**THE DETROIT CONFERENCE**

**HISTORICAL MESSENGER**

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Ronald A. Brunger, Editor

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**HERE AND THERE**

Through the vigilance and help of Rev. Gerald Parker of Chelsea, a copy of the 1804 Discipline of the M.E. Church was given to the Conference Archives on September 14, 1989 by Mrs. Helen R. Kloack, of 144 Sager Road, Michigan Center, MI. This is a wonderful and valued addition to our library.

We had the 1808 and 1812 Disciplines. Our oldest Discipline is the 1801 Discipline which was given by Rev. Fred Hart to the Conference Historical Society, June 25, 1945.

Our thanks go also to Rev. Jerry Parker for a picture of the bishops of the M.E. Church up to 1872 (31 men). Jerry picked it up at an auction for $1!

We were happy to be present at the Boulevard Temple Home on October 1, for the Program of Appreciation honoring Dr. Benjamin Holme, holder of the conference cane, on the occasion of his 95th birthday. A goodly number of friends were present. Eleven speakers paid fitting tributes emphasizing varied aspects of Ben's life and outstanding service to our Church.

The Adrian paper, on September 14, 1900, told of a supper at the M.E. Church with "pressed beef, potato chips, baked beans, cabbage salad, white & brown bread, pickles, pumpkin pie, tea & coffee. Price, 10 cents."

Your editor spoke on "Those Indispensable Ladies" at the Swartz Creek U.M.W. meeting on October 4. The talk, subtitled "The Beginning of the Women's Revolution in the Church," deals with the rise of the Ladies Aid Societies.

History comes up to the present time. We are proud and glad that outstanding history being made. We think of Bill Verhelst's vision and leadership of the new conference Volunteers in Mission program. At this writing 37 volunteers from 20 churches are about to build a new fellowship hall/community center for the Saganing Indian Church.

The Saganing Indian Church, small with 24 members, has a frame church which was dedicated on December 30, 1873. The church serves a considerable Indian population and a community center has been a long and deeply felt need. This is real mission project to cost $30,000. (For early history of Saganing, see the Messenger, March, May, and September, 1987.)

Our Burt Church celebrated its building centennial on October 15. Former pastors Ronald A. Brunger and Alan Weeks brought the morning and afternoon messages. The Bell Ringers of Ames Church, local musicians, and the church choir were also featured. Refreshments and fellowship followed the afternoon program.

The Ladies Library Association of Kalamazoo was the first Woman's Club in Michigan and third oldest in the U.S. In 1844 a reading club was started; in 1852 it sponsored lectures and established a circulating library. In the mid-1850's it was promoting a public library, an art club, and a current events study club.
In Memoriam

Allan G. Gray (1918-1989)

Allan Gordon Gray was born in Boston, March 22, 1918. He attended Highland Park Junior College, Colby College, Albion College, and Garrett. He married Elizabeth Jane Gray on June 11, 1943. He felt the call to preach in Colby College. He served seven charges from 1942 to 1983. He was on the Board of Ministry for 20 years, was on the conference secretarial staff 15 years, was book editor of the Advocate 29 years, a trustee of Northwestern University 12 years, a member of the Commission on Archives & History and the Jurisdiction Commission beginning in 1976, and president of the Friends of the Archives. His was an honored ministry.

Helen L. Royce (1900-1989)

Helen Royce was born December 3, 1900 in Waterbury, CT. She was ordained in Rochester, New York in 1937. She served churches in our Conference 1942-67; upon retirement was 12 years the associate pastor at Oak Park Church in Flint. She entered the Chelsea United Methodist Home in 1980. She was a member of the Commission on Archives, and is fondly remembered for her artistic slide programs on church themes. Helen had a beautiful spirit.

Bernice A. Ziarko (1904-1989)

Bernice Anderson was born February 22, 1904 near Farnhamville, Iowa. She attended Grinnell College and graduated from Iowa National Esther Hall as a Methodist Deaconess in 1928. She served 1930-40 at St. Peter’s Methodist Church and Community Center in Hamtramck, living in the Deaconess Home on Putnam Street, Detroit. She married Rev. Albert Ziarko in 1937 and served as a pastor’s wife until his death in 1948. Later in Iowa she served the Church in notable ways. She was grateful for her experiences as a Methodist Deaconess. (A story of her experience appeared in the Messenger for March 1986.) Bernice was a member of the Friends, and greatly enjoyed the Messengers.

Our Fall Meeting at Court Street Church on October 17 was an interesting time. Harley Topham showed slides on the history of Court Street Church and told the fascinating story of Seth Reed. Ronald Brunger gave some history of the Flint District; Dick Cheatham led us in devotions.

A woman in Minnesota, who was collecting family materials for a scrapbook honoring her mother-in-law on her 75th birthday, found part of an item on this woman’s grandmother from the Methodist Recorder for Jan. 17, 1903. She wrote us for help. As we have nearly a complete file of these Methodist Protestant papers, your archivist was able to copy the entire item covering the Resolutions of Sympathy passed by the Ladies Aid Society of the Flint Methodist Protestant Church in December 1902!

Tom and Pat Brown have given to the archives, From Ivied Walls, history of the Edith Buell Club at Boston University School of Theology. For decades this club existed for the wives of the male seminary students at Boston, and was a highly valued fellowship and support group.

OFFICERS OF THE FRIENDS

At our annual meeting at Adrian College on June 6, the following officers were elected: President - Frank Crisman, 865 Kirts Ave., Troy 48084; Vice-President - Jeanne Thomas, 13427 Viola Dr., Sterling Heights, 48077; Secretary-Treasurer - Sharon Scott, 214 E. Michigan Ave., Clinton 49236; Editor - Ronald A. Brunger, 73 Water Wheel Estates, Clinton 49236.

We considered the tragic fact that there is no comprehensive file of the Michigan Christian Advocate anywhere. The Archives only has a file for 1874 and 1932-89. The Advocate itself only has their file back to 1918. There are extra Advocates in the Albion archives. But the biggest treasure trove is in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library.

The Friends voted to set aside a large part of our assets toward an expensive project. We hope to meet with Burton officials and determine if there is a chance of a joint microfilming project on as many Advocates as can be assembled. Pray for success for this proposed project, still only our idea.
CHURCHES CELEBRATING CENTENNIALS
OF THEIR BUILDINGS

We are aware of four small churches that have recently rejoiced in centennial celebrations of their church buildings—Silverwood, Northwest Venice, Gilford, and Burt. The Manchester Church this year celebrates its sesquicentennial. The first three churches named are small rural churches, still using sanctuaries built in 1889. We thought it would be interesting to think a bit on the history of these rural churches.

1. Silverwood United Methodist Church

The Silverwood United Methodist Church (east of Mayville, west of Marlette) celebrated its centennial on September 17. In the late 1880’s lumbering was declining in the Thumb area, and the man with the hoe began to supplant the rugged lumberjack. A group of earnest people had formed a Society in the Ayers schoolhouse near the town of Silver Creek, now Silverwood. Often Rev. F.J. Galbraith, a local Methodist preacher from Clifford, preached to them. The people decided to ask Galbraith to help them organize a Methodist Church. A meeting was held on April 14, 1887, and a committee appointed to choose a site for the church. They accepted the offer of Hiram Harris to sell them the land for $10.

The gathering of money and materials began immediately. Timbers and stone for the foundation were given by a group of United Brethren people who had failed in an attempt to build a church. Subscriptions were solicited. Some people gave cash; others donated specified amounts of labor; others gave nails, shingles, lumber for the cause. The church was built by the men of the neighborhood, with the ladies preparing and serving meals to the workers. The church was completed in the spring of 1889 at a cost of only $1,139.49. Of the cost, $418 was received in labor and material; $160.59 in cash subscriptions. The Methodist Board of Missions gave $250; $148 was raised by the Ladies Aid Society for the pews, stove, lamps and lime for the foundation.

The church was dedicated by Rev. Galbraith on April 28, 1889. It is stated that it was entirely paid for within two years. In 1888 narrow gauge tracks for the Pere Marquette Railroad from Port Huron to Saginaw, were laid through this community, and the people wanted a post office. Silver Creek was the name they wanted; it was refused as Michigan already had a town by that name. Finally the community became Silverwood.

The village grew and flourished during the next 30 years. At that time there was a cheese factory, a brick kiln, a sawmill, two general stores, a hardware, a drug store, a racket store (variety store), a meat market, hotel, bank, barber shop, two blacksmith shops, and a doctor. The Maccabees, Gleaners, and Odd Fellows all were active here.

In the fall of 1887, Rev. George Tripp was appointed pastor of a circuit consisting of Clifford, Silver Creek, Clothiers, Newman, Pidd, and Parker—six preaching places. The women met in the home of Mrs. W.A. Johnson on Nov. 3, 1887 to organize a Ladies Aid Society whose purpose was to raise money to furnish the church after it was built, to care for it, and to promote its interest. There were 14 charter members. In May 1888, when the masons were ready to lay the foundation of the church, no lime was available. The trustees had no money, so the Ladies Aid gave $10 that the foundation might be laid and the building begun.
Through the years the Methodist Church has served the community. In 1946 two small Sunday School rooms and a furnace were added. In 1971 a fellowship hall was built, a welcome addition to the church. In 1981, when the Chessie System train derailed and the area was evacuated, the church served as a temporary state police post. During this time the church provided food and shelter in the spirit of Christ for weary firemen, disaster crews, DNR personnel, Dow Chemical crews, and media people. In 1988 the Port Huron District United Methodist Women chose this church for their annual officers' meeting. The Mayville charge now is a three point charge, comprised of Mayville, Fostoria, and Silverwood. This year Silverwood reported only 24 members but average attendance of 37!

2. Northwest Venice United Methodist Church

The Northwest Venice United Methodist Church is located at the corner of East Wilkinson Road and Geech, about six miles northeast of Corunna, in Shiawassee County. Charles Wilkinson and family were among the first settlers here in 1840. The first school was held in a barn on his farm, until a log school could be built. At first the people met in homes, holding their own informal religious services.

The Methodists established the Shiawassee Circuit in 1837 with two circuit riders, Washington Jackson and Isaac Bennett. By 1839 the Circuit reported 189 members. At an early date it included Shiatown, Corunna, Vernon, North Vernon, Venice, Argentine, Deerfield, Boutwells, Boyd School House, Conway, Antrim, Perry, Austin School House, Bennington, Fremont, Green School House, and Newberg. In pioneer days, people came long distances by ox team to their worship services. The Methodists have been active in this area for 150 years, but the history of the first 50 years in Venice Township is a blank. No local records have been found. It is known that for some years before 1880, the Vernon pastor served the Methodists to the north in Venice.

People used lap boards to eat on. Perhaps four people would sit facing each other, the board resting on their knees, serving as a table.

Finally the Methodists here wanted a church building. Their frame church was built and dedicated on Sunday, August 22, 1889. The building had green trim and shutters at the windows. The bell in the belfry sounded fourth to call people to worship. On the platform in front at the north end of the building, stood the pump organ to the left, a pulpit in front of the aisle, and chairs behind the pulpit. There were three coal stoves at first for heat.

For many years this church was on the Judd's Corners Circuit. The name of Judd's Corners was changed to Juddville in 1904. In the summer of 1890, a horse shed was built out behind to shelter the horses while their owners were at worship. In 1893 Judd's Corners Circuit reported 176 members, 11 probationers, two Sunday Schools with 176 enrolled, and a salary of $500 for the pastor. In 1903 Northwest Venice was placed on the Vernon charge; it was 7 miles north. In 1904 Vernon reported 115 members and $450 salary; Venice reported 86 members and $350 salary.

In 1915 four of the six Sunday School teachers belonged to the Galloway family. On May 23, 1915 the 103 people in Sunday School gave an offering of only 93 cents, evincing the poverty of the farmers, and also perhaps a low level of stewardship. The Venice Ladies Aid made a friendship quilt in 1917. It was later framed and now hangs in the back of the church. Electricity did not come to this area until November 1936; lights were installed in the church soon after.
In 1944 an oil furnace was installed, a godsend for a country church, eliminating the need of a janitor in wintertime arriving very early on Sunday morning and attempting to heat up a cold church quickly. Many church fires were thus caused; automatic heat was safer and far more convenient. In 1946 the salary for the minister was raised to $750. The church paid 75 cents for mowing the lawn in 1950, and 75 cents per week for cleaning. One April night in 1956, the church belfry was struck by lightning. A neighbor, Jack Eldridge, driving by was able to put it out with his jacket. The appreciative people bought him a new jacket and gave him $25.

In the early days, when the church held social events, people used lap boards to eat on. A lap board was a piece of wood three feet square. Perhaps four people would sit facing each other, the board resting on their knees serving as a table.

Northwest Venice was linked with Vernon until 1960. In 1961 the church was renovated and modernized; the ceiling lowered and paneling placed over the plaster. In 1988 the church proudly obtained an electric organ. Northwest Venice was linked with Oakley 1963-68, and with the Owosso New Haven Church 1968-80. Today it is linked with Brent Church. The church this year reported 29 members.

One of the early women ministers of the conference, Beatrice Townsend served here in 1943-47. Her son Theodore (Ted), attended Northwest Venice as a teenager. He went as a missionary to India, and is currently Professor of Old Testament Literature at Leonard Theological Seminary in India. The church is likewise proud that Gary Sanderson, who grew up in it, felt the call to the ministry. He attended Candler Seminary and has served in the Detroit Conference for 23 years.

The Northwest Venice centennial celebration was held on August 26-27. On Saturday a two o'clock service with music and remembrances by former pastors was followed by the opening of the cornerstone at 4 p.m. In the evening a catered meal was followed by a Cheryl Swift concert. On Sunday morning District Superintendent Robert L.S. Brown preached on the theme, "An Amazed and Amazing People." A potluck meal followed in the large tent. An afternoon program at 2:30 p.m., with sharing and singing, concluded the celebration of the centennial milestone.

3. Gilford United Methodist Church
Formerly United Brethren and E.U.B.

Gilford is seven miles northeast of Reese, in Tuscola County. Services in the community were first held in the Godkin School. Later Rev. David S. Arnold, United Brethren pastor of Akron and Fairgrove, was invited to hold services in the John Paul Building, over the Pauls' home. Desiring to promote Christian work in the community, Mr. Paul gave the use of the hall free of rent, furnishing heat and lights. The services continued despite some opposition in the community. One Sunday night, while Rev. Arnold was preaching, someone shot through the corner window, just missing the speaker's ear.

Arnold was invited by John Cragg to hold a camp meeting in his woods, a mile east of Gilford. The camp meeting was held for two weeks in the fall of 1887 and was successful. The camp meeting gave impetus to the building of a church. Mr. Godkin

One Sunday night while Rev. Arnold was preaching, someone shot through the west corner window, just missing the speaker's ear.
gave the first $100. John Paul and Henry Shannon were active leaders in the project. Charles Phipps gave the land. Stone for the foundation was furnished by Dan Lane. The timber was given by A.J. Guisbert. Rev. Arnold hewed the timber; community men worked in their spare time. The church was built "by degrees," as the historian put it, and was dedicated in September 1889. Rev. Shelly, the Presiding Elder, officiated at the dedication.

The next few years were touch and money scarce. John Cragg, Howard Pomeroy, and Robert Fenner were able to keep the church on its feet. Fenner was the Sunday School Superintendent; Agnes Misner Otis was the first Sunday School teacher. The roads were poor and made travel difficult. In the winter of 1895, Fenner and Mr. Maulberg hauled timber down a difficult trail, for building a shed for the church-goers' horses. A building bee was held and the horse shed built to the west of the church.

At first the church lacked a vestibule. Upon entering the door, a worshipper met up with a large wood stove. The chimney was located in the west end of the building; the stove pipe ran near the ceiling, the entire length of the church. At first the wooden pews were arranged so that there was no center aisle. Women sat on one side of the building in early times; the men on the other. During the pastorate of Rev. Gladwell, the pews were divided and a center aisle made. Also altar rails and a communion table were added.

In 1926-28, in the pastorate of Rev. J.A. Reynolds, the church was raised and a basement constructed. In 1948-49 a major renovation added a choir loft and three Church School rooms; two rest rooms were added at grade level, and two classrooms added to the basement. In 1949 the following improvements were made: new oak floor, oak pews, a bronze cross, a stained glass window, a large painted picture of the last supper, front entrance doors, chancel chairs, a choir panel, an aisle runner, and an oil furnace. In 1950 an oak communion table and oak pulpit were given as memorials. These acquisitions were dedicated to the glory of God by Dr. A.L. Spafford, Conference Superintendent.

More improvements came in 1951-52. In the church the kitchen was remodeled, steel cabinets and a double sink also were installed. In the parsonage a full basement was added with new porches, a septic tank and toilet facilities. The parsonage is in Fairgrove. The Gilford Church is valued at $90,000. Gilford reported 97 members in 1989, and a total budget of $34,587, indicating an average giving of $357 per member!

Gilford Church celebrated its centennial on Sunday, September 17. At 10:30 John Parker, former minister in 1978-81, was the preacher. A state historical marker was dedicated at 1:30 p.m. The afternoon program featured Bishop Judith Craig and the former New Sound Singers, a group that actively gave musical programs in 1970-74. A tea party and balloon launch followed. This varied celebration concluded with a singspiration service in the evening. Gilford indeed enjoyed a gala centennial celebration!

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Send to Sharon Scott, 214 E. Michigan Avenue, Clinton, MI 49238
Women Preachers in Michigan Methodism in 1874!

In our May Messenger, we wrote about Frances York (1826-1910), an outstanding woman leader in the Detroit Conference a century ago. Well educated, she was a fine singer and musician. She trained choirs, worked in Sunday Schools, revival services, and at camp meetings. She was the wife of Rev. Lodowick York and was a great asset in kingdom work. In 1873 she was granted a local preacher's license by the Ann Arbor District Conference, and held it for three years. In 1876 the question of the legality of giving a woman a local preacher's license arose, and her presiding elder, Elijah H. Pilcher, ruled against her. At the annual conference in 1876, Bishop Ames backed the refusal of her license to preach.

Frances York simply moved on to other ways of serving her Lord, in a most notable way. She had actively and successfully engaged in organizing local societies of the new Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, and had advocated a conference organization. In that same year, 1876, she became the first Detroit Conference W.F.M.S. Secretary, and held that position for years. Later she originated the "Lesson Leaves," providing program materials for the local Missionary Societies, giving ordinary members a sense of their part in a great cause, a great movement. Often called on to speak in various places, she was a well recognized leader.

We have been surprised recently in studying more carefully the 1874 issues of the Michigan Christian Advocate, to realize that Frances York was not the only woman in our Michigan Methodism, holding a local preacher's license at that time.

The Flint District held its fourth quarter District Conference at Linden, August 4-6, 1874. We read in the minutes for the second afternoon, "recommendations for license to preach, ordination, and for the traveling connection were received as follows: L.N. Moon and R.M. Young, exhorters, and Miss Emma Young for license to preach; B.F. Hitchcock for ordination, and L.N. Moon, D.W. Giberson, William R. Campbell, and E.H. Boynton for the itinerancy. They gave an account of their Christian experience and were examined by the committees on doctrinal points, and their cases disposed of according to their recommendations."

Evidently these people were all voted on favorably. But there was opposition to a license for Emma Young. The minutes continue: "There was a lively and spirited debate over the question of the legality of licensing women to preach. Some took the ground that while it might be expedient, it might not be lawful. Scripture and discipline were freely quoted on both sides." On Thursday morning, the account noted that "Rev. Mrs. Emma Young conducted a prayer meeting of a half hour, which was a season of profit."

The same September issue of the Advocate noted that Rev. A.M. Fitch, the presiding elder of the Albion District, had "entered his solemn protest against the action of the Albion District Conference in granting license to women to preach." Rev. Orin Whitmore, the founding editor of the Advocate, showed his progressive liberal spirit, and a prophecy of the future, the same spirit soon to be demonstrated by Editor James H. Potts in his long editorship of the Advocate. Whitmore chided Fitch. "That looks very much like protesting against the inevitable. It must come, Brother Fitch. Yes, it has come already. We have kept the women back as long as we can, they are bound to go ahead and all opposition will be in vain."

The November 1874 Advocate contained an account of the Albion District Conference held at Battle Creek beginning on October 4. The Program was held to be outstanding. "Perhaps the most exciting meeting was that on Thursday evening, which was devoted to a debate on the following: Resolved, That the custom of licensing women to preach the gospel is an infringement upon the rights and powers of the general conference of the M.E. Church. The affirmative side was supported by Rev. A.M. Fitch and C.S. Fox. The negative by Rev. J.H. McCarty and S.L. Hamilton. The discussion was good natured and rather went to the bottom of things. At the close of the debate a vote was taken on the merits of the question and quite unanimously was given in favor of the negative. The affirmative did well, but the pulse beat on the side of woman."
THE MICHIGAN CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE REPORTS ON THE WOMAN PREACHER ISSUE AT THE 1888 GENERAL CONFERENCE

We were glad indeed one day this fall to find, among some scattered issues of the Michigan Christian Advocate in the West Michigan Archives at Albion, an issue for Saturday, May 12, 1888. The 1888 session of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was meeting in Buffalo.

This was a particularly important General Conference. Five women had been elected delegates to this General Conference; one of them was the famous and capable Frances E. Willard, President of the Woman’s Temperance Union. The idea of lay delegates was quite new to the Methodists of 1888, and now women delegates?!. "The bishops noted the presence of some ‘elect ladies,’ but warned the conference that a decision on their seating must be made solely on the law of the church. Chivalry of men and merits of the women should be vigorously excluded."

James H. Potts was just beginning his illustrious 32 years as editor of the Michigan Christian Advocate, 1885-1917. Potts, in his report to the Michigan Methodists back home, noted that the issue came up at once. "First Day. Dr. J.W. Hamilton of New England conference, moved two committees, with one member from each general conference district and 3 at large, to whom shall be referred, first the eligibility of the women who are reported as delegates to this body; and second, the cases of all other contested persons. Both committees shall report to-morrow morning at 10 o’clock. The resolution was seconded by Dr. Buckley."

Then Potts gave a report on "The Great Debate," a hit of his strong support of the women’s cause, and a prophecy that their cause would ultimately triumph.

The debate in the general conference on the eligibility of women was perhaps the ablest and best in the history of the Methodist Episcopal church. It was surprising how often persons utterly unknown to fame would spring out of obscure seats and make telling speeches on one side or the other, just as their convictions inclined them. The laymen made a strong showing in the debate, and were very evenly divided in the final vote. The outcome was not a surprise to those who had felt the powerful conservative influence at work in the body from the very first.

It was a wonder that the advocates of women’s eligibility came so near to immediate victory. The bishops and a large majority of the leading officials and influential laymen threw their voices and minds against the proposition to seat the ladies, and this gigantic officialism was a mountain of difficulty which the almost superhuman effort of the progressive men could not overcome. But triumph will come at last. The church will have what she wants. This was Potts’ confident prophecy.

Dr. James M. Buckley, editor of the New York Christian Advocate, was adamant against the recognition of women in the councils of the church; he was eloquent and used to carrying the day and having his way. He managed to get the floor several times; he had the nod of the bishops. Michigan Methodists were proud in 1888, and have reason to be ever since, that their own editor James Potts, of the fledgling Michigan Christian Advocate, spoke with telling eloquence on the side of the five elected women delegates, who were so obviously worthy of a seat in General Conference. In 1904 women were finally seated in the General Conference.