



FREE METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Newsletter

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## Marston Historical Center: The Missionary Connection

**F**ree Methodist missionaries have served around the world for well over a century. As time passes, the historical record of their work becomes part of the permanent archives of the Marston Memorial Historical Center.

But sometimes we need help—identifying photos, translating documents, or processing records, for example.

Recently Free Methodist missionary Yuko Wilkins, who with her husband Chris serves in Cambodia, visited the Historical Center and helped with some translation work. Yuko is Japanese; her husband is from the U.S., and together they serve as missionaries of the Free Methodist Church in cooperation with the Asia Pacific Free Methodist Missions Association.

Missionary Dorothy Raber, who served over thirty years in Taiwan, also spent many hours earlier this year at the Center, helping identify old photographs of the Taiwan work.

The missionary service of the Historical Center works both ways. Missionaries help us with our work, and the Center in turn provides assistance to missionaries, whether through finding specific information or through locating one-of-a-kind legal documents that confirm land acquisitions or organizational incorporations.

The Historical Center's work is as varied as is the church and its ministries. Center Director Cathy Fortner reported at the spring meeting of the Committee on FM History and Archives, held in Spring Arbor, Michigan: "In the past five months, Archivist Kate McGinn and I have answered approximately 64 inquiries. For example, we were asked to confirm the correct spelling of a missionary's name, furnish a list of pastors of a church, and provide information



Free Methodist missionary Yuko Wilkins recently lent a helping hand to the Historical Center.

on Free Methodist work in Hungary, missionary Victor Macy, denominational growth after the ordination of women, Edith Jones leading 900 children to safety in China, history of the church in Japan, and history of Central FM Church in Shreveport, Louisiana."

These are some of the ways the Historical Center fulfills its mission in behalf of the church. □

## PARTISANS for God

We should take God's part in the great moral warfare being carried on in the world. We should array ourselves on God's side in every controversy that is carried on between righteousness and iniquity.

— B. T. Roberts, "Abound in Love,"  
*The Earnest Christian* (Jan. 1884), 7.

# CONTROVERSIAL FOUNDER —

# New Light

## ON "NAZARITE" JOSEPH MCCREERY, JR.

— BY HOWARD A. SNYDER —

Joseph McCreery, Jr., was one of the most colorful and controversial figures in the drama that led to the founding of Free Methodism in 1860. He was successively a journalist, a Methodist preacher, a Nazarite, and a Free Methodist. Born in 1813, he was ten years older than B. T. Roberts. He died in 1892, just months before Roberts' death.

In the story of Free Methodism's founding, McCreery is known mainly as a ministerial colleague of B. T. Roberts in the (Methodist Episcopal) Genesee Conference, a revivalist and reformer along with Roberts, and the inventor of "Naziritism." Based on the Nazirite vow in the Old Testament, McCreery proposed a "Nazarite Union" of Methodists for the purpose of restoring the church to its former purity and power. McCreery coined the term "Nazarite" by conflating the O.T. term "Nazirite" with the New Testament "Nazarene" (referring to Jesus).

Though the proposed Nazarite Union never really existed,

McCreery's agitation for it led to his trial and expulsion from the Methodist Church in 1858—the same fate B. T. Roberts suffered as a result of his two-part article, "New School Methodism." As summarized in *Populist Saints*, "McCreery had collaborated with Roberts in revival work, and Roberts respected his spirituality and his preaching. McCreery became, however, the lightning rod in the Nazarite controversy that complicated Roberts' reform efforts and precipitated his eventual expulsion from the Methodist Episcopal Church" (p. 311).

### NEW RESEARCH

McCreery's great great granddaughter, Linda Farroh Eder of Elgin, Illinois, has recently assembled a considerable amount of new material on McCreery. This helps round out the story of this colorful, dynamic, and "unpredictable" (as Marston called him) man who—had he concurred with Free Methodism's founding in 1860—would today be considered one of the church's cofounders. In effect, he *was* a cofounder, for he was part of the movement that led to the birth of Free Methodism, and he later did join the new denomination.

McCreery was the son of Joseph McCreery, Sr. (also a Methodist preacher) and his wife Jane Luckey McCreery. His uncle was Dr. Samuel Luckey, who, Eder notes, was "a noted minister and leader in the Methodist Episcopal church." B. T. Roberts occasionally refers to Luckey; he was the first principal of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary in Lima, New York, which Roberts attended.

Eder notes that McCreery had four sisters (Margaret, Almira, Jane, and Mary), and two brothers (James and John). McCreery married Sidney Barnes of Livingston County, New York, in 1845, and a year later their first child, Jane Elizabeth, was born. Four other children followed in due course.

Eder traces McCreery's later history. He moved to Illinois, eventually joining the Free Methodists in 1865. He served several FM churches and was a delegate to the 1866 FM General Conference. His first FM pastorate was at Marengo, Illinois, where he became acquainted with the Hart family. McCreery's daughter Jane married McKendree Bishop, a brother of E. P. Hart's wife, so McCreery and Hart were indirectly related. In 1866 McCreery wanted Hart to become the second FM General Superintendent. However it would be eight more years before Hart was in fact elected to that office, to serve alongside Roberts.

### LATER YEARS

McCreery and his wife Sidney eventually separated. The 1880 U.S. Census listed Joseph as a farmer living in Alma,



Nebraska, where he apparently spent several years. Sidney McCreery was living in Livingston County, New York, as of the 1880 census.

Sidney Barnes McCreery died on August 3, 1889, in Toledo, Ohio, at age seventy, en route to New York State. Eder writes, "Joseph [McCreery] died December 2, 1892, and was buried in Bluff City Cemetery, Elgin, Illinois, in an unmarked grave."

McCreery was a powerful, if not demonstrative, preacher as well as a poet and hymn writer. Two of his hymns, "I Storm the Gates of Strife" and "I'm Glad Salvation's Free," are found in the 1910 *Free Methodist Hymnal*.

W. T. Hogue described McCreery as "a deeply devoted man, of striking originality, remarkable talents, and with the courage of his convictions." His audiences found McCreery's preaching deeply moving. Hogue wrote, "His way of putting things, which was peculiarly his own, had much to do with the effect of his preaching." Roberts described an 1852 camp meeting sermon by McCreery as "one of the greatest sermons I ever heard. Its effect was mighty. Preachers and people almost lost themselves."

Linda Eder's ten-page biographical sketch of McCreery is now on file at the Marston Memorial Historical Center. The study enriches the Center's collection of key sources on the origin of the Free Methodist Church.

**Bibliographic Note:** Linda Eder lists a wide range of sources in her profile of McCreery. In addition, a considerable amount of documented material on McCreery is found in Howard A. Snyder, *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* (Eerdmans, 2006). □

## LETTERS

Last September, I was introduced to Cathy Fortner at the Marston Memorial Historical Center as we toured the World Ministries Center. She explained the services they offer, and I expressed a desire to know more about my great-grandfather, a Free Methodist pastor.

Cathy went to work on locating the material I desired and soon presented me with a list of the places my great-grandfather had served, as well as his obituary.

In the meantime, my aunt discovered a journal written by her grandfather. How exciting it has been to read his journal, comparing it to the list of appointments I received from the Marston Memorial Historical Center. Once again history has come alive!

— Jann Allen, FM Missionary to Mexico  
Great Granddaughter of Samuel Porterfield

I am a Free Methodist pastor in Malawi who is currently studying for an M.A. degree in theology and religious studies with Mzuzu University, a public university here. I am writing a paper that deals with the ordination of women in FM Church. I am trying to argue that the ordination of women in the FMC is not the result of socioeconomic and political changes in New York, where the church started, but the result of the pioneers' proper hermeneutics (Interpretation of Scripture). Some books argue that the ordination of women is the result of changes in modern society, politics, and economics. I am finding this view to have no solid basis.

I will be very appreciative if you may help in any way on this matter. I am aware of the position of Benjamin Titus Roberts, especially his work entitled, *Ordaining Women*. What other information may you help me with?

— Pastor Bern Kalukusha,  
Free Methodist Church in Central Malawi

▷ HISTORICAL DVD – A video highlighting events in Free Methodist history is available from the Historical Center for five dollars. A copy can also be downloaded, free of charge, from [reelfm.tv/2010/04/bt-roberts](http://reelfm.tv/2010/04/bt-roberts) after May 1st.

▷ CENTENARY PARK – near Pekin, New York, established in 1960 to commemorate the founding of the Free Methodist Church in 1860, is in the process of being sold. The park's plaque and time capsule will find a new home on the campus of Roberts Wesleyan College in North Chili, New York, during the Sesquicentennial General Conference scheduled for July, 2011. Meanwhile a New York State Historical Marker will be erected as a permanent memorial at the Pekin site.

▷ BOOKS ON FM HISTORY are available at the Historical Center. These include the biography of B. T. and Ellen Roberts, *Populist Saints*, by Howard Snyder; *Soul-Searching the Church: Free Methodism at 150 Years*; and biographies of E. P. Hart, L. R. Marston, and others. For prices, shipping costs, etc., telephone or send an email to [history@fmcna.org](mailto:history@fmcna.org).

▷ PASTORS' SABBATICAL PROGRAM applications are now available. Contact the Historical Center for information on scholarships and scheduling.

▷ UNDERWRITE THE FUTURE by providing for the Marston Memorial Historical Center in your estate planning. Contact the Center, or the Free Methodist Foundation at 800-325-8975 or at [www.fmfoundation.org](http://www.fmfoundation.org).

▷ EXTRA COPIES of the Newsletter are available free of charge upon request (up to ten copies to one address). If you wish to send current or back issues to friends or family, contact the Historical Center by phone or letter or by email at [History@fmcna.org](mailto:History@fmcna.org).

▷ FM FACTOID: The first woman to be ordained an elder in the Free Methodist Church was M. Jean Parry, in 1974 in the Pittsburgh Conference. In early decades many women functioned as pastors and evangelists but could not be ordained elder, until General Conference action in 1974.

News  
Notes



# Book Review

***Corners of Green: Irish Voices of Faith and Doubt***,  
by U. Milo Kaufmann (Cuyahoga Falls, Oh.: Open  
Latch Publications, 2008). 89 pp. ISBN 0-9816803-1-3  
(hardback).

The first impression of a book is not when the reader begins to read it, but when she first looks at or holds it. From that first moment I was drawn to this book: Its green linen cover, its spine and edges cuffed in tan paper. It conveyed the idea of a journal filled with the anticipation of enjoying its personal contents. Reading this lilting collection of poetry transported me into another world. While I have read *about* Celtic spirituality, here I experienced it.

The humorous “Naked Gardener” labors in the convent garden and “The Ironsmith-Monk” dreams of the lure of gold, but discovers the loss of his soul. The juxtaposition of the simplicity of Eden with the goodness of dirt, or the convicting power of greed and discontent, weave their message into the heart. “The Abbott” finds that “grace is vast and correction kind” when fever comes to the gate, and “The Girl at the Innhouse” discovers redemption through the care of a lame seller of wool. The creation continuity of heaven and earth is seen through the wonderings of “The Maintainer of Hedges.” A biblical example of humility is wonderfully expressed in the paired poems, “The Clerk Speaks of the Bishop” and “The Bishop Speaks of His Clerk.”

Some poems will bring a smile, others will draw you back for a second or third read. Some leave you with a sigh; others bring a nod of recognition. The irony of wisdom is that it often is found midst the daily duty of life.

The author’s preface provides the setting for the poems. The “corners” are the four compass points of Ireland; the book’s sections name the Irish counties of Sligo, Clare, Cork, and Wicklow. “Green” captures the mystical exploration of the seen and unseen.

This slim volume integrates the spiritual and the daily life as seen through forty-seven personages in Ireland. From the innkeeper’s wife to the lover of horses, the piper to the lapsed monk, the hermit to the poacher—each brings a portrait of the intersection of life and spiritual thought. The ancient role of storyteller in Irish culture is honored here as the reader enters the hearts of these many humble folk. I will carry this book on my first trip to Ireland this year.

Kaufmann, now retired, was a long-time teacher at the University of Illinois, focusing on British literature, Lewis and Tolkien, and fantasy and science-fiction writing. This is his second published book of poetry. (See the review of *Measures of Breath* in the Spring 2006 *Newsletter*.) Milo and his wife Helen lived in Ireland during a six month sabbatical and both know the Irish spirit well. He and Helen are active in their local Free Methodist Church and in the Free Methodist Urban Fellowship.

— Sharon Baker-Johnson, Chicago  
Ordained Elder, North Central Conference

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