

HISTORIAN'S VIEW

DECEMBER

DECEMBER, 2014



PRESIDENT'S INVITATION

Come one and all who are interested in the real histories of the United Methodist Church in Alabama-West Florida. Some areas of the Conference were settled and churches were built very early and some came along later in the 19th Century. Very early education was an important aspect of Methodism as was mission work. The Chautauqua was begun as a Methodist Institution in up state New York, but migrated south due to the cold winter months prohibiting travel and out door activities. Two places in our Conference became the host for Chautauqua events, one was Citronelle, Alabama, and the other was DeFuniak Springs, Florida. The Church in DeFuniak Springs has its history closely tied with the Chautauqua events. We will learn more about this at the Annual Meeting on January 24, 2015. Membership in the Historical Society is not required to enjoy, learn, and experience a bit of history, first hand while attending the meeting and strolling around the lake to view the exhibits. Children and youth would enjoy and gain from the experience as well.

WARM COASTAL CLIMATE APPEALS TO THE CHAUTAUQUA ASSEMBLIES

The Methodist Church started these Assemblies as a warm weather means of educating the youth and children leaders. It evolved into a cultural enrichment and development program spreading further than the Methodist Church. It was begun in upstate New York by the Methodist, but climate in the north restricted the meeting time and length of the meetings. As many found the southern climate more enticing and as railroad travel became easier and quicker, a movement south began. Many journeyed here where they found the cost of living smaller in small towns and settlements. Soon these areas increased in size with houses built showing casing their origins. Steep roof houses sprang up in the mid to late 1900's as the new residents were accustomed to the heavy weight of snows in winters, but found very little snow here. They brought the concept of the Chautauqua Meetings with them. One was established in Citronelle, Alabama, and another in DeFuniak Springs, Florida.

The first Florida Chautauqua Assembly was opened on February 10, 1885, in DeFuniak Springs where the original building still stands today. These cultural programs continued until 1920. The building with its "dome of gold" began to slowly decay while the dome shown bright. Survival of the Assemblies in the 19th and early 20th Centuries depended upon railroad transportation, which declined in those areas. Having lived in both Citronelle and DeFuniak Springs, the oral histories were easily assessable, even in the 1960's and 1970's. As a creative writing teacher in the Walton County High School in 1975, obtaining oral history was still possible. One student chose to write a poem about the Chautauqua Assembly Building and entitled it, "The Dome of Gold". This student aptly captured what the Chautauqua had meant to the Florida area. Have you read the book, Ben Hur, or seen the movie? The author, Lew Wallace, was one of the cultural presenters of the Chautauqua in the 19th Century. He talked about his reason for writing this book, which was to prove that Jesus Christ did not exist. If you read the book, you will see how he tackles these issues in the beginning, but will see how his research turned him into a believer. By Myrtice Carr



**CHAUTAUQUA MEEING HOUSE
BEFORE RENOVATION
DEFUNIAK SPRINGS, FL
2015 THEME—"A JOURNEY INTO THE
WORLD OF TRANSPORTATION. FROM THE
RIVER TO THE ROCKET"**



REV, ED SHIRLEY, CURCIT RIDER/SINGER

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OPENS 2013 MEETING WITH CAMP MEETING SINGING

Year 2013 saw the Annual Meeting held in the 1879 style sanctuary of the First United Methodist Church in Opelika, Alabama, which was first established in 1837. It was to have started in 1836, but the Creek Indian Chief did not agree to the plan. However, when he departed with his tribe to the Oklahoma Territory, the small one room wooden church was built. This sanctuary was the third structure to house the Methodist Church in Opelika, although over a century old, it has been well preserved. A short organ concert helped to get the meeting together with The Rev. Ed Shirley, dressed in his circuit rider clothes and playing the guitar to lead in old camp meeting songs. Joe Harrington, Historian for the Church, and former Historian and President of the Conference Historical Society, Claud Brown, planned and led the meeting, which consisted of several tour led walks through the church and various members providing histories as the journeys continued. Tour group sessions learned about the architectural designs of all three buildings in three locations. Of special interest was the historical "vault" where many artifacts were located, much to the surprise of the historians during preparation of their 175th Anniversary. This church had boasted of having a comprehensive tape recording systems second to none in the nation and the original recording controls were located in this vault. Especially of interest were the pictorial journey through multiple ministerial leaderships presented in the halls of the Sunday School areas.

A delicious lunch was served by the church with some of the recently revised Sunday School orchestra members providing soft music. After lunch Sharon Tucker, Conference Archivist, assisted by Mary Ann Pickard, former Archivist, presented a list of possible retention schedules for local churches. These included Abstracts of property to W-2, 1099 and other forms for the IRS. An "Archival Records" Folder needs to be kept in the office, permanently, containing documents related to the location of archival records. "Gold Disks" were suggested for storage as they are guaranteed to last up to 50 years. Reports of all agencies must be saved, permanently as well as the minutes of meetings. All records of closed churches must be sent to the Methodist Archives Center at the address below. A special tour was arranged to the site of the original church and cemetery. Prior to this, Newel Floyd gave the efforts to locate and restore this historical site. Only the cemetery remains, but now in good repair, thanks to volunteers and a group of soldiers from Ft. Benning, GA. There are American Revolution Veterans still buried in this cemetery with a marker so designating this presented by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1937. The names had not been obtained at time of the visit. However, the possibility of the names being documented and retained by the DAR might reveal this information.

**VOUNTEERS NEEDED TO SERVE AS
2015 OFFICERS FOR HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF AWF CONFERENCE**

**To volunteer, email myrticecarr@att.net or call 205-991-7858 or Mary Ann Pickard
at the Archives Office below.**

AWF UNITED METHODIST ARCHIVES CENTER

Phone: 334-833-4413 Fax: 334-263-4465

Email: archives@huntingdon.edu

IN REMEMBRANCE

Dr. Bob Couch, a faithful and devoted member of the Historical Society passed away in December of 2013. He was an officer in the Society, off and on, and was secretary at the time of his passing. He was a contributing writer to this newsletter as well as helping with membership promotions. His presence among us will be greatly missed.

LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY AND RECORD KEEPING

Historical record keeping was, initially, kept in note books and ledgers and included membership rolls. We have come from the early days of circuit riders to the days of itinerate preachers assigned a year at a time, but who arrive in automotive vehicles, not horseback. The times have now moved into the technology era, but many churches have not taken advantage of the new and emerging ways to save and preserve records. Those interested in preservation of church records can make inquires of the ministers and members of Church Councils. Does your church have a designated Historian? Some records are now kept on thumb drives, disks, and cyber space such as offered by "gmail" and "cloud". There are pros and cons of each method, such as what might be the longevity of each method and the ease of storage and retrieval. Get interested and involved so the history can help direct the future. It has been often said that, "History is nothing but a prolog for the future."

Alabama West Florida United Methodist Church Historical Society invites all members and any interested person, young, senior citizen, or in-betweens to come to DeFuniak Springs, Florida, on January 24, 2015, for the Annual Meeting. Come earlier than Saturday, spend the night in one of the nearby hotels or motels and participate in the Florida Chautauqua. This will allow you and your family to see exhibits that are fun and educational, but historical as well. The theme of the 2015 Chautauqua is: "A Journey into the World of Transportation: From the River to the Rocket" with Apollo 13 Astronaut, Fred Hairs as guest. Tickets can be purchased for special events and lectures, but the visual approach of the exhibits are all free of charge and most are located around Lake DeFuniak Springs, located in the center of town. It is only one mile around the lake. Some of these exhibits include Buffalo Soldiers of Marianna where they will commemorate the history of the first peacetime all-black regiments in the regular U. S. Army. There will be an Antique Car Show on Saturday in the UMC parking lot. Go to the Community Center for a Porcelain Art Show and purchase some of this art on Saturday. This is a great place to watch a Civil War Camp and Skirmish Reenactment. See the Emerald Coast Wildlife Refuge and the Historical Exhibit about the Florida Chautauqua. The Florida Forest Service will exhibit a nature trail. There will be a Florida Frontiersman Settlement Camp on the Lake yard showing the chores, clothing, and life of an early settlement. Children are taught how to make their own bird houses with free kits and lessons provided by The Home Depot Kids Clinic. Children of all ages, including senior citizens will enjoy the Muscogee Indian Gathering and Encampment where tribe members exhibit their heritage. Have you ever wanted to see a Tin Can Tourist Vintage Camper?

All exhibits will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from Thursday, January 22, 2015, through Sunday. Concessions are available for lunch around the lake. A list of available accommodations just in DeFuniak Springs includes:

- Best Western Crossroads Inn - 1-866-276-6393 @ approximately \$81.00/night
- Econo Lodge 1-866-279-4856 @ approximately \$65/night
- Super 8 Motel 1-866-272-4856 @ approximately \$60/night
- Regency Inn & Suites 1-866-267-9053 @ approximately \$60/night

**REGISTRATION
FOR THE
2015 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE AWF CONFERENCE
AT DEFUNIAK SPRINGS UMC**

Name (s) _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone: (H) _____ Email: _____
(O) _____

Registration Fee \$15.00 per person, includes lunch \$ _____

Program is from 9:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Lunch at 12:15
1:30 to 5:00 Free to Stroll the Exhibits

Make checks payable to: Historical Society of UMC
Send checks with registration fee to:
Mary Ann Pickard
Huntingdon College AWF Conference Archives
1500 E. Fairview Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36106

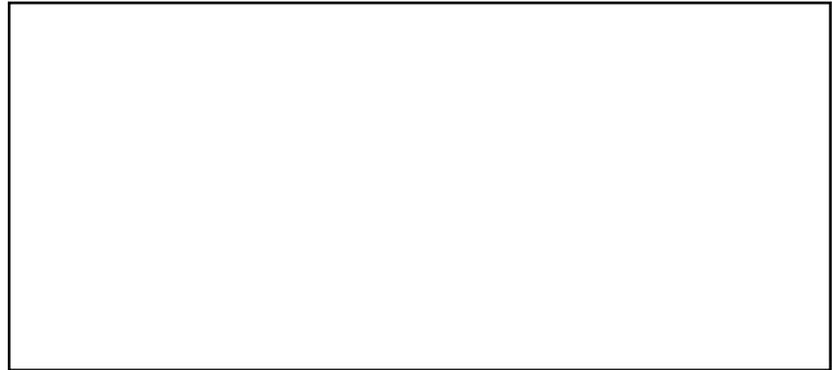
**WHAT IS THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA HIS-
TORICAL SOCIETY?**

This organization and arm of the Commission on Archives and History meets once a year for the purpose of studying some aspect of the history and development of the Conference of the United Methodist Church. These meetings are designed to be fun and interesting as well as educational. The purpose is to help all Methodist and prospective Methodist appreciate what we are today as a Church body. Hopefully, we can learn from the successes and mistakes of the past in order to better efforts of today and tomorrow to spread the words of Christ.

At the Annual meetings, the Society elects new officers or Executive Board members who help to carry out the business of the organization, which is facilitating communication to local church members and helping to preserve the Methodist heritage, no matter the size or membership of the local churches. Anyone is eligible to join, but you do not have to be a member of the Society to attend the meetings. We welcome anyone interested in preserving history.
Myrtice Carr, President



Executive Board
President—Myrtice Carr
myrticecarr@att.net
Vice President—Craig Reynolds
dfsreynolds@yahoo.com
Treasurer—Mary Ann Pickard
mpickard@huntingdon.edu



ANNUAL MEETING
SATURDAY
JANUARY 24, 2015

“ASK THE ARCHIVIST”

As the pastor of a small rural church (no secretary) with a very small office space, I have a question. Our church treasurer wants to keep “everything” related to the finances of our church. My question is, “What financial items should be kept in the office and for how long?”

As a member of a small rural church I understand your problem. However, we should realize all churches must be able to substantiate its financial records and the records should be kept at the church not in someone’s home. Please at least make a file cabinet drawer available for financial records only. The following should be kept on the premises for seven years then they can be destroyed, preferably shredded: accounts payable records, accounts receivable records, bank statements – balanced; purchase orders. The following should be kept permanently: tax-exempt certificates and Form 990; Finance Committee Meeting Minutes; yearly Fiscal Reports; bequests and estate papers. If the above information is stored on the church computer, please keep a back-up record.

We have just finished our annual charge conference. We gave copies of the information required to the District Superintendent, should we keep a copy of the records at our local church?

Yes. The District Superintendent keeps the annual charge conference records at their offices for several years. Then they send them to the Methodist Archives Center where we store them in an off sight location. They are available if needed for future reference, however, the employees of the Methodist Archives Center don’t have the time available to do the research in past annual charge conference records – the area is overflowing with records! We do make the information available to you for research. Instead of making a trip to Montgomery every time a question is asked why not keep copies of your annual charge conference records on site at the local church. If they are organized by year it makes for simple research. Also, computer storage is acceptable if back-up is used.

Unfortunately our church is closing at this year’s annual conference. Our closing date has not been set yet but I was wondering what records should be turned over to the District Superintendent at the closing?

Everything – please send all surviving records of the church to the Methodist Archives Center (or have your District Superintendent deliver them). We will appraise them, organize them, and preserve them for future generations. Just because your church has closed doesn’t mean it will go away – send us all information (from your church and/or church members). We will gladly preserve your history!

By Sharon Tucker, Archivist for Alabama West Florida Conference, UMC