

Methodists Will Follow In Footsteps of Asbury After Century And Half

Sequicentennial On Thursday Will Find Cavalcade Coming From Perry Hall To Visit Historic Points In City, Ending At Mount Olivet Cemetery, Where The Church's Hero Sleeps.

By MRS. ARTHUR BARNEVELD BIRBENS.

NOWADAYS all the world is looking to America to solve its problems. Not only are we asked to meet the war-spent Old World's needs in food supply, in raw materials for manufacture, in machinery for transportation and means of communication; but we are besought to set the pace in self-government, in disarmament and in the control of the great corporate interests that threaten the life and welfare of the people.

At the same time that we are recognized as the world's potential storehouse, exchange and experiment station there is in some quarters a growing anxiety on the part of a bewildered few to deem America "culture to the sun" as a center of "value and art, as an arbiter of all the arts, as a kind of light and leading," as if a people who had conquered a boundless continent from ocean to ocean, in the brief space of three centuries, could be expected to reel in the same intensive cultural development as some little pioneering kingdom of a dozen miles square, basking in degerate luxury after its rough edges had been smoothed off by the vigorous hand of good roads laid perchance by the Romans a thousand years ago.

America has achieved in the conquest of natural resources, in leveling down virgin forests and building therefrom the rude log cabins—the first homes—and later princely mansions and towering cities, in tunneling the mountains, in bridging great streams, and in surmounting such epochal triumphs in communication and transportation as the telegraph and railroad, in illuminating the cities by gas—

It is the anniversary of his coming to America which today should give us pause to study his motives and his bearings upon the background of our history.

On October 27, 1771, an epoch-making event occurred in American ecclesiastical annals. On that day, 100 years ago, there was born the Rev. John Wesley.

Here already Robert Strawbridge had by full deeds of Methodist service, of whose burden and of whose preaching, entrenched himself in the affections of his Anglican neighbors. His little mission of the American soul needs, for "no sooner had been arranged his house than he began at once to preach in it," forgetting crops or his own needs. After forming a class in his log cabin, the birthplace of American

to the New World and my heart outbid him. I would have covered over and covered by weatherboarding). He soon after built the log meeting house a mile away and began to hold services throughout the Frederick and Baltimore county region which brought many converts. It was at this time that his next Anglican families into touch with the vital soul-saving religion which they were after proclaimed to the world.

It was about 1775 that William Walters and his brothers, Philip Glitch, and a dozen others, of whom Asbury was the first, were converted to the Methodist creed, after preaching at 30 different appointments. When he returned to the Susquehanna home of James Presbury, one of Strawbridge's converts, in Christmas week, 1772.

Strawbridge the Pioneer.

No extensive had become the labors of Strawbridge, who had come from the West in 1769 in the west ships which carried the grain of the Frederick county upland, settled by the Potomac. He had come from Southern Maryland, to the needy ports of Ireland, that when Asbury first came to Maryland in November, 1772, a year after his arrival, he had traveled several weeks and over 300 miles visiting the families of the converts, and to the new settlements of his young associates. Here ready in his hand Asbury found the nucleus for the first Methodist church in the country, responsive fervor and famous hospitality made of Maryland the ready receiving and starting point for America's Methodism which soon gave promise of its world-evangelizing force.

When Asbury held the first annual conference in Philadelphia in 1773, New York reported but 100 members, Philadelphia 160, while Maryland reported 100, or nearly half of the church's total of 1,180 in America.

Asbury's advent in Baltimore at this time is thus related by a local authority. "The happiest event which could have occurred to Methodism in Baltimore was a month and a half before generally, was the arrival of Asbury in the fall of 1772, when he preached for the first time in the morning at the (Kell's) Point, and at town at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and at 10 in the evening."

The good seed sown here by Strawbridge, Williams, King, Pilmour and others, was the nucleus of the church that so that Asbury found a people prepared to his hands.

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On Friday, December 24, 1784, the apostolic little company rode from Perry Hall to Baltimore to meet them and at 10 o'clock began the first "general conference" of American Methodism. This establishes Maryland's long and legitimate claim that but it not been for the initial work of Strawbridge's native

more, where he writes "My heart is greatly refreshed at the sight of my spiritual children and kind friends."

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in England, met with Asbury and William Clark, of Nova Scotia, and arrangement for the historic Christmas conference in December, 1784, and the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

Freemson Greenstone, the able young Marylander, had sped on horseback over 1,200 miles in six weeks calling to Baltimore, "the natural center," the 60 itinerants who found their rugged way thither for this great occasion.

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Footsteps Of Asbury

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Itinerants, backed by Asbury's organizing genius and converts. Methodism could hardly have retained its remarkable hold on the country which it served so faithfully during the dark days of the Revolutionary conflict.

Wesley's itinerants, all save loyal Asbury alone, had returned to England. New York was not even an appointment for seven years from 1770 to 1783, and the New England Society had become extinct.

It was the warm fervor of the Chesapeake region, the genial, cordial temperament of Maryland and Virginia which kept the light aglow during this trying period.

Methodism On The Frontier.

When the surging van of emigration crossed the Alleghanies to possess the West at the close of the Revolution it was the Methodist church of Asbury, full-fledged and officered at Lovely Lane, which "entered the arena at the emergent moment" and with the 4,000 itinerants later ordained by the great Bishop of Souls kept ever heroically in the forefront of emigration and saved frontier America and the vast Empire of the Mississippi Valley from paganism and for a virile, practical Christianity. Sixty times did Asbury cross the Alleghanies on horseback. Forging scores of rivers, threading jungles and savage forests, he visited isolated families, presided over countless conferences, established the pioneer preachers and their feeble charges, made himself the financial agent for their support and, unmoveable in faith and courage, literally wore himself out in the service of humanity.

When General Washington stopped at Abingdon on the old Philadelphia road to receive the ringing salute of the infant Cokesbury College, on his way to be inaugurated President in New York, in 1789, his reply to Bishop Asbury's greeting there on behalf of Methodism was at once a sterling appreciation and a happy augury of the new relations of the pioneer Church and State, which were, however, to be forever wholesomely separate in this commanding new republic.

The old Cokesbury bell (recalling both its founders, Coke and Asbury), which greeted Washington in 1789, still rings its century-old salute each morning in Goucher College halls.

Will Celebrate On Thursday.

On Thursday next, a century and a half after Francis Asbury's arrival on these shores, a "cavalcade" of 64 automobiles representing the members of the Christmas Conference and their progeny, the 179 churches of Baltimore Methodism, which still remains in sturdy increase, will wend their way in reverent tribute to the first American bishop, after fitting ceremonies at Ferry Hall, past Philip Gatch's old homestead on the Belair road, through the streets of Baltimore to the site of Lovely Lane (now Redwood street), where on the Merchants' Club Building at the corner of South street a bronze tablet commemorates the start of the great world-wide movement, which numbering now 48,000 itinerants and 7,100 churches in its ministry to eight and a half million communicants in this and other continents, had its first inception here.

A moment later and the procession of present-day shrine worshipers will halt to do homage at Redwood and Light streets to the spot, also marked by a tablet, which states that here stood the successor of Lovely Lane, the first Light Street Church, built by Bishop Asbury, and in whose conference room adjoining was organized the Asbury Sunday-School Society (in honor of the man who formed the first Sunday-school in America in 1788). This became in the teaching of the three R's and elementary branches the pioneer of popular education and the public school system and the parent society of 40 later schools.

Nearby stood also the second attempt at higher education, when Cokesbury College was reopened here after its burning at Abingdon in 1795. Here, too, Asbury erected the Second Light Street Church, 1797-1792, where the weary Bishop's remains, after 45 years of journeying across the continent, rested overnight encircled by a guard of honor on May 10, 1816, before being followed by the General Conference, the Governor of the State, the Mayor, and members of the Supreme Court and a great concourse of over twenty thousand persons to the vault beneath the altar of the present Eutaw Street Church, which will in turn be visited by the company.

The pilgrimage of 1921 will end where came to a final close the journeyings of the "Prophet of the Long Road" at Mount Olivet. Here beside his devoted predecessor, Robert Strawbridge, he rests upon the high grassy slopes overlooking the old Frederick road, part of the historic National turnpike so frequently traversed by them and the host of 250 ministers, pioneers and patriots, bishops and builders of America who rest beside them there.