

Commission on Archives and History
2020 Annual Report

During 2019 the Commission on Archives and History met twice with the New England United Methodist Historical Society, as is our regular practice, at the Central UMC in Brockton, MA, to deal with the artifacts in our Heritage Center which had been newly located at the church during the previous year. At both meetings, some time was spent in the room provided by the church for the Heritage Center for display of the artifacts which have been collected over the more than 225 years of the history of the annual conference from both conference agencies and local churches. We worked with our Curator, Margaret Bickford, to determine the best way to arrange these artifacts for viewing by visitors who may eventually be able to visit the Center post pandemic. We have also had extensive discussions about how to adequately fund the Heritage Center itself.

Having met twice within 2019 at Central UMC/Brockton, we decided to accept an invitation from folks at the Church on the Cape in Kennebunk, ME, for our Spring 2020 meeting. Before we could hold the meeting, however, the Covid-19 pandemic hit our country, and everything was put on hold. We did not meet either in-person or virtually in the spring of 2020.

Our fall 2020 meeting was held virtually, and we considered several items. The first was the possibility of presenting a resolution to the 2021 Annual Conference to designate the Winooski United Methodist Church as one of our officially registered Historic Sites. The Church was attended by a number of Buffalo Soldiers (African Americans) when they were stationed at Fort Ethan Allen in Winooski prior to WWI. A number of those soldiers then retired in Winooski and continued to attend the church, with some descendants still active members there. This church has recently been named as a new site on the Vermont African American Heritage Trail, and it seems appropriate to recognize it as a United Methodist Historic Site, as well. It was voted unanimously to proceed with the application, and a resolution is being presented to the 2021 Annual Conference. This will make two United Methodist Churches in Vermont which are sites on the Vermont African American Heritage Trail – the other being the Wolcott UMC which is the *only white* United Methodist church in the United States that was organized by an African American – the Rev. George S. Brown.

Our Conference Archivist, Kara Jackman, reported that the online archives collection was getting a good deal of use now that many people were at home during the pandemic and doing online research. She is also available to answer email inquiries even though the library and archives are closed to all those outside of the BUSTH Community. She is also still available to pick up records of closed churches.

The Conference Historian, Pat Thompson, reported that she has begun a new column for the conference e-news, entitled, “Did You Know...???” in which she will share stories of little-known historical figures in the annual conference or little-known information such as the fact that there was once a Methodist Protestant Church in the state of Vermont. Her first column, as we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the passage of Women’s Suffrage in 1919, was about a woman named Elizabeth Upham Yates, a native of Maine, who was the first to run for high state office when she ran for Lieutenant Governor on the Democratic Ticket in Rhode Island in 1920. Unfortunately, the Republicans won the election.

We also discussed the fact that we need to be aware of how *white* our Commission is and to work harder to recruit members of color to serve on the Commission in the coming years.

And finally, we are currently holding our local church history writing contest. If your local church has published a local church history during the past six years – 2016-2021 – please consider submitting it to the local church history writing project. There are 3 categories – small, medium, and large churches. The deadline is January 15, 2022. If you need more information, please contact Rev. Pat Thompson @pajt8817@aol.com.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Pat Thompson, Chair and Conference Historian