



Free Methodist Historical Society

# Newsletter

F A L L 2 0 0 1 — V o l u m e 2 . N o . 2

B.T. Roberts  
(1823-93)

## Help Needed! Invest in Free Methodist History

New shelves for archival records, sleeves for the permanent preservation of historic photographs, and similar equipment have become necessary as the Historical Center develops its archive program. Your contribution at this time will help us preserve Free Methodist history for coming generations.



Pieces from the MMHC archives.

## New Membership Certificates for 2002

The second FM General Superintendent, E. P. Hart, will be featured on the Historical Society membership certificates for 2002. With your paid membership you will receive a certificate with a facsimile of the official seal of E. P. Hart.



Add this to your collection of commemorative certificates by sending in your membership gift. Sustaining member — \$20 per year; Heritage member — \$50 per year; Chapter member (Institutional) — \$100 per year; Marston Fellow — a one-time gift to the endowment of \$500. All gifts are tax deductible.

## Recent Research on B. T. Roberts and Early Free Methodism

Two new doctoral dissertations on B. T. Roberts and early Free Methodism are worthy of note.

Rick McPeak, who teaches at Greenville College, has completed "Earnest Christianity: The Practical Theology of Benjamin Titus Roberts," a dissertation done at Saint Louis University. McPeak views Roberts through the lens and methodology of practical theology, giving attention to Roberts' "theological vision," his handling of Scripture, and his philosophical foundations.

McPeak concludes that Roberts was concerned to establish a solid theoretical basis for action. While firmly committed to biblical authority, Roberts was open to learning from the natural sciences and human experience as well. McPeak notes, for instance, that Roberts did not believe the six days of creation were literal 24-hour days because he felt that view clashed with the findings of geology.

Primary source material for Rick has been Roberts' books and the hundreds of editorials he wrote for *The Earnest Christian*, which Rick covers

in a comprehensive 134-page bibliography.

Douglas Cullum at Roberts Wesleyan College and Northeastern Seminary has researched early Free Methodism for his dissertation at Drew University, "Rhythms of Life, Contours of Faith: Church, Home, and Society Among Early Free Methodists." Doug writes, "My research seeks to display, describe, and locate the religious beliefs and practices of the early Free Methodist Church (c. 1858-1893) in relation to the larger currents of nineteenth-century religious history and American Methodism." He makes extensive use of the B. T. Roberts Family Papers and relevant periodical literature.

Doug earlier published an article on a related theme, "From Simplicity to Multiplicity: Sunday Worship Among Free Methodists," in *The Sunday Service of the Methodists: Twentieth-Century Worship in Worldwide Methodism*, edited by Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1996).

Published by the  
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The Mission of the Free Methodist Historical Society is to preserve Free Methodist heritage and transmit it faithfully to each generation in order to assist the Free Methodist Church in fulfilling its mission.

by Robert F. Andrews

# Deaconess Home of Re

*After 100 years, the mission continues*

Holmes Home of Redeeming Love, Deaconess Hospital stands to serve.

The story behind Deaconess is told in a remarkable new book called *Redeeming Love: The Legacy of the Deaconess Ladies*, by Mary McReynolds. It is a consummate 20th century story, because Deaconess was started in 1900 as the Oklahoma Rescue Home in Guthrie and celebrated its 100th anniversary last year with the dedication of new and expanded facilities costing over \$30 million.


Despite its success and growth into a 300-bed, full-service hospital, Deaconess has not forgotten its original mission. Deaconess Pregnancy and Adoption Services still serves unwed mothers without charge, and the Deaconess Hospital staff deliver 1,500 new babies a year.

In her book, McReynolds chronicles the incredible struggles of the dedicated, highly religious pioneering women and men who made it happen early in the 20th century, when “rescuing fallen women” — society’s castoffs — was not a popular thing to do. The Deaconess ladies were licensed servants (deaconesses) of the Free Methodist Church who devoted their lives to

helping others. The Free Methodist *Book of Discipline* defined deaconesses as “a class of women who feel divinely called to advance the cause of Christ, but not to become pastors or evangelists. The duties of a deaconess shall be to care for the sick, provide for the orphans, save the erring and fallen, and to alleviate as far as possible the sufferings of those within her reach.”

Seven years before Oklahoma moved from Indian Territory to statehood, Sister Lydia Newberry, who had already established “rescue homes” in Omaha, Nebraska and Wichita, Kansas, felt God challenging her to “spread this work.” So many girls were coming from the Oklahoma Territory to the Wichita Rescue Home that it seemed the time had come to start a home in Guthrie, Oklahoma’s territorial capital. At a prayer meeting in an upper room, pledges of \$25 each from Sister Adda Music and Brother J. D. Schollenberger were the inspiration for taking definite steps to establish the ministry called Oklahoma Rescue Home on December 31, 1900.

The home opened in a rented space with four girls. In 1901, an eight-room house with a barn and six lots was purchased



*Every day thousands of Oklahoma City motorists speed by 5501 N. Portland, so accustomed to the sprawling medical campus that its signs pass largely unnoticed until needed. Few know that this bustling site was a working farm just a hundred years ago.*

Gone is the large pond, the livestock grazing in green pastures, the houses and barns that once nurtured a rescue home for unwed mothers. Today, multi-story buildings rise over paved parking lots. Brick and mortar displace grass and trees. Situated on the remaining acres once called the

## Ministry during the Great Depression:

*The 1932-33 Journal of A. H. M. Zahniser*

The journal A. H. M. Zahniser kept during the last two years of his life provides an interesting glimpse of Free Methodist pastoral ministry during the Great Depression.

My grandfather, the Reverend Archibald Howard McElrath Zahniser (usually referred to simply as A. H. M.), was born July 31, 1880, in Jackson Center, Pennsylvania. He died October 5, 1933, in New Brighton, Pennsylvania. For 34 of his 53 years he served the Free Methodist Church as pastor in three annual conferences: Oil City, Pittsburgh, and briefly Central Illinois as pastor of the Greenville College Church. Four of his six brothers served as Free Methodist clergy and one, Arthur DeFrance Zahniser, as a bishop.

The journal begins on January 1, 1932,

in New Brighton where A. H. M. was serving as pastor. For more than a year he wrote only on the recto (right-hand side) of the pages, a few entries spilling over onto the verso. Then on January 26, 1933, after writing on the recto of the last page in the book, he started through the book again from its beginning, writing his entries on the blank verso of each sheet. Almost all entries occupy one side of a single full sheet. A couple of short entries include this last and shortest one for October 5, 1933, when he was a district elder: “New Brighton, Pa. Cool fall weather. And the strikes will not allow the people to have coal.”

Normally A. H. M. states the weather conditions, records the day’s activities, and comments on the things concerning him

deeply — particularly the state of the work, the activities and condition of the members of his household, and his health. He keeps careful track of what he receives for his salary, what he expends for tithe, what he collects for conference claims, and what he pays out for other purposes. He indicates his professional and personal activities, especially the number and nature of his pastoral calls. Frequently an entry ends with an ejaculatory prayer for healing, spiritual help, or the success of the cause of prohibition and the work of God.

A. H. M. often indicates his reading and the texts he preaches from. His reading was extensive, including both Methodist and Free Methodist authors (Wesley, Whedon, Clarke, Roberts, Shelhamer, Hogue) and a broad range of others (in-

# Redeeming Love

for \$1,700. Miss Anna Witteman, who had been invited to come with Lydia Newberry to begin the work but had refrained in hope of becoming a missionary to Africa, gave up her dreams of foreign work and came to Guthrie to help. She was soon appointed matron of the home. When Sister Newberry resigned in 1902 to focus on soliciting funds, Anna Witteman was elected the second superintendent. She continued faithfully in that position until 1952.

In "A Tribute to Anna L. Witteman" on the dedication page of the centennial book, former Deaconess Hospital Administrator Melvin Spencer summarizes the contribution of this amazing lady:

*The life of Anna L. Witteman is synonymous with the survival, growth and success of the Home and Deaconess Hospital. She was the Superintendent of the Home for 51 years, more than one half of its entire years of service. She headed this growing organization long before women were accustomed to assume executive roles, and 19 years before women were granted the right to vote. During these formative years under her leadership, the fledgling Home became established and grew in Guthrie, moved to Oklahoma City, endured the great difficulties and hardships of World War I*

*and the Great Depression, survived World War II, and grew into an outstanding health care complex known as Deaconess Hospital. When the other ladies were called to other duties, Anna remained at her post. It is safe to say that, but for her, Deaconess would not exist today. Through the years she worked with more than 10,000 girls seeking help at the Home.*

As Deaconess Home enters its second century of service to women facing crisis pregnancies, the goal today is the same as yesterday – to provide a safe haven where difficult decisions may be made in a Christian environment. All services to pregnant women are provided free of charge. Hundreds of girls, some homeless as well as pregnant, contact Deaconess each year. The Deaconess Home is not a business. It is a ministry of the Free Methodist Church, licensed by the Department of Human Services of the State of Oklahoma, and supported by contributions from friends and by fees paid by adoptive parents.

**Bibliographic Note:** In addition to the book *Redeeming Love: The Legacy of the Deaconess Ladies*, Leslie R. Marston gives a brief account in *From Age to Age a Living Witness*, 143ff. There is material on the Deaconess Home at the Marston Memorial Historical Center, and the archives of Deaconess Home in Oklahoma City contain a variety of papers including correspondence, clippings, a biographical sketch of Anna Witteman, and poetry by unwed mothers.



**Photos (l-r, clockwise):** Early photo of Pearl Holmes and Anna Witteman, the countryside surrounding the Holmes Home of Redeeming Love and North Building, one of the women's dormitories built in 1910.

cluding Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, Baxter, Shakespeare). He also read the evening newspaper and several magazines and journals. And, of course, the Bible, about five chapters a day. Frequently A. H. M. reports that he has sent an article for publication, usually to *The Free Methodist, Pentecostal Herald*, or *God's Revivalist*. He wrote no less than thirteen articles and chapters for books during the nineteen months of the journal.

The journal offers a window into the life of a Free Methodist minister during some of the difficult days of the Great Depression. It is located in the Holiness Archives at Asbury Theological Seminary.

— A. H. Mathias Zahniser,  
Wilmore, Kentucky

## News

**O T C S** • **YOUR DONATION DOLLARS AT WORK** — If collections are the life's blood of an archive, supplies are its arteries. Thanks to the hundreds of dollars we received, the Marston Historical Center was able to purchase enough acid-free folders and boxes to re-house the Pamphlet File Collection. Begun by Bishop Leslie Marston and Evelyn Mottweiler, the Pamphlet File Collection comprises the heart of the Historical Center archive — covering all aspects of the denomination from its earliest days.

- **EXTRA COPIES** of the Newsletter are available free of charge upon request (up to ten copies to one address). If you wish to hand out current or back issues to friends or family, you can make your request by email to [History@fmcna.org](mailto:History@fmcna.org).

- An increasing number of people are contacting the Historical Center through its website. Some seek genealogical information, while others are researching the history of particular local churches or other topics.



Cathy Fortner and Kate McGinn inspect the archived treasures of MMHC as items are moved to newly-purchased folders and boxes

# Book Review

*With His Joy: The Life and Leadership of David McKenna*, by Donald E. Demaray (Indianapolis: Light and Life Communications, 2000). 160 pages. ISBN: 0-89367-255-6.

Call him a Free Methodist scholar, administrator, educator, teacher, controversial reformer, historian, ecumenist, theologian — or all of these. Each term, and many more, has been used to describe David Loren McKenna, who has been a prominent figure in the Free Methodist Church since his appointment as a dean and teacher at Spring Arbor Junior College in the early 1950s.

After earning the Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and a short stint at Ohio State University, McKenna returned to Spring Arbor where he had a definitive influence, crystallizing the school's mission in the "Spring Arbor Concept" as it transitioned to a senior college. From there he went to Seattle Pacific College and led it into the world of being a University. At Asbury Seminary he moved the institution to center stage in North American theological education.

Demaray's biography attempts an analysis of the life and ministry of this energetic unretiring retired administrator. People who have wondered about "the real David McKenna" but have

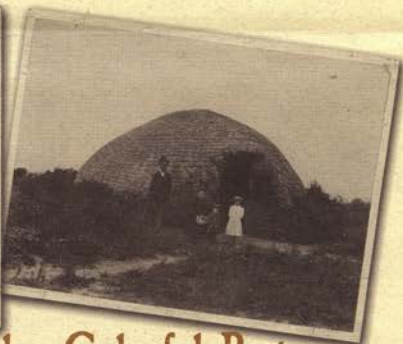
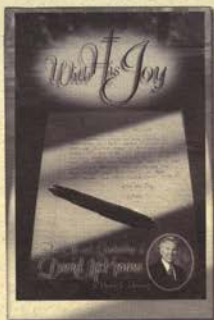
not had the opportunity to know him personally will find here an intimate introduction to the man, his family, his passions and values, as well as his accomplishments and honors. The narrative presents a remarkable individual in remarkable ways.

The volume does not pretend to be an academic biography. It is a didactic book, as much about spirituality as history, that challenges the reader to trust God and act on that trust. One hopes that, after time passages bring the possibility of additional perspective, the other book or dissertation, a scholarly biography, will be written that might interpret McKenna within the context of the American history through which he has lived and through which he led three institutions of crucial importance to the Free Methodist Church.

In the meantime, we can be grateful for Donald Demaray's presentation. Demaray brings a skilled pen and engaging wit to the task at hand. Indeed, one could argue that the book brings together forever two of the major figures in the denomination's history during the last half of the twentieth century, and that alone makes the book worth having on the shelf!

— David Bundy

Christian Theological Seminary  
Indianapolis, IN



## Black and White Photos Reveal a Colorful Past

Most of the thousands of photographs housed in the Marston Historical Center are black and white; many of them faded. Still, they manage to convey the vibrancy and color of the Free Methodist Church over many years.

Photographs taken by missionaries document the lives of Asians and Africans and Latin Americans as well as the people who ministered to and with them. Whether it is missionaries in South Africa or the Dominican Republic working with locals to establish schools, hospitals, and churches, or Pentecost Bands workers in India doing the same, the historical photographs of the Free Methodist Church highlight the denomination's efforts to spread Christianity to all people and to empower them with Christ's love.

Missionaries relied on photographs (and before that slides, originally made of glass) to tell their stories to the "home churches." Their scrapbooks chronicle everyday life in foreign lands, often including photographs of nationals who were instrumental in the

ministry. These presentations did more than raise funds. They bridged the distances between places and people that were then long boat and train rides apart.

Historical photographs excite interest, as do most relics of by-gone eras. But they are also instructive tools for the present. In witnessing the strides and struggles of earlier generations to incorporate all races in worship, these photographs inspire us to strive to do the same. Similarly, photographs of Deaconess and Olive Branch missions remind us that community outreach is still a critical component of Christianity's world mission.

The sepia-toned images that gaze back at one from the Historical Center's collection can be deceptive. At first glance they suggest that the lives of those captured on film long ago are ended. But a second look confirms that belief translated into action is a continuous moving picture.

—Kate McGinn, Archivist