

B.T. Roberts  
(1823-93)

FREE METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Newsletter

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## Transforming the Marston Memorial Historical Center

By Cathy Robling

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*The Marston Memorial Historical Center is temporarily closed for visitors. The redesign project that we have been planning and talking about for years is in process. The space is now empty. The library's thousands of books have been boxed up, the artifacts from the museum have been inventoried and put into storage, and the Light and Life Hour display is awaiting its new home.*

It is exciting to think that the vision for a replica 1910 chapel will be realized – the extended Zahniser family has made this possible and the chapel will be named in memory of the five Zahniser preacher brothers. The library will be expanded, enabling us to add several hundred books to the shelves, and windows will be added to enhance the space. The studio will be a great location not only to view and reminisce about the Light and Life Hour radio ministry, but also to capture visitors' stories about "growing up Free Methodist" or how the church has ministered to them personally.

We can imagine individuals standing at B.T. Roberts' pulpit desk and using an electronic device to read one of his letters or sermons, or to view photos. The same can be done at a pulpit used by John Wesley Redfield and Bishop Paul N. Ellis, or at the desk of Bishop Wilson T. Hogue or Bishop L. R. Marston. There will be opportunities to listen to a radio broadcast, such as Free Spirit music, Light and Life Hour singers – so many possibilities.

It was a major undertaking to inventory, pack up, and clear out every item from the Historical Center space. It caused me to reflect on persons who donated items, on stories of missionaries, and ministries in the church's past. Often I found myself thinking of the careful, hard

work that former director Fran Haslam put into setting this space up so wonderfully. I have been in this position for about 20 years, and I continue to appreciate the work of Fran, Evelyn Mottweiler, Bishop Marston, and others who have worked with this valuable collection. The systems and finding aids they set in place help us in our work daily. From these records, the staff has been able to create electronic inventories and additional finding aids that speed up our work considerably.

The walls, lighting, and windows should all be in place by the end of September, but it will take us awhile to re-shelve books, furnish the chapel with old pews, work on display ideas, and more. When you are in this

area, please stop in and see how the project is progressing.

Right now, we have limited access to all resources, but we still hope to answer your inquiries. Feel free to contact us by email, phone or letter. Julianne, Kyle, and I are happy to help you in any way that we can. Please visit our website [fmcusa.org/historical](http://fmcusa.org/historical) and view the

increasing digital resources.

If you are not receiving the "FM History Update" by email and wish to, please send a message to [history@fmcusa.org](mailto:history@fmcusa.org) and we will be happy to add you to the distribution list.



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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.

# SEARCHING FOR TREASURE: FIVE DAYS AT THE MARSTON MEMORIAL HISTORICAL CENTER

BY LAURA A. CHEVALIER

*3. Little children, little children,  
Who love their Redeemer;  
Are the jewels, precious jewels,  
His loved and His own.*

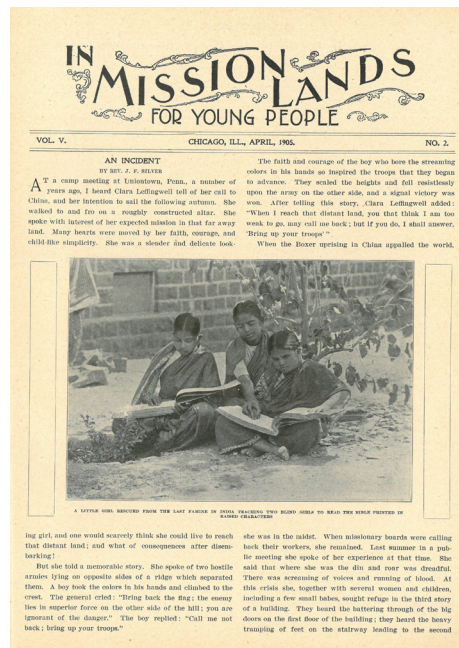
*Like the stars of the morning,  
His bright crown adorning,  
They shall shine in their beauty,  
Bright gems for His crown. [1]*

In 1909, Aimee B. Millican, a Free Methodist Church (FMC) missionary to China, wrote that the school girls she taught could sing “Precious Jewels,” a reference to the above popular hymn. [2] The words of the final verse and refrain convey a sentiment, shared by missionaries of the time, that children who came to know Christ would be counted as jewels or gems in His crown. Like Millican, missionaries often wrote letters home telling stories about the precious children born in “heathen lands” with whom they worked.

While my treasure-hunting may look a little different than that of Millican and other early FMC missionaries, I too have been seeking precious children: their stories are the jewels that are often hidden and remain untold in the historical record. My quest to find the children is part of my doctoral research at Boston University School of Theology, for my dissertation on the history of Christian mission. The focus of my research is missionaries’ work with children around the turn of the twentieth century among Wesleyan holiness and early Pentecostal groups. My search led me to visit several historical archives including the Marston Memorial Historical Center (MMHC) where I had the great privilege of working with director Cathy Robling and archivist Julianne Class. I expected to find information about my topic in the periodicals, reports, and letters contained in the archive, but I was delighted to discover that the center’s resources included much more breadth and depth than I had anticipated. Here are some of the treasure chests and jewels I discovered:

First, *The Missionary Tidings* (MT), the main historical mission periodical of the FMC, proved to be a virtual gold mine of data and stories. Produced by the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) of the FMC and edited

by its leading women, it is not surprising that work with children featured prominently in its pages. For example, the editors included letters from missionary F. Grace Allen and the students in her charge in Southern Africa. Stories about work with orphan children in India and what child-life was like in various regions



of the world, as well as reports and pictures of Sunday school happenings, are some of the main published sources I am analyzing. In the early years of the magazine (1897–98), it also appears that the *MT* periodically published a “Children’s Number,” specifically targeting child readers in the United States. By 1901, this “Children’s Number” had become a separate quarterly periodical called *In Mission Lands for Young People*, especially for use in Young People’s Societies. [3] The missionaries’ work on the ground and in writing letters for these periodicals that encouraged the missional spiritual formation of children was, therefore, multi-directional and transcontinental.



The Pamphlet Collection contained valuable contextual information about the various fields of FMC ministry and other published material by some of the missionary subjects of my study. For example, the yearly calendars of the WFMS were beautiful gems, full of text and photos depicting the first FMC mission fields. It was hard to stay focused while looking through this collection as it also included other rare items that any historian of mission would be interested in studying in detail, such as large maps of all the Christian mission stations in Africa and China in the early twentieth century.

The personnel files contained missionary letters and reports that described the tremendous strain of caring for the needs of their growing “families” in boarding schools and orphanages. They wrote to the home office pleading for more workers and funds as well as describing some of



the all-too-common interpersonal struggles present in cross-cultural ministry. The record of letters was substantial, and any one missionary file could have served as the source material for another dissertation. Detailed reports containing concrete data and numbers on the actual workings of mission schools and orphanages interspersed among the letters were unexpected treasures.

Finally, a scrapbook and record book kept by early missionaries in an orphanage in India proved to be perhaps the most valuable and enlightening finds. They contained pictures of children stricken by famine and information about their relationships to the mission orphanage and sponsors in the U.S.—important discoveries despite their difficult content. Children were constantly being delivered to the missionaries and constantly leaving through death, parent retrieval, or running away. U.S. sponsors shifted all the

time, too. Despite these ongoing changes, there were always scores of children to care for, so ensuring their physical and spiritual well-being kept the missionaries committed and looking to God and their friends, nearby and abroad, for provision. Frequently they recorded that a child had become a faithful Christian or that a grown orphan had decided to participate in the work of the mission.



These highlights only scratch the surface of the historical treasure trove of sources I discovered at MMHC. I look forward to delving deeper into the records I collected and finding many more gems that will inform my writing. I hope my study will make a unique contribution to the history of Christian mission. Certainly, my visit to the MMHC left me richer.

[1] William Cushing, "Jewels," Verse 3 and Refrain, 1856, accessed July 28, 2017, [https://hymnary.org/text/when\\_he\\_cometh\\_when\\_he\\_cometh](https://hymnary.org/text/when_he_cometh_when_he_cometh). The hymn is alternately known as "When He Cometh."

[2] Aimee B. Millican, "School Girls in China," *The Missionary Tidings*, July 1909, 10.

[3] The record indicates *In Mission Lands* ran from 1901 to at least 1907. No copies were among the MT bound files after 1907, but it may have continued.

# *Tribute to Norma Cathey*

*January 24, 1928 – May 1, 2017*



From 1950 to 2016, Norma Cathey faithfully attended Seattle First Free Methodist Church. She served in various capacities through the decades, including as an Annual Conference delegate, as the Pacific Northwest Conference delegate to the Committee on FM History and Archives, on the local board of administration, and as the Seattle First Free Methodist Church and Pacific Northwest Conference archivist. In the latter positions, Norma did wonderful work collecting and preserving materials that documented the life of Seattle First Free Methodist Church. Because of her foresight and diligence, the church and conference have a full and detailed record of its activities and members going back to the 1920s. Norma's interest and skill in writing led her to pen numerous articles on the history of Free Methodists in the Pacific Northwest, including stories of her alma mater, Seattle Pacific College/University. She also edited two books of local history *The First Free Methodist Church of Seattle, Washington: Centennial Year 1880-1980* and *Free Methodist Church Centennial: Pacific Northwest Conference, 1895-1995*. Her writings have been used by students, scholars, and other interested people to better understand the Free Methodist place in the history of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. Through her collecting and writing activities, Norma preserved and told the story of God's work in the lives of Seattle First Free Methodist Church and the Pacific Northwest Conference. She had a passion for preserving and passing on the history of the Free Methodist Church. Her love for the Church as an institution, and the people in it, was deep and intensely felt. Without her skill and commitment, many valuable stories and testimonies would have been lost. Norma lived out the words of the Psalmist: "But I will remember the Lord's deeds; yes I will remember your wondrous acts from times long past" (Psalm 77:11). And in so doing, she helped those of us who come after her to remember too.

*--Adrienne Meier*