian Advocate*, March 17, 1927.

¹¹ Lafferty, p. 265.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hannon & Butts, pp. 18-19.

man.¹⁴ The book was assembled by his widow and the Rev. D. G. C. Butts. His biographers note that many writers and speakers can turn a poetic phrase when poetry is the task before them. Hannon was unique in that even his everyday speech and writing were filled with metaphors, personification, mythical allusions and colorfully descriptive phrases. Many said that Rev. Hannon's prose was itself poetry.

This poetry, however, was not of the disciplined variety. He regularly "mixed his metaphors," skipping from one image to another, even within a single sentence. He was imaginative and ebullient in almost everything he said or wrote. As his friend W. W. Royall said,

His literary style was the despair of all who attempted to criticize it. He thought in metaphors. To drag him down to plain language was like hitching "Pegasus to a plough." But there was never an acid or a bitter word in it. Love touched and toned it all.¹⁵

Rev. Hannon's oratorical skills also had great practical value to the church. He was widely known for his lectures, especially "Dynamite" and "The Tub Philosophy of Diogenes."¹⁶ With his humor in these lectures, he delighted the hearers, and the proceeds from admission charges often helped to found or strengthen new and struggling churches.

In his memoir of Hannon, W. W. Royall notes that one of the beautiful things in Rev. Hannon's beautiful life was his tenderness for his mother. She was an annual visitor in every parsonage where Hannon lived, "the precious mother, queen of the home, drinking huge draughts of happiness out of a long-necked bottle, labelled 'John.'"¹⁷ And his mother's love was reciprocated by her son. He wrote that his mother spent a great deal of time with him during her widowhood and his bachelorhood. Rev. Hannon's mother died quietly at age 85 in the house where she had spent her life. Of her life, Rev. Hannon said, "It was a song, not loud, but sweet."¹⁸

When Rev. Hannon's retirement from active ministry was announced at the meeting of the Annual Conference in Lynchburg in November 1917, his witty remarks on the floor were interrupted by John Victor, a representative of Lynchburg's Memorial Church, of which Rev. Hannon had been the organizer and first pastor some 33 years prior. Victor presented to Rev. Hannon the title deeds of a residence in Lynchburg, which members and friends of Memorial Church had purchased for him and his family.¹⁹ Hannon thus spent the last four years of his life in peace and comfort, thanks to the loving hands and hearts of the people of Lynchburg.²⁰ He died in this residence September 2, 1921.²¹

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 345-416.

¹⁵ Hannon & Butts, in "Memoir of Rev. John Hannon, D.D.," by W. W. Royall, p. 81.

¹⁶ "The Tub Philosophy" may be found in Hannon & Butts, pp. 303-322. No copy of "Dynamite" was found.

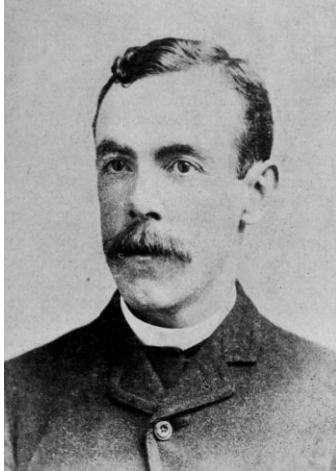
¹⁷ Hannon & Butts, in "Memoir of Rev. John Hannon, D.D.," by W. W. Royall, p.78.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Hannon & Butts, in "Current Newspaper Report (of Virginia Annual Conference, November 1917, Lynchburg, Va.)," pp. 35-40.

²⁰ Hannon & Butts, in "Memoir of Rev. John Hannon, D.D.," by W. W. Royall, p. 35.

²¹ Ibid, p. 77.



REV. GEORGE HOWE WILEY
Served Trinity 1902-1905

George Howe Wiley was a native of Richmond, Virginia, born May 8, 1859.¹ He was licensed to preach in November 1885 and joined the Virginia conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South a year later. He was on trial in 1886, a deacon in 1888, in full connection in 1888 and an elder in 1890.

Rev. Wiley married Catherine Estelle "Stella" Cheatham in 1895. They had 11 children in 18 years. He died September 6, 1930, at age 71.² He is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Richmond.³ Early in his ministry he was stationed as follows within the Virginia Conference:⁴ From 1886 to 1887 at Fifth Street in Manchester; from 1888 to 1889 at Trinity in Lynchburg; 1890 at City Mission in Lynchburg; 1891 in West Charlotte; from 1892 to 1894 in Appomattox; from 1895 to 1897 in West Campbell; 1898 in East King and Queen.

Once Wiley was located back in his hometown of Richmond in 1899, it became clear that he saw mission work as his purpose in life. His appointments from 1899 forward were to various Trinity church pastors. He was first appointed to City Mission in Richmond from 1899 – 1902. He then served as assistant pastor to Rev. Dr. George H. Spooner, serving City Mission, from 1902 to 1908; John Hannon from 1903 to 1904 and James Sidney Peters from 1904 to 1904. In April 1900 the Epworth League, a Methodist association for young adults, secured a large vacant building at Brook Avenue and Baker Street in connection with his mission work.⁵ In May of that year, Rev. Wiley was negotiating for a large building at Nineteenth and Main Streets for an "industrial institute" to be run by Richmond Methodists,⁶ or the Methodist Institute as it would become known. This building was the former United States Hotel.⁷

In January 1901, Rev. Wiley and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union inaugurated a Sunday morning coffee house service at the Methodist Institution for Christian Work. He said that he chose Sunday morning for this service because "more men were drunk on Saturday night than at any other time, and that, therefore, a large number would need a stimulant the next morning."⁸ In December 1901 he began setting up an employment bureau "to be of service to persons who are out of work and want it, but do not know where to find it."⁹

¹ John J. Lafferty, *Sketches and Portraits of the Virginia Conference Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Richmond, Va.: Christian Advocate Office, 1890), pp. 216-217.

² *Certificate of Death, Commonwealth of Virginia*, stamped 21252, registered no. 1901. Although ancestry.com says he died in Wise, Virginia, the death certificate says he died in Richmond (Henrico County).

³ Website www.findagrave.com, memorial # 30145978.

⁴ *Minutes of the Virginia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (various years).

⁵ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "The Ministerial Union," April 4, 1908.

⁶ *Richmond Times*, "Industrial Institute," May 30, 1900.

⁷ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Doing a Good Work," February 17, 1901.

⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Sunday Morning Lunch," January 17, 1901.

⁹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 21, 1901.

In March 1902 a newspaper described the activities of Rev. Wiley's Methodist Institution for Christian Work. The headline was "Here Is a Hotbed for Stories of Great Human Interest / They Come to Superintendent Wiley Daily in the Transformed Old United States Hotel, Nineteenth and Main Streets---Some Curious Things." It said, "It is not generally known that this is the place where hundreds of the tramps and drunkards of the most abject type go, and are treated kindly, and for the first time probably in their lives get a taste of what Christianity is. . . ." ¹⁰

In April 1902, Virginia Union University gave Wiley's mission a deed of sale for the former hotel building at Nineteenth and Main Streets. A newspaper article said, "The work at this mission has been very successful under the direction of Rev. George H. Wiley. It will be considerably enlarged in the near future." ¹¹

In December of that year Wiley submitted the annual report of the Methodist Institute. In it, he recommended setting up public baths, "where facilities may be had by 2,000 people who are without comfortable arrangements for bathing at their homes." He also said, "We have solved to a large extent the problem of how to get the worst of men to our meetings; it is to go after them in Salvation Army style, with bass drum and cymbals." The report said that "a thousand men have been fed at the Mission lunch counter. . . . The beds of the Mission have afforded a resting place for 700 different men from all parts of this country, and many foreign nations. Two-thirds of the lodgers paid for their lodging in money or labor." ¹²

In 1903 anxiety arose about whether the Methodist Church would allow Wiley to continue his work in Richmond. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, in an article entitled "Trying To Keep Rev. G. H. Wiley," said, "If the efforts set afoot as the result of a movement begun here are successful, the Rev. George H. Wiley will continue at the head of the Methodist Institute, of this city. Under the laws of the Methodist Church, the ministers have to move at the expiration of four years. Mr. Wiley has served the full term, and unless something is done he will be compelled to leave the work to which he has given the best efforts of his heart, head, and hand. . . . One avenue of escape presents itself, and so far as is known, only one. Mr. Wiley may be given a nominal appointment to Trinity or some other church, and allowed to continue his present work. An effort is now being made to arrange it so that this can be done." ¹³

The next month, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* indicated that these efforts had been successful: "At the meeting of the Board of Missions this afternoon, it was positively announced as coming from the bishop, that the Rev. George H. Wiley will be returned to his present work. This will be read with gratification by all the people of Richmond." ¹⁴ A few days later it was discovered that Methodists in Jacksonville, Florida, had tried to get Rev. Wiley for themselves: "It leaked out during the session of the Methodist Conference in Charlottesville that a strong movement was being made to get Bishop Hendrix to send the Rev. George H. Wiley, of this city, to Jacksonville,

¹⁰ *Richmond Times*, March 16, 1902.

¹¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 18, 1902.

¹² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Mr. Wiley's Work," December 7, 1902.

¹³ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Trying To Keep Rev. G. H. Wiley," October 28, 1903.

¹⁴ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Mr. Wiley Will Return," November 13, 1903.

Fla." Wiley had previously visited Jacksonville "and laid there the foundation for a work similar to that he has conducted here with such marvelous success."¹⁵

That December, the Methodist Institute held a Christmas feast for the poor of Richmond. A newspaper announcement added, "A source of regret will lie in the fact that the superintendent of the Institute, the Rev. George H. Wiley, will not be present on account of the sad death of his little girl."¹⁶

In May 1905, Wiley was injured when his horse carriage was struck by a speeding car. He "received a painful scalp wound, and was severely [sic] bruised about the chest and body."¹⁷ This may or may not be related to the fact that six months later he was not appointed for health reasons. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* said, ". . . in Richmond proper every minister was returned for another year of work at his old post with the single exception of the Rev. George H. Wiley, the condition of whose health forced his retirement for a year or two."¹⁸

Nevertheless, he seems to have continued to be active. Two months later, in January 1906, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported that a charitable movement had been started to provide a building as a home for the temporary relief of ex-prisoners of the city and county jails and the state penitentiary. "Mr. George H. Wiley, a man who has spent years of his life in ministering to the wants of the poor of the city . . . will be in active charge of the work."¹⁹ Later that same month, he was elected superintendent of the Ex-Prisoners' Aid Society of Virginia.²⁰

In later years, he continued his activity as a minister and evangelist. For example, in September 1908, he preached three times each day at a revival in Culpeper.²¹ In February 1909, the news was that "Evangelist George H. Wiley, of Richmond, has been conducting a revival at Colonial Beach."²² In August 1911 it was announced that "Rev. George H. Wiley, D. D., one of the leading Methodist evangelists in the state, will come to Hampton on September 28 to conduct a series of revival services in Central Methodist church for ten days."²³ In 1916 he was conducting revival services at the Baptist Tabernacle: "The pastor, Rev. George H. Wiley, is preaching every night to large congregations."²⁴

Little seems to be known beyond that point. As mentioned earlier, he died August 29, 1930.²⁵ His wife survived until 1952.²⁶ Their last child, Paul Garland Wiley, was born October 29, 1914, became a minister and lived until 2011.²⁷

¹⁵ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "They Were After Rev. Mr. Wiley," November 19, 1903.

¹⁶ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "A Great Dinner for Richmond Poor," December 29, 1903.

¹⁷ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Narrow Escape," May 28, 1905.

¹⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "New Pastors for Local Churches," November 16, 1905.

¹⁹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Ex-Prisoners To Have a Home," January 6, 1906.

²⁰ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Ex-Prisoners' Aid Society," January 24, 1906.

²¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Revival at Culpeper," September 10, 1908.

²² *Irvington Virginia Citizen*, "Religious," February 26, 1909.

²³ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Rev. George H. Wiley Will Conduct Revival," August 15, 1911.

²⁴ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Interest Continues in Revival Services," March 30, 1916.

²⁵ *Certificate of Death, Commonwealth of Virginia*, stamped 21252, registered no. 1901.

²⁶ Website ancestry.com entry for "George Howe Wiley 1859-1930".

²⁷ Ibid.



REV. JAMES SIDNEY PETERS
Served Trinity 1904-1906

J. Sidney Peters was born in Berkley, Virginia, just outside of Norfolk November 12, 1866. His mother was the former Susan Agnes Lumsdem, a saintly woman who lived a service-filled life reminiscent of Susanna Wesley with its order and discipline. His father was John W. Peters, the commonwealth attorney for Princess Anne County. Like his father, Sidney studied law after attending Randolph-Macon and Hampden-Sydney Colleges. He was precocious and driven and when elected was the youngest Virginia legislator, representing Lynchburg and Campbell County. On the day Peters was to go before the examiners to secure his license to practice law, this pastor-politician went instead to the Methodist Quarterly Conference in Danville to secure his license to preach. He seemed to be following in the footsteps of his maternal grandfather, James Lumsden, who had been licensed to preach at Trinity in Richmond in 1832.

Rev. Peters married Miss Victor Morgia Brandon of Campbell County in 1886. Their union of 17 years produced two children: Dr. William Anthony Peters, physician, and Dr. John Brandon Peters, pastor. Rev. Sidney Peters' son, John Brandon, served in the Virginia Conference, Georgia, and St. Louis and was briefly dean of Candler School of Theology at Emory University. His grandson, John Brandon Peters, named for his uncle, served Trinity United Methodist Church from 1997 to 2013. The younger John's father was Howard Robertson Peters, a Virginia Conference pastor and Sidney's son by his second wife.

Rev. Sidney Peters began his 39 years of ministry in 1893. As was typical in those days, appointments were brief, lasting two to three years. The itinerant system was ingrained in Methodism, especially in the South. Rev. Peters served 14 churches, two of them twice. His ministry included Staunton River Mission, Brookneal Circuit, Cartersville, Barton Heights in Richmond, First Church in Hampton, Trinity in Richmond, High Street in Petersburg, Central in Richmond, Emporia, Crenshaw in Blackstone, Fairmont Avenue in Richmond, Grace in Newport News and High Street in Petersburg.

A significantly different aspect of Peters' ministry occurred after serving nine pastoral appointments. He felt deeply moved to address what he considered the most serious moral issue of the day—alcoholic beverage and prolific saloons. The family story and the suggestion of other Methodist historians was that alcohol had been a demon for Peters at an earlier time in his life before his ministry. Bishop James W. Cannon and Rev. Peters purchased 188 of the 200 shares of the Advocate Publishing Company. Bishop Cannon became editor and Rev. Peters associate editor of the *Baltimore and Richmond Advocate* for the purpose of supporting prohibition through their writings. In addition, they invested heavily in a daily paper, *The Richmond Virginian*, with Peters serving as secretary-treasurer. It was also "devoted to the dry cause."¹ Peters then became the representative of the Virginia Anti-Saloon League. In 1916 he was elected the first commissioner

¹ W. Hewlett Stith, "Attic browsing yields portrait of Advocate and . . .," *Virginia Advocate*, June 10, 1982, p. 12.

of prohibition in Virginia, a position he held for six years. He later served as national lecturer of the Anti-Saloon League. Bishop Cannon and Rev. Peters sold the *Advocate* to the conference in 1918 and sold the *Richmond Virginian* to the *Times-Dispatch* in 1920.

Rev. Peters' prohibition work was completely consistent with his mother's focus on temperance. He also demonstrated her organizational skills. His mother had organized the Female Orphanage Society and was a major organizer of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

Rev. Peters married his second wife, Sara Lee Robertson, in 1905 while serving Trinity. Her brother, Senator A. Willis Robertson, was serving Virginia during the period of segregation and was a strong supporter of Senator Harry F. Byrd's controversial policy of "massive resistance," to school desegregation. Willis Robertson's son, Pat Robertson, founded the Christian Broadcasting Network. Rev. Peters' wife, Sara Lee, said that during the time her husband was serving as commissioner of prohibition, when they were walking in the streets of Richmond, people would cross over to the other side to avoid them. Rev. Peters' fiercely held position regarding prohibition may have affected his appointments in the Virginia conference.

Bishop Cannon saw Peters as an astute and gifted organizer. In fact, a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial once referred to him as "the best organizer in the state of Virginia."² In 1925 Cannon called on Rev. Peters to help organize the merger of the three branches of Methodism in Virginia. These two gentlemen had previously sought to ensure that every candidate running for office in Virginia would oppose beverage alcohol. At the conclusion of national prohibition, Peters resumed his pastoral duties while carrying with him many memories of his protests against saloons and his political efforts to blot out alcohol use as the great moral threat to society.

In 1933 Peters was appointed for the second time to High Street, Petersburg. Rev. Howard Peters recalled how embarrassed the family was when his father preached his first sermon at High Street. He rambled and repeated himself and seemed confused. He was subsequently diagnosed with a brain tumor and never preached again. Before his death on March 20, 1933, he called his son Howard to his bedside and said, "I wish I could have done more with you, son."³ His political organizing and moral battles definitely took a toll on him and his family.

Sidney Peters lived at a unique time in history. He felt his moral obligation was to eradicate the liquor traffic in the state of Virginia and the United States. The temperance influence of his mother and the cultural climate of the day surely shaped his ministry. "She had suggested having on her tombstone the words 'She hath done what she could.'"⁴ The same should be said for J. Sidney Peters.

²Arthur L. Stevenson, "The Reformer – J. Sidney Peters," *Native Methodist Preachers of Norfolk and Princess Anne Counties, Virginia*, sixth *Native Methodist Preacher Series* (Brevard, NC: published by the author, 1975), p. 15.

³ Peters Family Records, unpublished.

⁴Betty Peters Moorman, "She Hath Done What She Could, The Life of an Outstanding Methodist Mother – Susan Peters Jones," *Virginia United Methodist HERITAGE*, Spring 1997, p. 27.

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