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Cathy Robling, Director
Julianne Class, Archivist
Kyle Moran, Digital Librarian

World Ministries Center
770 N. High School Road
Indianapolis, IN 46214

(800) 342-5531

Email
history@fmcusa.org

Website
fmcusa.org/ministries/
marston-memorial-
historical-center

Newsletter
Mindi Grieser Cromwell
(Editor)
Cathy Robling
David Bundy
Howard Snyder
Julianne Class

Layout & Design
Andrea Anibal

TELL YOUR FREE METHODIST STORY

BY MINDI GRIESER CROMWELL

Over the years so many of you have shared your stories with us and we love to hear them! While the Marston Historical Center had an Oral History Project under the guidance of Louise Campbell and saved the stories of several prominent former bishops, missionaries, and lay people, we have not had a method for the widespread collection of such stories. That changed when we heard of the StoryCorps app! Several years ago StoryCorps was developed in partnership with the Library of Congress to collect and save stories. Its mission is “to preserve and share humanity’s stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world.” Starting out with a traveling van, they have now developed a free app that allows anyone with a smartphone (or access to one) to record, share, and save personal stories. People can add tag lines so that the stories are searchable through the Library of Congress. With the appropriate keyword, we will be able to find your story.

There are four simple steps to this process. First, find the StoryCorps app on your phone’s app store and download it. Next, find a friend to interview you about your Free Methodist story. It helps in this process to set aside a quiet space, review your thoughts, and prep your

interviewer on how you want to tell your story. Because we are interested in your denominational connections we would love to hear you tell your story of growing up Free Methodist, being a pastor or growing up in a parsonage, becoming a member as a youth or adult, or attending a Free Methodist college or other institution. When your recording is ready, chose to archive it using the StoryCorps app with the Library of Congress and use the keyword “FreeMethodist” so we will be able to find your story. And finally, encourage a friend! Interview a Free Methodist friend and encourage that person to interview someone else.

We would love to see stories of our heritage of faith saved and shared. Individuals can share their own story and collect stories of others. Churches can use it to tell the stories of new believers and seasoned saints, or Annual Conferences can set up a booth to collect powerful stories of laypeople and ministers from years of ministry. If you are interested in using a method other than StoryCorps to collect lengthier stories, we do have oral history collection packets on our Marston Center area of the Free Methodist Church USA website. Either way we want to hear your stories!



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or go to
give.fmcusa.org/
give.marston

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.

A Light On the Prairie: Mrs. Shay and her Garden

By Susan Dean Arnott

A pristine English cottage, surrounded by its garden of flowers and trees, is nestled at the foothills on the west border of Wessington Springs, South Dakota. And in the town's cemetery a small stone marks the graves of a special lady, Emma Freeland Shay, and her husband of 50 years, Clark W. Shay. Mrs. Shay left an indelible mark on Wessington Springs and throughout the world. Students she inspired during three years teaching English at Wessington Springs Seminary (later changed to Wessington Springs Jr. College) from 1891 to 1894, and 12 years chairing the English Department (1919 until her retirement in 1932), spread her influence far and wide. Her home and most visible legacy, the Anne Hathaway Cottage and Shakespeare Garden, have survived the 70 years since her death in 1945 and more than 50 years since the closing of Wessington Springs College.

Emma Abigail Freeland was born April 30, 1862 in Lyndonville, New York, the second child of Rev. James B. and Mariet Hardy Freeland, both pioneers in the early Free Methodist Church. Mother Freeland, a loving wife, mother, and servant of Christ, was among the earliest women preachers and an ardent supporter of the ordination of women. The Freeland family was also deeply involved in the earliest history of Wessington Springs after its founding 1882. In 1887, Emma's parents and her brother, Rev. James K. Freeland, were among the founders of Wessington

Springs Seminary, leaving friends and the comforts of New York to minister to the prairie pioneers in Dakota Territory. James B. Freeland was chairman of the planning board for Wessington Springs Seminary.

James K. Freeland was the first principal, and his wife was the first preceptress. Emma's sister Mary Freeland Coffee was registrar and one of the first teachers.

Educated in New York, Emma graduated from high school in Syracuse in 1883 and attended Cheshbrough Seminary (now Roberts Wesleyan College). She taught two terms of country school and seven years at Evansville Seminary in Evansville, Wisconsin, and studied at Wellesley College in Massachusetts before joining her family in South Dakota. There she taught along with her brother and sister from 1891 to 1894.

In 1894, Emma moved to Seattle where she became preceptress at Seattle Seminary (now Seattle Pacific University). Following Graduation Day in 1895 she married Seattle Seminary Principle Clark Shay, who had also taught at Wessington Springs Seminary in the early 1890s. Busy years followed during which three sons were born. The youngest, Paul, died in childhood. Wendell F. and James Wilbur grew to manhood in the Shay home. Wendell Shay taught high school biology in St. Louis, Missouri for 11 years before his death in 1937. James Wilbur Shay pursued a profession working and teaching mechanics, and was living in Jacksonville, Florida, at the time of his father's death at the hospital in Wessington Springs on July 5, 1951. Wendell's wife Ruth Quoss Shay, James and his wife, and the Shay's two grandchildren were able to be at Clark Shay's bedside when he died.

Together, Emma and Clark devoted their lives to Christian education in Free Methodist institutions of higher learning. They lived in California while Clark taught five years at Los Angeles Seminary (later Los Angeles Pacific College). From 1911-1919 they lived in Illinois, where he taught at Greenville College (now Greenville University) and from where Mrs. Shay graduated with a bachelor's degree at the age of 58 in 1920. She went on to receive her master's degree from the University of Michigan in 1924 at the age of 62.



From Illinois, the Shays returned to teach again at Wessington Springs Seminary, now a junior college, for the next 13 years. Emma Shay, whose life ambition had been to be a missionary, unknowingly reached that goal. A tribute by J. Louise Maynard, a contemporary of Mrs. Shay who taught with her at WSC, lends evidence to the reality of her attainment: "Many a missionary on the field will testify to the inspiration of Mrs. Shay and to her prayers. Perhaps no one knows so well as those of us who worked side by side with her the extent of her influence on the lives of her students. Literally hundreds of letters came to her from former pupils, thanking her for her faithfulness to the call of a Christian teacher." Former student Dr. Roscoe Dean wrote these words in a 1972 tribute to this woman he held in the highest esteem, "She was a light in our lives that will live on in the people and countries influenced by her."

Mrs. Shay's love for English writers about whom she taught at Wessington Springs in Classroom 16, affectionately called "Sunnyside," inspired her to journey to England in the summer of 1926 to explore the environs of the English authors and poets. On William Shakespeare's birthday in April 1927, her dream of a Shakespeare Garden on the campus of WSC began to take shape. Through the efforts of Mrs. Shay, her husband and her students, the garden transformed the hillside behind the college into a beautiful spot that would be cherished by generations of students and faculty, as well as the community.

Questions about whether there are living descendants of Clark and Emma Shay remain unanswered. The obituary of a grandson, Harold M. Shay, 81, (probably the son of James Shay), came to light in the Miami Herald of July 26, 2008. He was an environmentalist and a Master Mariner



If you are interested in visiting the Shakespeare Garden and Anne Hathaway Cottage check out their website: www.shakespeare-garden.com.

who captained numerous tankers around the world during his career. He apparently was unmarried and left no descendants. Information about the Shay's only other grandchild is still unknown.

Wessington Springs College closed in 1964 and the Academy closed in 1968. Since the demolition of the college buildings in 1970 the Shakespeare Garden and Anne Hathaway Cottage, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are the last physical reminder of the spiritual legacy of the Freelands, Shays and the many Christian leaders who passed through Wessington Springs College and Academy.

It is known that Emma counted among her crowning achievements the published biography she penned about her mother's life, *Mariet Hardy Freeland, A Faithful Witness*. But if you ask any former student or resident of the Wessington Springs area, the answer will be without exception — Shakespeare Garden — that spot of beauty and serenity that every summer beckons old friends and strangers alike from the world over. Emma Shay's gem still shines on the South Dakota Prairie.



A cottage resembling the English home of Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway, was built for the Shays in the garden in 1932 upon their retirement from teaching at the college. Builders used a postcard of the original cottage in Stratford-upon-Avon. There they lived the rest of their lives, and Emma died in her beloved cottage on September 7, 1945 "just as the first fall flowers in the beautiful Shakespeare garden were in their brightest bloom" as one newspaper reporter described it at the time.

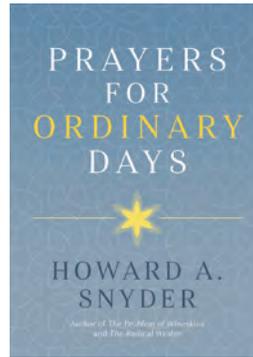
BOOK REVIEW

Howard A. Snyder, author. *Prayers for Ordinary Days*.
Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publications, 2018. ISBN: 978-1628243659.

Prayers For Ordinary Days, published at the request of individuals encouraged by the daily prayers Howard Snyder posted on Facebook, is timely for a number of reasons. Most compellingly, because we live in a time where common grace and courtesy amongst those calling themselves Christian seem to be lacking both in personal interactions and as people interact on social media.

Many of us recognize that while many Americans are still Christians, there is a deep need for the transformational work of God in our world and in our personal lives. We know we are saved, but there are times in our spiritual pilgrimage where we get so caught up in our daily living and so distracted by our phones that we forget who we are and, more importantly, Whose we are.

John Wesley lived in England at a time when almost everyone was baptized a Christian, yet too few walked closely with God. Morning prayer was offered daily in the Church of England, with Scriptures, liturgical prayers and the Eucharist. Though some certainly attended these services, one study found that during Wesley's time even Sunday morning services in some parishes were attended by under 25% of the population. Too few were taking advantage of the means of grace offered them, and Wesley lamented the lack of spiritual vitality around him.



With this work, Snyder encourages us to recapture such Methodist fervor. The positive response to Dr. Snyder's prayers indicates the desire many people do have to meet with God in the midst of life. The prayers have facilitated a break from mindless scrolling through endless Facebook arguments and memes. They invite individuals to stop, if only for a few moments, to recalibrate and to reflect upon a God who is and who loves. Snyder states that his desire is "to help individuals cultivate a Sunday through Saturday prayer and meditation pattern." (p XVI). We are invited to start our days with prayers of hope in a God who is calling us to press on. Much like the Psalms, there is great diversity in these prayers. Many invite us to offer praise to God for God's goodness to us.

But others invite us to intercession, lamentation, and even to express our honest frustrations of confusion in the midst of life's troubles. Snyder helpfully reminds us that "(c)ommuning with God is very personal."

Prayers For Ordinary Days is a gift to encourage us to meet with God. Each day's prayer is followed by a Scripture or an inspirational quote by divines such as the Wesley brothers, E. Stanley Jones, and Alice Hayes Taylor. There are even a few Free Methodists included, such as A.H. Mathias Zahniser and B.T. Roberts. *Prayers For Ordinary Days* could stand alone, or it could be paired with another devotional book or Scripture Readings. We are invited to make these prayers our own, and to spend time reflecting and meditating on the quotes and Scriptures. This gift of Dr. Snyder is an excellent tool to help us grow and be nurtured in our faith.

— Bob Munshaw

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Free Methodist Historical Society
770 N High School Road
Indianapolis, IN 46214
(800) 342-5531