

Historical Messenger

Newsletter of the Commission on Archives and History, Detroit Conference-United Methodist Church
 Diana Spitnale Miller, Chair

Matthew T. Herbst, Ph.D., Historian and Archivist

Archive of the Detroit Conference of the United Methodist Church

Located at: Shipman Library, Adrian College, 110 S. Madison St., Adrian, MI 49221

Phone: (517) 546-2730 Email: mherbst@adrian.edu

On-Line: <http://www.adrian.edu/library/resources/archive.php>



New “Church History of the Year” Award

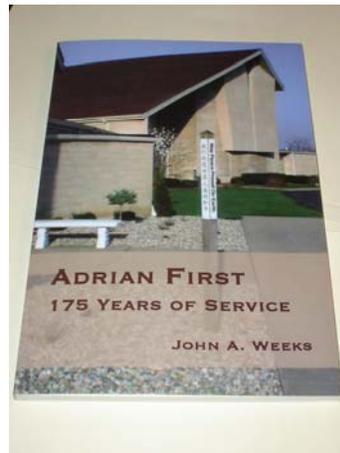
In recognition of the very important historical work that is carried on in local churches and in pursuit of improving our effort to obtain copies of this work in our Archive, the Detroit Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History (CAH) introduces its new “Church History of the Year” Annual Award.

All churches are encouraged to submit their most recent history. To enter, simply fill out an application form and send it with your history. The form is available on Page 11 of this newsletter. If your most recent history is already at the Archive, you need only submit the form.

Please note that the medium of history (that is, the means by which it is conveyed) is completely open. It can use a traditional literary form in a book or booklet or it can employ more recent technology. History on DVD, for example, or on church websites on the internet are equally welcome.

The CAH will select the winner and announce it at

Annual Conference 2006. The award winner will receive an official recognition certificate and will be highlighted in the 2006 Annual Conference Archive exhibit and in the *Historical Messenger*.



Dr. John A. Weeks is the author of Adrian First's most recent History (2005)

Moreover, the winner will receive a one-year membership to the Detroit Conference “Friends of the Archive” and to the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church which, among other things, includes a year's subscription to historical publications, including the journal *Methodist History*.

Church History via Print, DVD, Internet

Today we are able to preserve and convey our historical record not only in print, but also through more technologically advanced media. Church history on DVD or on church websites are important avenues to consider using. Let us examine several fine examples of local church history in each format: **Grace UMC of Houghton** and **Adrian 1st** (in print), **Franklin Community & Metropolitan UMC in Detroit** (on the internet), and **Farmington 1st** (on DVD).

Professor Terry Reynolds of Michigan Tech wrote the most recent history (2004) of Grace UMC of Houghton. This is a model example of local church history. It is extremely well-researched (and includes extensive citations), and is a stimulating history in booklet form (67 pages) with pictures, diagrams, very useful bibliography, and an appendix of pastors. It conveys the local history in connection with events in Michigan Methodism as well as in our State's History. It is much

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Models of Church History in print, on DVD & on the Internet	1-2
Article: Building the New World Order: The UN, US Foreign Policy, and the Detroit Annual Conference	3-4
Book Review: Methodism Empire of the Spirit (2005)	4
Feature Article: Methodist Pilgrim: Rev. E. E. Caster in the Holy Land, 1891	5-9
Notes: “Act on Slavery,” DAC, 1856 A Note from the Archivist Methodist Histories Available	10
Forms: “Church of the Year” Application Form and “Friends of the Archive” Membership	11
“Capture the Past” Program Information (Sept. 26)	12

Church History via Print, DVD, and the Internet (Continued from Page 1)

more than a chronicle of when the building was built, the organ was installed, and the next pastor arrived. It skillfully and accessibly tells the tale of Grace without whitewashing or ignoring details in order to create a fictitious image of a perfect past.

John A. Weeks, Adrian College Professor Emeritus of History, followed a similar approach in

the most recent history of Adrian 1st in a book entitled, *Adrian First: 175 years of Service* (2005). This is a very attractive volume (106 pages), with pictures, bibliography, appendices of church statistics and lists of pastors. This work also portrays the successful endeavors, as well as the challenges. Consider one fascinating excerpt: "Rev. James A. Kellam, pastor during the time that services were conducted in the basement [in 1839], had these services disrupted several times by the rude actions of young people, according to Elijah Pilcher. After several attempts to admonish these young men and women failed, Kellam obtained a list of the perpetrators' names to publish if they did not stop. After warning them of the intention and their

continued activities, he read their names after a service. The young people decided to retaliate. The next night young women and maybe some men dressed as women attempted to administer a beating as he walked from the church to



Franklin Methodist Church, 1903

the parsonage. He then ran too fast from them to get in more than a few licks. While some were arrested and brought to court, Kellam could not identify any, so they escaped any legal retribution." Adrian's challenges and triumphs are well told by this history.

Before turning to church

history on-line, let us first ask: Does your church have a website? If so, does it have a history page? Is that page easily accessible or hidden away? What have you chosen to put on-line? Finally, is your church site found on its District website?

Two fine examples of on-line history were created by Franklin UMC [<http://www.franklinchurch.us/history.html>] and Metropolitan UMC in Detroit [<http://www.metroumc.org/history.asp>]. Both employ brief narratives (stopping at the mid-20th century) and use photos to help tell their story. Metropolitan's history link is displayed proudly and prominently on its homepage, making for the easiest access for viewers. Franklin locates its history link under the "About Us" heading. Each site provides a sense of the church's past in the

midst of the rest of the site which expresses the present state and future direction of the congregation.

Another approach to telling the tale of the local church is via video. Farmington 1st, which celebrated its 175 anniversary in 2004, used this format for its most recent history. This informative history is told on DVD using interviews, contemporary and historic photos, voice over narration, music, and graphics. It is an impressive, entertaining, and visually engaging presentation. Farmington 1st has offered a model for every church which is interested in using this medium to tell its story.

To learn more, please consider attending the "Capture the Past: Strategies and Skills for Local Church History" Program at Flushing UMC on September 26 (see Page 12 for details).

Metropolitan UMC Homepage [www.metroumc.org]. Note the prominent display of and easy access to its history page

Building the New World Order: The United Nations, US Foreign Policy, and the Detroit Conference (1945-1955)

By
Matthew T. Herbst

In the wake of the cataclysmic upheavals of the First and Second World Wars, the Detroit Annual Conference (DAC) in the

post-War period fully embraced and championed the United Nations as the necessary political instrument to ensure world peace and to establish a “new world order” wrought by God through nations working together. It professed:

“We believe that the purpose underlying the U.N. organization is an expression of God’s spirit in the hearts of men. It assumes “one world” and a common human destiny. Therefore, let us use to the fullest extent the opportunities which it offers for conference and common action. We hope for its speedy transformation into a Federal World Government, in which there shall be sufficient authority to enable every man to sit under his vine and fig tree without fear of warfare.” (DAC Minutes, 1947, p. 806; see also 1945, p. 339; 1948, p. 112)



The DAC hoped that the UN would be an effective means to stave off future conflict and to ensure peace. “War” it declared “as a method of settling international disputes and adjudicating differences between nations and peoples belongs to a barbaric past.” (1953, p. 371). To achieve this aim, disarmament was key. Through its World Peace Commission,

the DAC supported this effort: “Advance in disarmament would refresh the faith and hope of the peoples of the world and would deliver the nations from the black despair of war preparation.” (DAC, 1951, p. 897) This goal was not localized in Michigan, but proclaimed by the General Conference in 1952 for a “Crusade for World Order” to be carried out in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1954-55.

Viewing war as a relic of our barbaric past led to the DAC’s opposition to the Korean War, approving US Senator E.E. Johnson’s resolution to the US Senate in 1951 that declared the “Korean War has every appearance of being a hopeless conflict of attrition and indecision and a breeder of bitter racial hatred.” It supported an immediate end to hostilities and a return to the division of Korea at the 38th Parallel (where it would, in fact, end up in 1953).

War was not the answer. Collective resolution, with all sides having a voice, was the goal and the United Nations was the means. The DAC was committed to the United Nations and opposed anything that posed an obstacle to its effective action. This explains its opposition to the veto power held by a select few nations, including the United States. By undemocratically giving privilege to the few over the many, the DAC feared that the path was potentially paved for resentment, injustice, and the birth of future conflict.

For the same reason, the DAC opposed the development of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO was viewed not as a peacekeeping entity, but as a threat to world peace and the work of the UN. The DAC was concerned that NATO would by-pass the UN vis-à-vis military action and that it might stimulate an escalation of military forces, thus increasing the likelihood of hostile action. (DAC, 1949, 374-375)

The Conference viewed American unilateral political or military action as contradicting the hope for peace through united effort.

Therefore, it opposed the Marshall Plan in which the US, led by President Harry S. Truman, provided economic assistance to Greece and Turkey which faced the real threat of succumbing to Communist factions. By doing this, the US undermined the UN, acting without consulting world opinion. In opposition, the DAC declared: “The present American policy of military aid to Greece and Turkey, or any other unilateral action by any nation, violates the spirit of the UN, undermining its prestige and authority as an effective instrument of international peace and justice.”

(1947, p. 806)

Moreover, the Conference opposed the use of US troops to defend Taiwan (Formosa) from threat of



Taiwan and Neighboring Mainland China

Mainland Chinese invasion. In 1955, it resolved: “We do not believe that the defense of Matsu and Quemoy by our sons is necessary for the defense of the United States. We urge that the problem of Formosa,

including a cease-fire line, be handled by the United Nations and not by any single government.” (DAC, 1955, p. 910)

(Continued on page 4)

Building the New World Order (Continued from page 3)

What do we learn from these observations? Historians today view the Marshall Plan as one of the most effective American foreign policy strategies which tipped the balance in nations tottering on the edge of political turmoil.

Both Greece and Turkey, nations which had long been at odds, entered NATO as US allies. Moreover, because of US intervention, Taiwan did not face an imminent invasion from mainland China. Finally, the Eastern

military build-up in response to NATO (with its destabilizing impact on the



Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989

Communist economy) was, ironically, one factor contributing to the fall of the Soviet empire. These policies, in today's parlance, expanded the sway of freedom and democracy. These were not UN decisions, but US

driven and—in at least two cases— unilateral.

The DAC championed the UN, believing that it was the most important entity needed to forge the expected world peace. These American policies undermined the

UN—yet, the impact of these decisions are today viewed as extremely positive.

To contemporaries, however, what was apparent was only the violation of their hope in the UN, not the future benefit to the world.

This is evidence of the

“This is evidence of the challenge of the church—any church, at any time—to discern present political realities with prescient clarity.”

challenge of the church—any church, at any time—to discern present political

realities with prescient clarity. The church may passionately strive, struggle, and resolve, and at the same time, may be—as future generations

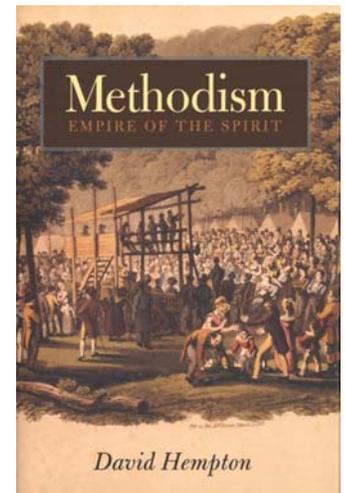
look back—on the wrong side of political debates. It makes one consider our views of current US foreign policy. What is the right decision? That question will best be answered by our descendents.

A New History of the Rise and Spread of Methodism

Methodism: Empire of the Spirit (Yale University Press, 2005; \$20/paperback; \$30/hardcover) is Boston University Professor David Hempton's newest study of this religious tradition, following his *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (1984) and *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion, ca. 1750-1900* (1996). The book offers a transatlantic perspective on the growth, development, and declining transition of Methodism. It is not a narrative history, thought it follows a general chronological frame from the 18th to the 20th Century. Hempton explores the complex influences on John Wesley, including the Enlightenment

Enthusiastic movements, and the tensions of these traditions. He sheds light on the appeal of Methodism to various groups in England and America, its growth and spread among mobile populations (soldiers, for example), and its ability to adapt to local environments for survival. It offers insight into Wesley's approach of carefully controlling print media, his strategic use of song, sermon, and ecclesiastical organization for sustaining unified communities throughout vast stretches of territory. It also examines the limitation of and challenge to this unity. Hempton analyzes missionary efforts throughout the world—both successful and unsuccessful—and them historically

within the context of American expansion and English political power. There is a fascinating discussion of Methodist activity in Korea in the late 19th Century where war and social disruption paved the way for an alternate religious message. Methodist emphasis on discipline and order helped transition some Koreans from Confucian to similar Christian principles. The book concludes with a thought-provoking discussion of Methodism's settlement and establishment in a chapter on its “Consolidation and Decline.” How do we explain the slowdown and drop in Methodist growth? Why, in contrast, are Pentecostalism (which is viewed as carrying on the original



message of Methodism) and others growing? For possible answers and for an intriguing examination, this study is well worth your time.

A Methodist Pilgrim: Rev. Elisha E. Caster in the Holy Land, 1891

By
Matthew T. Herbst

Rev. Caster served churches in: Middleburg, Owosso, Corunna, Bay City, Marquette, Flint, Detroit, Romeo, Saginaw, Fenton, Howell, and Chelsea.

In late Spring 2004, I stumbled across a small journal (roughly 3.5 by 8 inches when closed) that had been kept by Detroit Conference Pastor Elisha Ezra Caster (1835-1914). The journal chronicled three journeys: his trip to the East Coast (Nova Scotia, Boston) in 1884, to the West Coast (San Francisco, Oregon, Seattle) in 1890, and to Europe, Egypt, and the Holy Land in 1891.

Rev. Caster had spent a lifetime in ministry in Michigan, beginning in 1857 when he was 22 and retiring as a septuagenarian in 1907. He served churches throughout the state and was Presiding Elder (now Superintendent) of the Bay City (now Saginaw) District. After retirement, he kept active with preaching and speaking engagements scheduled almost up to the very moment of his death on March 22, 1914.

He was greatly sought after as a preacher and speaker. He had a gift for holding an audience captivated by his eloquence and for painting the most vivid images with his words. One newspaper recorded that he “has the happy and remarkable trait of seeing everything and remembering all he sees, and is able to describe it in a taking manner.”

Another reported that Rev. Caster “talks fluently and with all the ease and grace possible, with just enough spice and wit to make it lively all along. [He] probably has more calls for lectures than any other minister in MI.”

Rev. Caster’s journal had been in the posses-

with great interest, thinking that I would use it for a project when the opportunity arose. Before that moment arrived, however, our Archive was struck by a terrible flood in June 2004. The journal was lost and I feared that it had been destroyed.

Fortunately, in December 2004, I recovered the journal through the restoration process in Chicago. While it did endure significant water damage, nevertheless, it was, at least, back in the Archive. Delighted to have it once again in my hands, I was able to write this article as a continuing step to unlocking its historical value.

This article seeks to put Rev. Caster’s Holy Land journey into historical perspective, setting it into context of American religious and social history. Why, for example, were so many Americans traveling to the Holy Land in the 19th century? What impact did the trip have on their views of the world and on their faith? How did the pilgrimage affect their ministry? Rev. Caster’s journal proves a valuable source for us to mine the DAC past as we seek to answer these and other questions about our history.

(Continued on page 6)



Rev. E.E. Caster and Family

sion of Margaret B. Macmillan who used it for her important study, *The Methodist Church in Michigan in the 19th Century* (see pages 418-419 for a discussion of Rev. Caster’s journey). The journal reached the Detroit Conference Archive in a roundabout way. After decades in private hands, it had been donated to the United Methodist Collection at Drew University. L. Dale Patterson, Archivist for the General Commission on Archives and History, identified it as more appropriately housed with the DAC and sent it here in July 2003. When I started as the new Archivist at the end of May 2004, I read it

A Methodist Pilgrim: Rev. Elisha E. Caster in the Holy Land (Continued from page 5)

American travel literature to the Holy Land began after 1819 when Protestant missionaries Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons departed for the East, reporting their experience in Palestine (then a part of the Ottoman Empire) in the *Missionary Herald*. They were on the vanguard of American scholars, theologians, pastors, and other tourists who were to fulfill their own pilgrimage dreams in the 19th Century. While the dream was held by many, relatively few actually made it. To fill the wide gap, the new pilgrims reported—in print and in lectures—to an extremely interested public.

There was a general feeling that travel to the Holy Land strengthened one's faith, as one 19th Century pilgrim noted, "[o]nly then does the Bible become real." To achieve this, however, meant to undergo the reality of Ottoman Palestine—with all of its hardships. It lacked the amenities and conveniences that greet the modern tourist. For the one who completed the undertaking, the result was inspiration and admiration. This inspiration translated into letters sent to newspapers at home as well as literary accounts that reached a national audience. Herman Melville, for example, visited in 1856-57 which inspired his (rarely read) two-volume *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy-Land* (1876).



Elijah H. Pilcher

In 1857 William C. Prime published his popular *Tent Life in the Holy Land* (which was significant enough for Mark Twain to humorously refute it on his later voyage). In 1861 Baptist Pastor D.A. Randall of Ohio set sail and offered his account in 1862 as *The Handwriting of God*. There were many more, but the most stirring literary work was written by Mark Twain after his 1867 journey. Twain published his recollections as *The Innocents Abroad, or the New Pilgrim's Progress in 1869*. This humorous book sold nearly 70,000 copies in its first year, testi-

fying not only Twain's literary gift, but also to the appetite of the American public for such first-hand accounts. This was Twain's best selling and most popular book during his lifetime. (In 1878, for example, President Ulysses S. Grant, then *ex-officio*, traveled to the Holy Land with *Innocents Abroad* as a guide book.)

Holy Land fever was catching. Twain observed that everyone in America seemed to be going.

Fittingly, the very next year the Detroit Conference joined the movement when



Rev. E. E. Caster's journal

the prolific pastor, presiding elder, author, scholar, and renaissance man, Elijah Holmes Pilcher (1810-1887) and his colleague in ministry and education, and future bishop, William X. Ninde (1832-1901), made their way in 1868-69. Ninde, in fact, returned to the Holy Land on a second trip in 1870. To the public, eager for eyewitness accounts, Rev. Pilcher sent (as had Mark Twain) letters to newspapers back home which published fifty-four articles chronicling his journey.

The pilgrims also offered their observations on the lecture circuit. This was an approach of Rev. Caster.

He promoted himself as—in addition to a preacher—a lecturer on a variety of topics, including politics, culture, marriage, temperance and anti-Catholicism. The majority of his subjects, however, were related to his pilgrimage in 1891. Once again, Michigan audiences were captivated by a first-hand account of the Holy Land. One newspaper reported: "For two hours and a half the crowd at the opera house was held spell-bound by his description of scenes in Palestine," for the reverend "...helped them to see what he saw on the way from New York to Egypt and Jerusalem."

Rev. Caster's long journey began in Bay City where he served as Presiding Elder and where his friend and colleague on the journey Edward Winston Ryan (1837-1916) served as Pastor of the Madison Ave. Church. Rev. Ryan would later also take a second Holy Land trip because of his "zeal for Christian ministry."



Train Station, Bay City

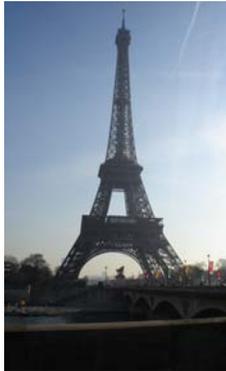
On April 7, 1891, they set out on train from Bay City to Detroit, Buffalo, and then New York City where they embarked on the ocean liner, "City of Chicago," for Liverpool, which they reached on April 19.

(Continued on page 7)

A Methodist Pilgrim: Rev. Elisha E. Caster in the Holy Land (Continued on page 8)

A train ride took them to London which Rev. Caster described as “an immense aggregation of 4,211, 056 people” but “not a pretty city” with its streets “narrow, crooked, and crowded. With few exceptions its buildings are not fine. The House of Parliament is showy on the outside, but [in the interior] does not equal the Capitol at Washington or the State House at Albany.” Unimpressed by the Old World, our ministers headed for St. Paul’s Cathedral. There they were among the 4000 who listened to famed Baptist minister Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892). Rev. Caster commented that Spurgeon was “getting very gray of hair and beard.” (Indeed, this evangelical giant was approaching the very end of his life.) On his return voyage, Rev. Caster visited Westminster Abbey and heard a sermon which was “not equal to my expectations.” As a renowned preacher himself, he had high standards for his colleagues in ministry.

In England, he also made a pilgrimage to renowned Methodist sites, such as the grave of Samuel and Susanna Wesley and City Roads Chapel noting that “he (John Wesley) ...preached, here, in a room adjoining the church, he died, and in the yard at the rear of the church he is buried...” This was the highlight of his visit to England confessing “[i]t was a pleasure to visit these places.”



The Eiffel Tower

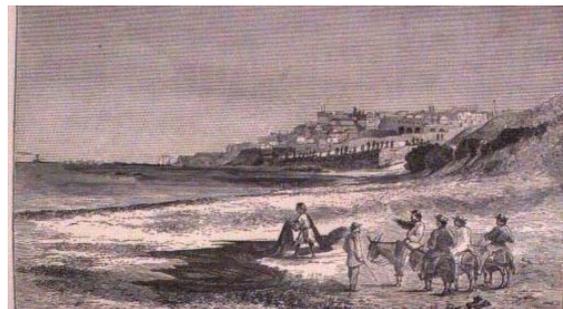
In London, the ministers purchased the tickets needed for the rest of the voyage—to Paris, to Rome, to Egypt, and to the Holy Land. They departed for Paris on Monday, April 20. Like

travelers throughout the centuries (including myself), Rev. Caster was stunned by the magnificence of this city, declaring Paris “the most splendid city on earth.” He visited the same sights that still draws tourists today: Arc de Triomphe (“doubtless the finest triumphal arch in existence”), the Louvre, Notre Dame, Napoleon’s Tomb and the Hotel des Invalides, Tour Eiffel, Versailles, Place de la Concorde, etc. He was mesmerized by Paris at night which was illuminated by “100,000 electric lights.”

Back on the train, they traveled through the beautiful French countryside to the border of Italy where their bags were searched by customs agents. From there, they traveled to Genoa (“a very picturesque city...the birthplace of Columbus...with many buildings standing that Columbus saw before he saw America”) and then to Rome. Rev. Caster was struck by the beauty of the Italian countryside. “No country could be more pleasing to the eye. The broad fields resemble very much the prairie lands of Illinois. Large fine wheatfields, just heading out. Herds of grizzly cattle, horns three feet long, grazing in the fields, droves

of asses by the score, not many horses, fields watered by water brought through stone aqueducts scores of miles and emptying into immense stone basins.” It was beautiful, he noted, but not more than the new Holy Land whence he had set out.

From Rome, they traveled south to Naples which did not strike Rev. Caster’s fancy. He refers to it as “the most lied about city I ever visited, when it is called ‘a perfect beauty.’ It is not true. It has many great piles of stone, brick and mortar, but any considerable town in the United States of America equals or excels it in architecture, while the bay of Marquette, Lake Superior is fully as beautiful as the Bay of Naples.” After a detour to see the ruins of Pompeii, they boarded a train to Brindisi where they embarked on an Austrian vessel. They traveled in sight of the coast of Greece (an independent nation at this time) and



Crete (then a part of the Ottoman Empire) and arrived at “one of the historic cities of the world” Alexandria, Egypt on April 29.

Alexandria was the departure point for Pales-

tine. They paid \$1.55 to the Egyptian customs agents to obtain a permit to visit the Holy Land. The fees frustrated Rev. Caster who declared: “The business of this whole country seems to be to see how much money they can rob travelers of.” His sentiments have been shared by many a traveler, then as now. They boarded an Egyptian steamer at night and landed in Joppa the next morning on Friday, May 1, 1891. As the pair made their way by carriage to Jerusalem, Rev. Caster connected the old Holy Land to the new. The Valley of Sharon before him was “as beautiful as an Illinois prairie.” His remark was reflective of the American belief that the United States was the new Holy Land. This idea stemmed, in part, from 17th Century thinkers such as John Winthrop who viewed the development of the New World as a “city

upon a hill,” Cotton Mather who linked faith with the American landscape as “Christianography,” and William Penn’s effort to create a perfect society dubbed his “Holy Experiment.” Holiness

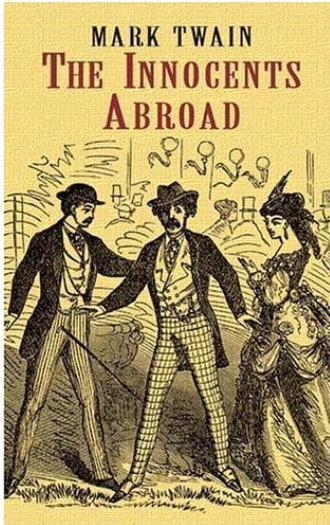
A Methodist Pilgrim: Rev. Elisha E. Caster in the Holy Land (Continued from page 7)

and the development of the American nation blended together in the minds of contemporaries who perceived God's special providence upon the nation. This idea fuelled belief in a divine injunction for American expansion both in North America (referred to as "Manifest Destiny") and beyond. The Americans were—by this reckoning—the new chosen people. We hear an echo of this feeling in President Abraham Lincoln's discussion (on the very day of his assassination) on whether to visit California or Jerusalem, the new or the original Holy Land.

When Rev. Caster entered Palestine, he was in a world of Arabs and Turks, Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians. Despite this, as he looked around he saw less of the present reality than the Biblical past. He read the Landscape through the Biblical narrative. Here was the birthplace of John the Baptist, there Mary visited Elizabeth, over there the path by which Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Egypt, etc. These were the observations of a pilgrim.

On May 2, they entered Jerusalem. Rev. Caster joyfully proclaimed: "Glorious city of David I have

been looking for thee for 30 years—here I am at last!" After touring the city, Revs. Caster and Ryan parted



company. The former hired a guide to take him on horseback to Jericho on May 4 and then to Northern Palestine on May 8. To reach the north, he traveled 14.5 hours in the saddle! He (like

Mark Twain before) was shocked by the state of the roads: "In America we would not think of putting a horse over such roads—there are no roads, simply bridle paths a horse scarcely touches his feet on the ground for the stone, stone, stone, stone! I should say that not one has been thrown out of the path in the last 3,000 years. Sometimes my horse was level, sometimes he was standing nearly on his head. Next nearly on his tail."

Since there were no tourist accommodations, Rev. Caster relied, as pilgrims had for centuries, on the philanthropy of local monastic centers. About these, however, he says remarkably little. He did note that they were "well-pleased" with their stay at the Catholic monastery on Mt. Tabor and that his stay in a Catholic Monastery at Tiberias provided such "good entertainment" that he remained for two nights (without providing clues to

what that was).

Rev. Caster's general silence on his first-hand monastic encounter is evidence of the general Protestant disregard for this tradition. The Protestant view was expressed most succinctly by Mark Twain in his *Innocents Abroad*: "Some of those men have been shut up there for thirty years. In all that dreary time they have not heard the laughter of a child or the blessed voice of a woman; they have seen no human tears, no human smiles; they have known no human joys, no wholesome human sorrows. In their hearts are no memories of the past, in their brains no dreams of the future. All that is lovable, beautiful, worthy, they have put far away from them; against all things that are pleasant to look

upon, and all sounds that are music to the ear, they have barred their massive doors and reared their relentless walls of stone forever. They have banished the tender grace of life and left only the sapped and skinny mockery. Their lips are lips that never kiss and never sing; their hearts are hearts that never

hate and never love; their breasts are breasts that never swell with the sentiment, "I have a country and a flag." They are dead men who walk." [Ch. 55]

Yet, upon experiencing the monastic hospitality, Twain was open-minded enough to reevaluate his view: "They knew we were foreigners and Protestants, and not likely to feel admiration or much friendliness toward them. But their large charity was above considering such things. They simply saw in us men who were hungry, and thirsty, and tired, and that was sufficient. They opened their doors and gave us welcome. They asked no questions, and they made no self-righteous display of their hospitality. They fished for

no compliments. They moved quietly about, setting the table for us, making the beds, and bringing water to wash in, and paid no heed when we said it was wrong for them to do that when we had men whose business it was to perform such offices. We fared most comfortably, and sat late at dinner. We walked all over the building with the hermits afterward, and then sat on the lofty battlements and smoked while we enjoyed the cool

(Continued on page 9)



Transfiguration Monastery,
Mt. Tabor

A Methodist Pilgrim: Rev. Elisha E. Caster in the Holy Land

air, the wild scenery and the sunset. One or two chose cozy bed-rooms to sleep in, but the nomadic instinct prompted the rest to sleep on the broad divan that extended around the great hall, because it seemed like sleeping out of doors, and so was more cheery and inviting. It was a royal rest we had." [Ch. 55] Twain pointed out how travel is fatal to prejudice. Such reevaluation, however, was not in the mind of Rev. Caster whose antagonism to Catholicism (reflective of his Methodist Episcopal Church) provided ample material for his lecture circuit. Also, by primarily seeing Palestine's Biblical past, scant attention was paid to its present.

Rev. Caster fulfilled the "dream of my life" when, on May 12, he spent the day on a boat in the Sea of Galilee "where Peter fished and Jesus taught." As he looked at the scenery he felt overjoyed and overwhelmed: "Here I am amid wonderful memories..." From Galilee he began the journey back to the Mediterranean coast, enduring long rides on horseback and very rough sleeping conditions (for there were no monasteries on the way). His last night was the worst. His entry on May 15 reads: "Spent the most uncomfortable night last night I ever spent in a public house. Dirt and fleas disputed supremacy. We did not essay to get into bed—did not dare to, but

stayed up and knapped about until 5' O'clock this morning when our boat came from Constantinople and we went about for Port Said [Egypt]." In Egypt, it was his hope to

reconnect with Rev. Ryan whom he had not seen in two weeks.

At his Hotel in Port Said, Rev. Caster met two African-American preachers, noting: "[t]hey are gentlemen and intelligent. It seemed good to see *even a black man from my own country.*" The latter comment reflects the very real racial bias against African-Americans that existed even in the North and among the ministers of the Detroit Annual Conference which had opposed slavery and sought to provide assistance to African-Americans in the South through its Freedmen's Aid

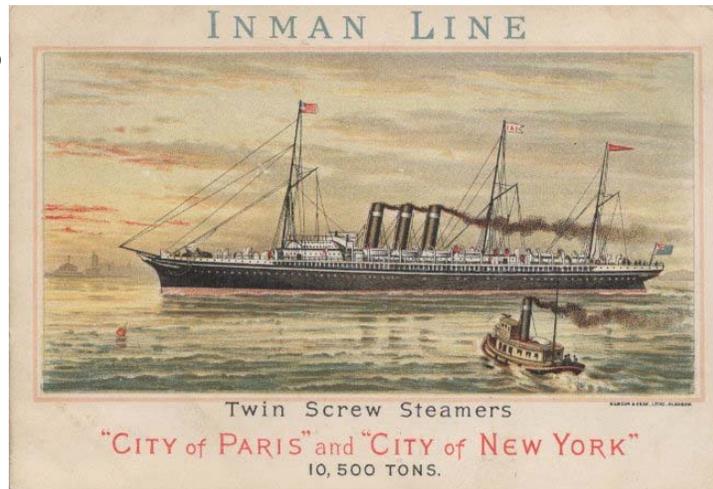
and Southern Education Committee. In this same year, the DAC called for the Methodist Episcopal Church to "forever put its heel of power on the caste serpent

From Queenstown he, along with 800 other passengers, boarded one of the greatest ocean liners of the century, the steamship "City of New York." This impressive luxury liner had been launched just three years earlier and went on to set a record for its transatlantic crossing. On this giant, Rev. Caster left the Old World to return to the New. Looking ahead, he exclaimed: "Thank God for America! How I prize her!"

Rev. Caster was anxious to return home, to share his experiences, and to worship in the churches of his beloved Detroit Conference. Until then, however, he was stuck on board and had to endure worship led by the ship's captain which our critical reverend noted, "did not seem much like worship."

The diary ends on July 1, 1891 without entry. It seems that once Rev. Caster returned home, his thoughts were transferred from his diary and developed in his lectures and sermons which he gave for more than two decades.

How did he feel upon returning home? We do not know for certain. Perhaps he echoed the sentiments that he had felt when he returned home from his earlier trip to the East Coast: "I was never more pleased to see my home. I now record with hearty thanksgiving to God, his goodness in being with and preserving me and mine during... our separation."



[=discrimination], though, if need be, it must suffer the redeeming bruise by such encounter." Yet, as is evidence from the comment of our minister, the serpent existed not only in the South, but even in the hearts of its members and ministers in the North. From Port Said, Rev.

Caster passed through the Suez Canal. Back on land, he caught a train to Cairo and toured the pyramids, before heading back to sea. On his return journey, Rev. Caster visited Rome, Milan, Venice, Germany, Belgium, Paris, London, Scotland, and Ireland.

An Excerpt from the 1st Detroit Annual Conference, 1856

This is an excerpt from the first meeting of the Detroit Annual Conference which took place from September 17-23, 1856 in Adrian. Bishop T.A. Morris presided and Rev. Seth Reed (1823-1924) was elected secretary.

Act on Slavery.

The encroachments of Slavery in this country for a few years past have been truly alarming, and the slave power never presented a more threatening aspect than at this moment. Its policy has always been grasping, aggressive, and self-appropriating, but its determination to subjugate the entire country, was never so clearly manifest as at present.

It has enacted and enforced laws which for their injustice and inhumanity can not be paralleled in any civilized nation on earth. It has broken faith with freedom, and wrested from her, by fraud and violence, some of her fairest domains. It has trampled upon and beaten down the right of free-speech, and the liberty of press, and has desecrated and prostituted the ballot box to the vilest purposes of tyranny. And at this moment, if its arrogant pretensions are not allowed, it threatens the disruption of the Union, and the overthrow of the government, and all the horrors of civil war. But we believe that submission to wrong does not make for peace.

We believe that God raised up this nation to be a great missionary nation, a light among the nations of the earth, but we believe that it can never fully answer the end of its being until the institution of slavery is blotted out:

Therefore,
Resolved,

1. That love to our country, and love to our race, our sympathy with the poor and with the oppressed, and our desire for the triumph of Christ's kingdom throughout the world, all prompt us to labor and pray for the extirpation of this "sum of all villainies."
2. That we rejoice at the progress of anti-slavery sentiment manifested in our late General Conference, and heartily concur with the voice of the majority in favor of so changing the general rule, as to prohibit holding a human being as property; and we never shall be fully satisfied with the position of our Church upon that subject, until *that* or some similar rule is adopted.
3. That we believe it to be our duty as ministers of the Gospel, and as American citizens, to content earnestly for freedom of speech and for the liberty of the Press, which the slave power has attempted to strike down.

J.S. Smart
S.S. Littlefield

A Note from the Archivist: Thanks, Recovery, and Moving into the Digital Age

I want to thank the many churches that have added the Archive to their Newsletter mailing list and for sending pictures and other material to the Archive. I am very pleased to help maintain and organize these important documents that convey the impressive work of our Conference.

The process of reconstructing the Archive continues after the devastating flood of June 2004. Indeed, it has been a long road, but we have made great strides. I am thankful for the support of the Commission on Archives and History and its Chair, Diana Spitnale Miller. Throughout, the leadership

and effort of Adrian College, including (now former) President Cane, Shipman Library Staff (Noelle Keller and David Cruse), the IT and Plant departments, has been indispensable. Without them we could not have recovered. I must also recognize the outstanding work of Archive Assistant and Adrian Undergraduate Meredith Burns who spent many hours re-cataloguing, organizing, and sifting through materials for our restoration.

The goal ahead, in addition to the continued restoration, is to begin the transition of Archive material to digital format for permanent

preservation and easier access. This is a long-term project which will be accompanied by the

development of a new Archive website. I hope to have this up and running in Summer 2005.

Michigan Methodist Histories Available

The Michigan Area Historical Society of the United Methodist Church has provided copies to the Archive of Margaret Macmillan's *The Michigan Church in Michigan: The Nineteenth Century* and A. Douglas MacNaughton's *The Methodist Church in Michigan: The Twentieth Century*. Copies are available at no charge for all churches and historical committees. In addition, Farmington First UMC, which

funded the reprinting of Elijah H. Pilcher's classic 19th century study, *Protestantism in Michigan*, has also made copies available for distribution at no charge (except postage). Lastly, the Archive has copies of Dorothy Reuter's *Methodist Indian Ministries in Michigan (1830-1990)* which sells for \$13.25. To obtain a copy of any of these, please contact the Archive.

Church History of the Year Award Application Form

Detroit Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History

Deadline: December 15, 2005

To be considered for the Detroit Conference "Church History of the Year Award," simply fill out this form and submit it to the Archivist at the address listed below, with your most recent history. Questions and other inquires may also be sent to the Archivist.

1. Church Information

Name of Church:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

Church website (if any):

Contact Person:

Contact Phone Number/Email:

2. Format of History (circle one):

Print

Video (DVD/VHS)

Website

Other

3. When was this history compiled:

4. Submit Application Form and History to:

Dr. Matthew T. Herbst, Detroit Conference Archivist and Historian
First United Methodist Church of Howell, 1230 Bower St., Howell, MI 48843
(517) 546-2730 /mherbst@adrian.edu

Become a Member of "Friends of the Archive"

**Friends of the Archive
Membership Form**
Detroit Annual Conference
Archive

"The Friends of the Archive" is a non-profit group that supports the Archive and the mission of maintaining and preserving the history and historical material of the Detroit Conference. Members receive the Archive Newsletter, "Historical Messenger," and related material. Members also seek to publish material of interest to the Detroit Conference and its churches. Please join us in helping to preserve our past!

1. Membership Information

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

2. Membership Level:

1-Year **Regular** Membership (\$6)

2-Year **Sustaining** Membership (\$15)

5-Year **Supporting** Membership (\$30)

Lifetime Membership (\$100)

(Congratulations to **Rev. John G. Park** of Flint on becoming the most recent Lifetime Member!)

3. Submit Form and Payment (checks payable to "Friends of the Archive") to:

Sharon Scott, Treasurer

214 E. Michigan Ave., Clinton, MI 49236



Detroit Conference
 United Methodist Church
 1309 North Ballenger Hgwy,
 Ste. 1
 Flint, MI 48504

Change Service Requested
 Dated Material-Do Not
 Delay

Non-Profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Flint, MI 48504
Permit No. 704



“Capture the Past: Strategies and Skills for Local Church History” on Sept. 26

The Commission on Archives and History will offer a workshop on enhancing local church history on **Monday, Sept. 26 at Flushing UMC** (413 E. Main Street, Flushing MI 48433, 810-659-5172). The cost is \$5 per person. The program schedule is: Registration (5:15), Dinner (5:30-6:00), Introduction on the Importance of Local Church History (6-6:30) and Breakout Sessions (6:40-7:25 and 7:30-8:15) on strategies for using print, internet, and video as well as on managing our church records –what do we keep? Each breakout program will be held twice. Questions? Contact Jeanne Thomas or Diana Spitnale Miller, CAH Chair (989-673-4355 or ddmiller@centurytel.net).

Capture the Past: Strategies and Skills for Local Church History Registration Form



Contact Information:

Name: _____
 Church Name: _____
 Address/Phone Number: _____
 Registration Fee: \$5 per person (Make checks payable to “Detroit Annual Conference”)

I will attend the workshop on (choose two):

1. Telling our Story in Print (Best Approaches)
2. Telling our Story On-Line (Strategies of using Church Websites for Church History)
3. Telling our Story on Video/DVD (Models of using
4. Managing Church Records: What Matters?

Mail Registration Form and Payment to:

Jeanne Thomas, 8494 Wesley Dr., Flushing, MI 48433
 810-659-0881 / jim_jeanne2000@hotmail.com