

All Rights Reserved By HDM For This Digital Publication
Copyright 1998 Holiness Data Ministry

Duplication of this CD by any means is forbidden, and
copies of individual files must be made in accordance with
the restrictions stated in the B4Ucopy.txt file on this CD.

* * * * *

ROBERT STRAWBRIDGE -- FOUNDER OF MARYLAND METHODISM
Compiled and Edited by Duane V. Maxey

* * * * *

Digital Edition 02/19/98
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

CONTENTS

Part 1
Introduction

Part 2
Strawbridge Excerpts -- By John Lednum

Part 3
Strawbridge Excerpts -- By Edward J. Drinkhouse

Part 4
Strawbridge Excerpts -- By Abel Stevens

Part 5
Strawbridge Excerpts -- By Ezra Squier Tipple

Part 6
Strawbridge Excerpts -- By Nathan Bangs

Part 7
Strawbridge Excerpts -- By Samuel Gardiner Ayres

Part 8
Strawbridge Excerpts -- By Adam Clarke

Part 9

A Strawbridge Excerpt -- By John Wesley Etheridge

Part 10

Strawbridge Excerpts -- By Jesse Lee

Part 11

Strawbridge Excerpts -- By P. P. Sandford

Part 12

Strawbridge Excerpts -- By Matthew Simpsom

Part 13

A Strawbridge Excerpt -- By W. H. Withrow

Part 14

Conclusion

Endnotes -- (For The Strawbridge Material From Abel Stevens)

* * * * *

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Was His Church The First? -- Was He Right About Church Government?

Any detailed study of the impact of Robert Strawbridge on American Methodism will encounter, in substance, at least these two prominent questions: (1) Was his the first Methodist society in America, before that of Philip Embury in New York, or vice versa? -- (2) Was Robert Strawbridge right in his opposition to Asbury both by his insistence upon the right to administer the ordinances, and by his more democratic views of church government?

Question #1 -- Was the John Street group in New York, under Philip Embury, the first Methodist church in this country? or was it the Log-Meetinghouse group in Maryland, under Robert Strawbridge? So clouded in uncertainty was this question, even among early Methodists themselves, that for years Methodist historians and writers were divided on the subject. I know not whether even to this day the question has been so decisively settled that all are agreed. However, it really matters little. In presenting this material about Robert Strawbridge, I have left the opinions on this question just as they have stated them. Let the reader, if possible, come to his or her own conclusion which opinions are correct.

Question #2 -- Prior to the organization of the Methodism in this country into the Methodist Episcopal Church at the historic "Christmas Conference," Wesley insisted that American Methodists not administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper -- that they, instead, go to the Anglican ministers to have these sacred rites performed for them -- to men, some, if not many, of whom gave no evidence of real spiritual life. Asbury, in turn, going along with Wesley,

insisted that Methodist preachers refrain from administering these ordinances. Strawbridge, and others like-minded with him, insisted that this was a bad restriction, and that both he, and other Methodist preachers should justly have the right to baptize their converts and to serve them the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, Strawbridge appears to have had a much more democratic concept of church government than did Asbury. Was Strawbridge right? or was Asbury right in these matters? Strawbridge's opposition to Asbury on the matters surrounding this second question aroused such negative feelings in Asbury that after Strawbridge died Asbury expressed the view that he believed thy God had in judgment taken him away.

The fact is, and no doubt Asbury recognized this, Robert Strawbridge wielded a mighty impact for good upon American Methodism! A fair judgment of his ministry in America, by even his most negative critic, would be compelled to admit that it was great, and that God mightily used his brief pioneer preaching in this country to bring men into the kingdom and to advance the cause of Methodism. Perhaps none, in so short a time, had a more powerful and more lasting impact on Methodism. Some of the best and mightiest men in Methodism were either converted under his ministry, or were directly influenced by it.

Numbers early Methodist and Methodist Itinerants, some of whom became prominent leaders, were either saved under the ministry of Robert Strawbridge, or were spiritually influenced by him directly or indirectly, including: Benjamin Abbott, Caleb Pedicord, Edward Dromgoole, Freeborn Garrettson, Henry Boehm, Hezekiah Bonham, John Wesley Bond, John Hagarty, John Durbin, Nathan Perigo, Paul Hagarty, Philip Gatch, Richard Owen [or Owings], Richard Webster, Robert Bonham, Sater Stephenson, Thomas Ware, Thomas Bond, and William Durbin.

A fair and objective examination of the facts left us on the historic records seems to quite convincingly show that Asbury's negative attitude toward Robert Strawbridge was too much colored by his own wounded feelings. Asbury was a great and good man, but apparently found it difficult to work with those who strongly challenged his authority or his views. Further, while Strawbridge may have "jumped the gun" a bit, his basic position on the matter of administering the ordinances was right -- and, the more democratic concept of church government held by Strawbridge, O'Kelly, Snethen, and eventually the Protestant Methodists, is certainly more in accord with the church polity of many holiness churches today. In fact, the policies and reforms advocated by Strawbridge and others in early Methodism are so widely in practice today in many holiness circles that they are taken for granted.

Beyond the debate and disagreement of that time, one thing is certain -- both Francis Asbury and Robert Strawbridge greatly influenced the early growth and spread of American Methodism, and I suspect that beyond the veil, where human misunderstanding shall never enter, they shall both rejoice together in Christ and in the reward of their different, but effective, ministries in America.

The Structure of This Compilation

This file will be a handy resource for those who wish to learn more about Robert Strawbridge, but rather than investing the time to arrange the gathered bits of information and

comments about him into one, chronological sketch, I have decided to leave this to those users who may wish to do so. For a more complete study of Robert Strawbridge, those users who have our current HDM Digital Library can quite easily employ "Search & Replace," or the search functions of another program, to revisit the contexts from which these excerpts were taken.

Basically, this compilation is a collection of excerpts about Robert Strawbridge, many of which are quite disconnected except for the fact that all contain information directly or indirectly related to Strawbridge. All of the excerpts were taken from HDM files, using the "Search & Replace" program to locate them. I have set apart the excerpts from each author into a distinct group, showing from which author and HDM file the excerpts were taken.

The beginning of each group of excerpts from an author is divided from that above it by 7 stars (asterisks), and 3 stars have been placed between excerpts from the same author. -- DVM

* * * * *

Part 2

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY JOHN LEDNUM

Taken from: "A History of the Rise of Methodism in America" -- hdm0324.tex

In 1760, as the Rev. George M. Roberts of Baltimore has most indubitably shown, in his able letters in the Christian Advocate and journal in 1858, Robert Strawbridge and Philip Embury both arrived in this country -- these lay-preachers began the organizations of Wesleyan Methodism, which have since been made permanent in Maryland and New York; and they both came from the region of the river Shannon in Ireland.

The Rev. William Hamilton, in an able article in the Methodist Quarterly Review for July 1856, tells us that "Mr. Strawbridge was a native of Drummers Nave, near Garrick, on Shannon, county Leitrim, Ireland." On arriving in this country he settled on Sam's Creek, Frederick county, Maryland. In Dr. Roberts letters, referred to above, we are assured, that, as soon as Mr. Strawbridge had arranged his house, he began to preach in it, as early as 1760; and, beside the appointment in his own house, he had another at John Maynard's house, in 1762, who was a Methodist, and where he baptized his brother Henry Maynard at a spring, in 1762. Soon as Mr. Strawbridge commenced his labors in Maryland, the Lord began to work in his hearers, and a society was formed as early as 1762, or 1763.

Dr. Roberts speaks thus:

"Robert Strawbridge. -- I am gratified to be able to say also, that in reference to the labors of this excellent and useful servant of God, our knowledge is not merely conjectural; I have in my possession some letters, written by different individuals, at a distance from each other, and without any concert upon their part, which disclose some interesting facts; I have space only to notice a few. Mr. Michael Laird, who subsequently settled in Philadelphia, was born April 30, 1771. He obtained his knowledge of these points from his father, who was intimate with Mr. Strawbridge, and fully conversant with the truth of what is stated in his letter. Mr. Strawbridge came to America

in 1760, with his wife and children, and settled in Maryland. Immediately after arranging his dwelling he opened it for Divine service, and continued to preach therein regularly. These efforts soon after resulted in the awakening and conversion of several who attended.

"In another communication I ascertain that Henry Maynard was baptized (by Robert Strawbridge) when he was but six or seven years old. At that time Mr. S. was preaching regularly at John Maynard's, a brother of Henry. Henry accompanied his father to one of these appointments; and Mr. S. Baptized him at the spring.

"Henry Maynard died in 1837, aged eighty-one years. This fixes his baptism as early as 1762. John Maynard, at whose house Mr. Strawbridge was then preaching, was himself a Methodist. This renders it positive that Mr. S. Had been engaged in preaching regularly prior to 1762, and fully corroborates the statement contained in Mr. Laird's letter, viz.: that he commenced his labors in the ministry immediately after his settlement in Maryland."

This society, Brother Hamilton informs us, consisted of "twelve or fifteen persons." After Bishop Asbury was fully informed on the subject, he entered in his Journal, in 1801, soon after he ended the business of the Baltimore Conference, which sat this year at Pipe Creek, his testimony on the subject; he says, "here Mr. Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland -- and America." See his Journal, vol. Iii. P. 27. Brother Hamilton furnishes the names of a few of the original members -- "David Evans, his wife and sister, Mrs. Bennett, now in her eighty-ninth year," with a few more, "embraced the Methodist religion under Mr. Strawbridge." Mrs. Bennett says, from her knowledge, "the society was first formed at Strawbridge's house." Soon afterwards, i. E. About 1764 or 1765, "the Log meeting house was erected, about a mile from Mr. Strawbridge's residence, and the preaching and meeting the class were at the Log chapel. This place, Mr. Hamilton. Avers, takes precedence of any other Methodist chapel in this country, by about three years; it was built, through Mr. Strawbridge's influence, on Pipe or Sam's Creek.

In the Autobiography of the Rev. James B. Finley, we have an account, on pp. 262-3, of two of the early Methodists of Pipe Creek. He says -- "I was traveling a solitary path in the woods, between Barnesville and Marietta, Ohio, and came upon an old man of the most grotesque appearance, trudging along at a slow rate, half bent, with an axe and two broomsticks on his shoulder. As I approached him I said, Well, grandfather, how do you do? He was a German, and replied, It ish wall. You have too much of a load to carry. Yes, but I can go not often. Where do you live? Shust dare, pointing to a small cabin on the hillside. You seem to be poor, as well as old. O yes, in dis world I has noting; but in de oder world I has a kingdom. Do you know anything about that kingdom? O yes. Do you love God? Yes, mid all my heart; and Got loves me. How long a time have you been loving God? Dis fifty years. Do you belong to any church? O yes, I bese a Metodist. Where did you join the Methodists? I jine de Metodist in Maryland, under dat grate man of Got, Strawbridge, on Pipe Creek -- and my vife too; and Got has been my fader and my friend eber since; and I bless Got I vill soon get home to see him in de himels. This conversation took place in 1813; and as he had enjoyed the love of God fifty years, the inference is, that he was converted under Mr. Strawbridge, in 1763.

When Mr. Asbury first visited this society, in the latter end of 1772, he found there such names as Hagarty, Bonham, Walker, and Warfield. Mr. Hezekiah Bonham had been a Baptist, until

awakened by Mr. Strawbridge's preaching, when he became a Methodist, and was much persecuted by his former sect. At this time, Mr. Asbury heard him speak in public, and seeing that he had gifts as a speaker, he gave him license to exhort. He afterwards became a preacher; and, in 1785, his name is in the Minutes of Conference, among the itinerants. His son, Robert Bonham, was also a traveling preacher. Paul Hagarty, it seems, was of the Pipe Creek society; also, his brother, John Hagarty, who became a traveling preacher, and could preach in both German and English. Robert Walker had been awakened under Mr. Whitefield, at Fagg's Manor, Chester county, Pa. He afterwards moved to Frederick county, Md., and was reawakened under Mr. Strawbridge, and joined the Pipe Creek society. He subsequently removed to Sandy river, S. C., where he was pleased to entertain Bishops Asbury and Whatcoat, in 1800; he was then in his eightieth year. Doctor Alexander Warfield was a vestibule Methodist, i.e. A kind and useful friend to them. Mr. Asbury dined with him on his first visit to Pipe Creek; and it seems certain that his lady, Mrs. Warfield, was a member of Mr. Strawbridge's first society. The Rev. Lott Warfield, once favorably known in the Philadelphia Conference, was of this family.

Not far from Pipe Creek, lived William Durbin, who, with his companion, united with the Methodists in 1768 or 1769. We must regard them as the fruit of Mr. Strawbridge's ministry. Their house was an early stand for preaching; and their son, John Durbin, was a traveling preacher in the beginning of this century; he died a most triumphant death; his last words were, "Jesus, Jesus, angels, angels beckon -- there's two -- I'll go." Thus, in a blaze of glory, he went to glory. See the Minutes for 1805.

In the same region lived George Saxton, whose house was a preaching place at that early date. We must suppose that he was brought under Methodist influence, and his house opened for preaching, through Mr. Strawbridge. These were the principal Methodists in Frederick county, at that early date.

Mr. Strawbridge extended his labors to Baltimore and Harford counties, where he also had fruit. The Owen family was brought to experience the comforts of the Holy Spirit through his ministry. Mr. Asbury says, "Joshua Owen was a serious churchman seeking the truth, and found it;" His house became a home for the early itinerants, and a stand for preaching. His son, Richard Owen, was a spiritual son of Mr. Strawbridge; and the first native American who became a preacher of the Gospel among the Methodists. See the "Life of the Rev. William Watters," p. 108. He labored usefully as a local preacher until near the end of his life, when he died in the itinerancy. See the "Minutes of Conference for 1786." In 1781, he performed the solemn duty of preaching over the corpse of his spiritual father, Mr. Strawbridge.

In the "Recollections of an Old Itinerant," on p. 204-5, we are informed that Mr. Samuel Merryman had occasion to visit Pipe Creek, where he heard of a marvelous preacher (Strawbridge) who could pray without a book, and preach without a manuscript sermon, which was regarded by many in that age and place as an impossibility. Mr. Merryman gave him a hearing, and was astonished at his success in praying without a book, and preaching without a written discourse -to him it was the most interesting religious service he had ever attended -- he heard him again -- his High-Church notions gave way -he was awakened, and obtained a sense of sins forgiven, and ceased to wonder how a man could pray and preach without a "book, for he could pray and discourse about religion (i. E. Preach) without the aid of manuscript or printing-press.

His house was opened for such preaching, and a Methodist society was subsequently formed, and a chapel followed.

Sater Stephenson, of Baltimore county, was brought to God through Mr. Strawbridge, and began to preach soon after Richard Owen commenced. Nathan Perigo, who lived some six miles northeast of Baltimore, was also a spiritual son of Strawbridge, and an early local preacher. Under his zealous labors Philip Gatch was awakened, and a Methodist society was raised up at Mr. Simmes in his neighborhood, before the regular itinerants came along. See "Memoirs of Gatch," by Hon. John McLean, LL.D., p. 9.

The first society raised up in Baltimore county was at Daniel Evans' near Baltimore. For its accommodation one of the first chapels in the county was erected; and Mr. Strawbridge was instrumental in gathering the society, if not in the erection of the chapel. See "Gatch's Memoirs," p. 24.

Mr. Richard Webster, of Harford county, Maryland, was among the first Methodists of the county. In 1824, the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson was visiting his friends in Maryland; and was with Mr. Webster a short time before his death; and informs us on page 248 of his life, that Mr. Webster had been a Methodist fifty-six years, which dates back to 1768, as the year in which he united with them. As no Methodist preacher had labored in Maryland at that time but Mr. Strawbridge, we must suppose that Mr. Webster identified himself with the Methodists through him. Mr. Webster's house became a home for the preachers, and the preaching -- a society was also raised up around him. Soon he began to preach; and his name is found in "The Minutes for 1774 for Baltimore." In 1775, he was stationed on Chester circuit; here he became acquainted with a daughter of Mr. George Smith, of Goshen, Chester county, Pennsylvania, whom he married. After this he was useful as a local preacher. He died in 1824.

Mr. Thomas Bond, of the same region, and his first wife, were also Mr. Strawbridge's spiritual children. The Rev. Thomas E. Bond, extensively known as editor of the Christian Advocate and Journal for several years, was his son; also, the Rev. John Wesley Bond, the last traveling companion of Bishop Asbury.

Methodist preaching was introduced into Fredericktown, now Frederick City, by Mr. Strawbridge, on an invitation from Edward Drumgole, who, on coming from Ireland in 1770, and bearing a letter to Mr. Strawbridge, heard him preach at Pipe Creek, and gave him an invitation to preach the same truth in Fredericktown, where Mr. Drumgole then resided. Mr. Strawbridge was the first of Mr. Wesley's followers that preached on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. About 1769 or 1770, he preached at the house of John Randle, in Werton, Kent county, Maryland. The Rev. Henry Boehm testifies that he heard him preach at his father's, the Rev. Martin Boehm, in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. This must have been about 1779, when Brother Boehm was only five or six years old.

Methodism was planted in Georgetown on the Potomac, and in other places in Fairfax county, Virginia, by Mr. Strawbridge and his spiritual son, Richard Owen.

In 1773 and in 1775 Mr. Strawbridge's name is found in the Minutes, as a laborer among the itinerants; after which it disappears, probably on account of his administering the ordinances, which was contrary to Mr. Wesley's advice. According to Mr. Asbury's journal, the first Conference, in 1773, allowed him to do it, provided he would do it under the direction of Mr. Rankin, Mr. Wesley's assistant, which he refused to do, inasmuch as he had not derived his authority from Mr. Rankin or the Conference. From what source he derived his authority to administer them, we have not been informed. In his course in this matter, though opposed by most of the Methodist preachers, he was sustained by his spiritual children. The people were much on his side; and the Rev. Benedict Swope, of the German Reformed Church, advocated his course, saying, "Mr. Wesley did not do well in hindering Methodist preachers from giving the ordinances to their followers." It seems that Mr. Strawbridge felt that he had been the first instrument used by the Head of the church in raising up Methodism in Maryland; and therefore was unwilling to bear the reins of those, though higher in Mr. Wesley's authority, who had entered into his labors.

The evidence adduced by the Rev. George C. M. Roberts; in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, and by the Rev. William Hamilton, in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* of 1856, makes it clear, beyond a doubt, to all who have duly considered it, and are not committed to another theory, that Mr. Strawbridge raised up the first society; and also built the first chapel. (See the *Quarterly Review* for 1856, p. 435). It may be asked, "Why did Bishops Coke and Asbury, in their early account of the rise of Methodism in this country, as found in the *Discipline*, make it appear that Methodism began in New York? also Rev. Jesse Lee, in his history of Methodism, and others who have asserted the same." The answer is, "They so understood it, not having made it their business to inquire particularly into the history of Mr. Strawbridge's movements in Frederick county, Md." We have seen that in 1801 Bishop Asbury came to a more correct understanding of the matter, and entered in his journal the truth, which we presume he had then and there obtained: thus correcting all that he had before said on the subject. Mr. Lee never took the pains to investigate the matter, and remained persuaded that New York was the cradle of Methodism in America. Others have copied the error without questioning it. We are glad that the matter has at last been placed in a clear light by the correspondents from Baltimore referred to above.

The evidence adduced warrants the assertion that the first Methodist society raised up in America (not taking into the account the one formed at Savannah, Ga., by Mr. Wesley) -- the first chapel (mean as it was) -- the first native American Methodist preacher (Richard Owen) -- the first native American Methodist preacher who was a regular itinerant (William Watters), belong to Maryland. That Mr. Watters was the first itinerant has never been in controversy. That Richard Owen was the first native preacher has not been generally known. The priority of the Pipe, or Sam's Creek Society, and Log Chapel, has been mooted.

Mr. Strawbridge had great influence at the Bush Forrest chapel, in Harford county, Maryland. It is likely that he had been instrumental in raising up both the society and the chapel. It was the second house for worship erected by the Methodists in Maryland, and may have been built as early as 1769 or 1770. Mr. Asbury preached in it in 1772. In 1777, when all the English preachers were retiring from the work on account of the war, some of the Methodist congregations were devising means to provide for themselves by settling pastors over them; and an arrangement was contemplated to settle Mr. Strawbridge over the Pipe Creek and Bush Forrest congregations.

About the same time Mr. Asbury received a call to the Garrettson church (of the Church of England), in Harford county, Maryland. (See his Journal, vol. I., p. 194.)

We will close this account of the labors of Mr. Strawbridge in America, with a few extracts from the Rev. William Hamilton's account, in the Methodist Quarterly Review for 1856, already referred to. He informs us that Mrs. Bennett, sister to David Evans, of the first class at Pipe Creek, still living in 1856, in her eighty-ninth year, had sat under his ministry with great profit, and was able, as an eye-witness, to describe him:

"He was of medium size, dark complexion, black hair, had a very sweet voice, and was an excellent singer.

"He had six children, Robert, George, Theophilus, Jesse, Betsey, and Jane. George died, and also two of the other children, who were buried under the pulpit of the Log meeting house. Two of his sons, George and Jesse, grew up and became carpenters."

The Log meeting house was twenty-two feet square; on one side the logs were sawed out for a door, on the other three sides there were holes for windows; but it does not appear that it ever was finished, standing without windows, door, and floor. About 1844 it was demolished, and several canes were manufactured out of some of its logs. Mr. William Fort sent one to each of the bishops, then in New York, and one to Dr. Bond. A letter from Mr. Fort appeared in the Christian Advocate and Journal, relating to the old chapel, at the same time.

Mr. Strawbridge continued to reside at Sam's Creek about sixteen years, and then removed to the upper part of Long Green, Baltimore county, to a farm given him for life, by the wealthy Captain Charles Ridgely, by whom he was greatly esteemed, and who often attended his preaching. It was while living here under the shadow of Hampton (Col. Ridgely's seat), that, in one of his visiting rounds to his spiritual children, he was taken sick at the house of Mr. Joseph Wheeler, and died, in great peace. His funeral sermon was preached to a vast concourse of people by the Rev. Richard Owings, under a large walnut tree, from Rev. xiv. 13. His grave, and also the grave of Mrs. Strawbridge (who died in Baltimore), are in the small burying ground in the orchard south of the house, about the center of the ground; a large poplar tree has grown up between them, as a living monument." Their resting place is about six or seven miles north of Baltimore. It appears from Mr. Asbury's Journal, vol. i. p. 334, where we suppose he is referred to, under date of September 3, 1781, that he was then dead, and it seems that this event occurred in the summer of 1781.

* * *

Three lay preachers, Strawbridge the farmer, Embury the carpenter, and Webb the soldier, had this honor put upon them by the Head of the Church; and in this way has the Lord made them memorable among us and, although they acted under slender human authority, they were moved by Divine impulse; and, therefore, in the order of God. They had raised up the societies of Pipe Creek, New York and Philadelphia -- Wesley Chapel was built, if not the Log Meeting House of Pipe Creek, before Mr. Wesley's first missionaries arrived; and whatever good has resulted to the souls and bodies of mankind in America from Methodism, has followed this beginning.

* * *

In 1773, Methodism began to take root in Fairfax county, Va. Preaching was established at Mr. William Adams', and several people were brought to know God in different parts of the county, through the labors of Messrs. Owen, Strawbridge, and others.

* * *

Kent Circuit, the first formed on the Peninsula, appears on the Minutes in 1774. It had been some four years growing up, from the time that Mr. Strawbridge preached the first Methodist sermon at Mr. John Randle's, in Werton, that was preached on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The next appointments established after Werton were those on Bohemia Manor, at Mr. Hersey's, and at the school house near Messrs. Ephraim and Robert Thompson's. The fourth was at Mr. Hinson's. The fifth at Georgetown Cross Roads. Afterwards, Mr. Gibbs' and the Still Pond appointment. Thus far had the Methodists gone on this Shore up to September, 1773. Isaac Rollin, sent by Mr. Asbury in December, 1772, had been a good deal with them, and some of them were tired of his philippics [lengthy expositions, presentations]. In November, 1773, Mr. William Watters came to Kent. In him the people saw a serious dignity, and sweetness of spirit combined with zeal, that were every way agreeable to them, and the work prospered. It was in the form of a two weeks circuit, supplied by one preacher. Mr. Watters made some new appointments for preaching in Kent. Among those established about this time we may mention one at Newtown Chester, the original name of Chestertown; another at Mr. Solomon Simmons', near the head of Sassafras. Afterwards, there were appointments in Quaker Neck, and on Easterly Neck Island. Also, One in Cecil county, in Sassafras Neck, known by the name of Johntown. We have also seen that Mr. Watters made an appointment at Mr. John Fogwell's in 1773, who lived a mile or two south of Sudlersville, in Queen Anne's county. By this time, we may suppose, there were other appointments in the county, especially the one which has long been known as "Dudley's," near Sudlersville. This stand was occupied as early as 1774; and it is likely that a society was formed this year, which has continued ever since.

* * *

Mr. Edward Drumgole [This name is variously spelled] was a native of Ireland, near the town of Sligo, where he became acquainted with the Methodists in the beginning of the year 1770. He had been raised a Papist, but as soon as he heard the followers of Mr. Wesley preach he was convinced of the necessity of religion, and began to read his Bible -- joined society, -- and resolved to read his recantation publicly in the church, which procured him the displeasure of some of his relations.

In May 1770 he sailed for America, and landed in Baltimore, from whence he went to Fredericktown. Having a letter directed to Mr. Strawbridge, in the fall of this year he heard him preach, and importuned him to come to Fredericktown that he might hear the truth and be saved. One Sunday evening while he was praying in great distress of soul, the Lord visited him with his salvation. In 1773 he began to preach. In the beginning of 1774 he was employed as a traveling preacher on Frederick Circuit and at the Conference of 1774 he was stationed on Baltimore

Circuit. He was regarded as belonging to the traveling connection until 1786, when he desisted. His labors were confined chiefly to Virginia (where he settled near North Carolina, probably in Brunswick county), and in North Carolina. After he located, he continued to be a faithful and much respected preacher. In 1815 Mr. Asbury ordained him an Elder, at which time he must have been nearly seventy years old. He then had two sons, Edward and Thomas, that were local Deacons in the M. E. Church.

General Drumgole, late a member of Congress, was also his son, and was said to be one of the most eloquent speakers in that body; and he possessed considerable character as a statesman. It would be gratifying if evidence induced the belief that he was as religious in heart and in life as his father, and as most of his father's family were.

* * *

Frederick Circuit, the birthplace of American Methodism, had been slowly growing up from the beginning of Mr. Strawbridge's ministry there, about 1760, and first appears under this name in 1774. At this time Frederick county, from which the circuit took its name, embraced the counties of Montgomery, Washington, Allegheny, and Carroll. This circuit covered all the ground that the Methodists then cultivated in this, and in Fairfax county, Virginia. For several years it was a frontier circuit, and the preachers who traveled it were in the back woods.

Without being able to give a minute enumeration of all the appointments that were on this circuit at this time, we can only mention Pipe Creek, Fredericktown, Westminster, Durbin's, Saxon's, Seneca, Sugarloaf, Rocky Creek, Georgetown, and Adams'. In this year preaching was introduced into Alexandria, on the Potomac, and a society formed, consisting of twelve persons, one of whom was John Littlejohn, a man of superior abilities, and who was afterwards an eloquent preacher, and will be further noticed under the year 1777.

Frederick county has been represented as the most wealthy county in Maryland, on account of the goodness of the soil. It was settled chiefly by the Germans, and on that account the progress of Methodism was slow there. As a proof; after the preachers had labored and nursed Methodism in Fredericktown, now Frederick City, for more than thirty years, they had only about thirty members. Preaching was first established in this town in 1770, and in 1801 the first small Methodist chapel was built in it.

In 1776 appointments in Fairfax county were embraced in Fairfax Circuit, which reduced the size of Frederick Circuit; and in 1788 it was further reduced by the formation of Montgomery Circuit.

Mr. Gatch says, "I went to Philadelphia, where Conference commenced on the 25th of May, 1774. At that Conference five preachers were taken into full connection -- William Watters, Abraham Whitworth, Joseph Gerburg, Philip Ebert, and Philip Gatch. Joseph Gerburg, Philip Ebert, and Philip Gatch, and eight others, were received on trial. These were trying times to Methodist preachers. Some endured as seeing him who is invisible, by faith; others left the field in the day of conflict. My appointment by the Conference was to Frederick Circuit, with William Duke, who was quite a youth, for six months. We found the circuit to be very laborious; some of

the rides were quite long, and only one hundred and seventy-five members in the society. Fredericktown and Georgetown were both in the circuit, but there were only a few members in each. Mr. Strawbridge and Mr. Owens lived in the bounds of this charge. We found among the few in society some steady, firm members, and in some places the prospects were encouraging. I had gone but a few rounds on the circuit when I received a letter from Mr. Shadford, directing me to gather up my clothes and books, and meet him at the quarterly meeting to be held in Baltimore.

* * *

In 1775 there was the first great revival on Frederick Circuit -- some two hundred were added to the societies. The other half of this year he spent in Fairfax Circuit. In this circuit he saw the greatest work of religion that he had ever seen. One of the converts was Nelson Reed, who was long a laborer in the vineyard of the Lord. Mr. Strawbridge was his colleague on Frederick Circuit.

* * *

Caleb B. Pedicord was a native of the Western Shore of Maryland. The Petticords or Pedicords, for the name is written two or three ways, were in Frederick county, Md., where Mr. Strawbridge opened his mission in America as early as 1760. The Rev. William Burke, in his Autobiography, says, "While on Limestone Circuit, Kentucky, Fleming county, he had a great meeting at Union Chapel, near Germantown. The first fruits of the meeting was the conversion of Brother Petticord's daughter. Brother Petticord was one of the first race of Methodists from Frederick county, Md.; and a relative of Caleb B. Petticord, who was admitted as a traveling preacher in 1777." "J. B. Finley's Sketches," p. 83.

Those who have seen Mr. Pedicord have testified to the beauty of his person, and this casket contained a jewel of the finest polish. His first appointment was to Frederick Circuit.

* * *

In 1779, Mr. Strawbridge preached at Rev. Martin Boehm's. Mr. Boehm's ministry was devoted to those who spoke and best understood the German language. Among these he had much fruit.

* * *

During the year 1781, the Methodists lost two of their preachers, Messrs. Robert Strawbridge, and Philip Adams. The former was the first instrument in raising up Methodism in America. The latter, a native of Virginia, was a useful preacher, closely attached to Methodism.

* * *

Although Kent was the first county on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that was favored with Methodist preaching (having, as is believed, been visited by Mr. Strawbridge), it has not furnished many Methodist preachers. Brother Smith, it seems, was among the first from this county.

* * *

Having followed the operations of the Methodists, from the time that Mr. Strawbridge began to astonish the people of Frederick county, to the arrival of Dr. Coke, we will sum up. During this period, the Methodists were a religious society, directed by Mr. Wesley to receive the ordinances from the ministers of the Church of England. Some of the Methodists had been reared in this church, and were satisfied with this state of things; but there were many who deplored it; and hence, the Conference in Virginia, in 1779, undertook to help themselves and the societies to the ordinances. Whether it were better or worse for the Methodists, to have been in that state during that period, is as difficult to determine, as it is to be certain which of two measures would be best when only one of them has been tried; as to untried measures, we cannot rise above conjecture. No doubt there had been those who had been blessed under their ministry, who did not unite with them, because they were not invested with what were considered full ministerial powers. On the other hand, as they were considered a branch of the Church of England, and many of them went to that church to receive the ordinances, and cultivated friendship with her pious ministers and members -- this gave them great influence with them; and many serious Church people, that desired spiritual religion, fell into the ranks of the Methodists. Many of this description might not have been Methodists but for the relation they sustained to each other, and the friendship that subsisted between them.

* * * * *

Part 3

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY EDWARD J. DRINKHOUSE

Taken From: "History of Methodist Reform," Vol. I -- hdm0428.tex

Among the converts of Wesley and his helpers in the early days were Robert Strawbridge and Philip Embury, the former from the county Leitrim, and the latter from the county Limerick, Ireland. They became class leaders and local preachers in their respective neighborhoods, and were eminently successful in their work of preaching the gospel while laboring for a living for their families. They turned their gaze toward the new land of promise in the wilds of America and emigrated thither. The question of the priority of their arrival in America has perplexed Methodist antiquarians and is not fully settled to this day. Embury arrived with a small company of Methodists, notably Paul and Barbara Heck, on the 10th of August, 1760, in the harbor of New York. It is claimed that Robert Strawbridge and his company arrived in the same year. This is the view of Lednum, Dr. Roberts, who made careful investigation, and Dr. Hamilton, who also sides with them. On the other hand, Wakeley and Shillington, an Irish authority, hold that he did not arrive until 1764 or 1765.

* * *

Returning to Robert Strawbridge, a character quite as worthy of extended notice claims farther attention. He did not tarry in New York when he landed, but traveled southward, until he found a location in the backwoods; for Frederick County, Md., had but recently been reclaimed

from savage invasion. At his conversion his zeal for religion provoked such a storm of persecution that he was compelled to remove from Drumsnagh, near the river Shannon in Leitrim County, to the county Sligo, where he was eminently useful as a local preacher, and here he found his devoted young wife. His name remains embalmed in the memory of its latest generations. Clearing a place on Sam's Creek, he built his rude house and at once opened preaching in it. He never lost the warmth and buoyancy of his religious experience. One of his praiseworthy characteristics was that his zeal for God outran his provident care of himself and family, though one of his motives undoubtedly in coming to America was to improve his temporal condition. He had a wife, however, who was equal to the situation and willing to bear anything that the gospel might not be hindered. Out of his nearest neighbors he soon formed a Methodist society, and not long after his settlement built the historically famous "Log Meeting House" on Sam's Creek about a mile from his own home. Asbury has settled beyond dispute that it was the first chapel built in America for the Methodists and the first society formed. He says: "This settlement of Pipe Creek is the richest in the state. Here Mr. Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland -- and America." The word America is italicized by Asbury. Thoroughly conversant, as it may be safely assumed he was, with American Methodist history, nothing but positive evidence to the contrary can shake this testimony on the mooted question of priority. The only exception that can be made to the whole statement is that he confounds Pipe Creek with Sam's Creek, quite a common error of contemporary writers.

The chapel was a rude structure twenty-two feet square, built of logs, a door sawed in one side, and in the other three holes for windows. Though used for years, it was never completed, and it has been noted that it was not deeded to the Conference. A stone chapel took its place in 1783, and this was rebuilt and enlarged in 1800. Strawbridge became an independent itinerant, traveling not only over Frederick, then comprehending three later counties, but into eastern Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia. His preaching was fervent and fluent and his popularity widespread and abiding. He often left his family for weeks, his kind neighbors, who believed in him, running his small farm meanwhile, and supplies coming in from unexpected quarters. He founded Methodism in Baltimore and Harford counties of Maryland. The first native American preacher, Richard Owens, was converted under his preaching. He afterward entered the itinerancy and died in it. William Watters was the first native itinerant, but Owens the first native preacher. Owens and Strawbridge were congenial spirits. The latter was the spiritual father of a number of the earliest preachers, local and traveling: Sater Stevenson, Nathan Perigo, Richard Webster, and others, while not a few prominent laymen must also be added to the number of his converts. Such men as Watters, Gatch, Bowham, Hagerty, Durbin, and Garrettson were prepared by him for the more methodical prosecution of the work. His own name does not occur in the minutes of the Conference as an itinerant until 1773-75, and then suddenly and without explanation drops out. The truth of history is that Strawbridge's spirit would not brook the stern authority of Asbury and his British associate, Rankin. As the earliest American preacher, and having clear convictions that the Methodists in this country should not be dependent upon the Anglican clergy for the ordinances, specially now, when they were fleeing the country on account of their loyalty to the King, and utterly at odds with the undemocratic polity of the Conference, he could not be brought under the yoke. He was one of three men whom Asbury could neither command nor cajole, the other two being James O'Kelly and Nicholas Snethen, as will be shown later.

Asbury knew Strawbridge's worth and influence. He bid for his submission, as he never did in any other case. He was uncompromising in the matter of the ordinances, for the reason that

he knew full well that to yield to the demand of the preachers and people would be to frustrate his cherished design of seeing a Methodist Church organized on an Episcopal plan in accord with his own conscientious convictions of its scriptural nature, and of succumbing to a liberal Presbyterian polity, which was the vogue of a large number of the preachers and the people, specially south of Philadelphia. As early as December, 1772, at a quarterly meeting in Harford County, the sacramental question was discussed, and Asbury says: "Brother S____ (Strawbridge) pleaded much for the ordinances, and so did the people, who appeared to be much biased by him. I told them I would not agree to it at that time, and insisted on our abiding by our rules. But Mr. B____ (Boardman) had given them their way at the quarterly meeting held here before, and I was obliged to connive at some things for the sake of peace." Again, at the Conference of July, 1773, in Philadelphia, among other propositions that were agreed to, the third is, "No preacher in our Connection shall be permitted to administer the ordinances at this time; except Mr. S____ (Strawbridge), and he under the particular direction of the assistant (Rankin)." Strawbridge would not submit. As he grew older, he restricted his attention to the Sam's Creek society and Brush Forest, the latter being in Harford County, and its chapel the second built in Maryland. Finally, in his old age and poverty, having devoted his all to Christ and Methodism, he is traced to Long Green, in Baltimore County, where Captain Charles Ridgely, a rich and generous friend, gave him a farm free of rent for life. While residing here, in one of his pastoral visiting rounds to his spiritual children, he was taken with his last illness at the house of Joseph Wheeler, in the summer of 1781, and died in great peace. Owens preached his funeral to a great throng in the open air under a tree at the northwest corner of the house. A number of his log chapel congregation were there to honor the occasion, and, as the throng bore him to his last resting-place, they sang as they marched one of Charles Wesley's rapturous lyrics. "He sleeps," says Stevens, "in an orchard of the friend at whose house he died -- one of his own converts -- under a tree, from the foot of which can be seen the great city which claims him as its Methodistic apostle." He is described as "of medium size, of dark complexion, black hair, had a sweet voice, and was an excellent singer." Boehm's "Reminiscences" says, "He was a stout, heavy man." He was an entertaining conversationist and a man of broad intelligence. Asbury's unforgiving prejudice against any and every man who asserted his independence of his military authority, he does not conceal. A few months after Strawbridge's decease, Asbury visited the Brush Forest chapel, and made the following uncharitable record: "Monday, September 3d. I visited the Brush chapel. The people here once left us to follow another; time was when the labors of their leader were made a blessing to them, but pride is a busy sin. He is no more: upon the whole I am inclined to think the Lord took him away in judgment, because he was in a way to do hurt to his cause; and that he saved him in mercy, because from his deathbed conversation he appears to have had hope in his end." Asbury revised his own Journal, omitting, as he declared, records a sober second thought disapproved. He left unblotted this severe judgment of Strawbridge. Posterity has reversed it. Even Asbury, fifteen years afterward, or in 1790, prompted possibly by Coke, for to him is attributed most of the literary work on the "Discipline," in the historical preface, makes this note of Strawbridge, "About the same time Robert Strawbridge from Ireland settled in Frederick County, Md., preaching there and forming societies." Thus the log chapel on Sam's Creek, Md., and Wesley chapel, John Street, New York, are more significant in their forecast of a great and unprecedented work of God than the proudest cathedrals of stained glass and pointing spire.

In response to appeals which were made from John Street Methodists to Wesley for missionaries, Robert Williams, a local preacher, applied to his friend, Ashton, a well-to-do

layman, and they came over together, landing in New York in 1769, the latter paying Williams' passage over. Ashgrove chapel was named after him, and he left a memorial legacy which continues to this day. Williams at once began his labors in Wesley chapel, and for about six years, to his death, led a conspicuous career as a Methodist itinerant. He went to the aid of Strawbridge, became. the apostle of Methodism in Virginia,

* * *

Michael Laird, who subsequently removed to Philadelphia in 1770, testified that his father, who was personally acquainted with Strawbridge, fixed the date of his coming to America with his family in 1760. Henry Maynard, who was born on August 12, 1757, and died in 1839, testifies that he was baptized by Strawbridge when he was four or five years old, which fixes it not later than 1762, and the particulars of the baptism were remembered by Ephraim Maynard as late as 1866, as received from the traditions of the neighborhood. Other evidence makes it clear that Strawbridge was engaged in preaching as early as 1762. When Asbury recorded his verdict he had been in the neighborhood for some days and had full opportunity to investigate the matter for himself. It is believed that Strawbridge obtained ordination from a German minister, Benedict Swope, just as Otterbein afterward assisted at the ordination of Asbury. Dr. G. C. M. Roberts, who furnishes most of these facts in his "Centennial Pictorial Album," *also furnishes a likeness of Strawbridge, drawn from memory, as given by those who knew him. Notwithstanding such proofs as these, other historians still maintain that the case has not been made out for Strawbridge, for the reason forsooth that some of the facts are not under affidavit, and the documents at command. Such a test might invalidate even Embury's claim, and other originals received without farther question. It is possible that section has something to do with the matter. Most of the histories have been written from north of Pennsylvania, with Boston as a center, and for this reason it is that its Boston "tea party," of Revolutionary fame, is so well known, though it did not occur until December 16, 1773, and was patriotism in Indian disguise; while the burning of the Peggy Stewart in the harbor of Annapolis, Md., occurred on Oct. 19, 1772, and her cargo of tea, as well as the vessel, destroyed by the order of Maryland patriots by the hands of the owner himself, is not well known.

* * *

Guirey states that in the discussion of Asbury with Strawbridge and John King as to the ordinances, King proposed to leave it with the people to decide whether they would have the ordinances or not, but Asbury replied, "I came to teach the people, not to be taught by them." See p. 242 of his "History of Episcopacy." 12mo. 351 pp. Written before 1800. A copy in Maryland Historical Library, Baltimore, Md.

* * *

This ancient verdict is perhaps as near the truth of history as to the priority of Strawbridge or Embury as posterity will ever get. Since the previous Section bearing upon it was written, the author has had the pleasure of perusing Rev. Dr. Atkinson's elaborate and exhaustive argument defensive of Embury's claim, to which he devotes forty-six pages of his new History.* Nothing could be more ingenuous than his method of treating the alleged facts and arguments on both sides, and most readers will rise from its perusal convinced that the case is with Embury. It is not,

however, claimed even by Dr. Atkinson that Strawbridge came to America later than 1766, nor is it claimed that Embury, though in the country following secular business as a linen manufacturer, began preaching earlier than 1766 in New York City, under Barbara Heck's entreaties, nor that there could have been more than nine months' or a year's difference in any case between their first preaching respectively, so that it was "about the same time" after all -- Strawbridge, the pioneer of Methodism in the South, and Embury in the North. This is the whole case. Embury, as a resident of New York City, has the advantage of recorded documentary evidence as to certain dates, whereas Strawbridge -- in the wilds of Frederick County, Md., has no such records; left no Journal, not even letters to authenticate his case; only the traditions of the neighborhood, upon which Asbury relied; so that the traditional case is with the latter, though as Dr. Atkinson shows, the documentary case is with the former.

* * *

The latest phase of the question is furnished by Rev. Dr. W. S. Edwards in the New York Christian Advocate for January 7, 1897, by citing from certain papers of Rev. Alfred Griffith, among them the following, in which Griffith gives the substance of a conversation held by him with Bishop Asbury in 1809: "He said he was aware of the dispute about the priority of claim in church building between the two original branches of the Methodist family, and that with a view to compose the difference he had investigated the question with considerable pains by inquiries on the spot in each locality; that he had had recourse to the most intelligent and reliable sources, but still was unable to determine with certainty who commenced first to build, Embury or Strawbridge; but that Strawbridge commenced to preach first there could be no doubt; that he had concluded that it was most probably true that each had commenced to build his house within the same calendar year 1768 -- and there could not have been more than a few months' difference between them; but which had his house ready for preaching first he could not determine. He then observed that the whole question was of little consequence."

* * *

"History of the Origin of the Wesleyan Movement in America and of the establishment therein of Methodism." By John Atkinson, D.D., Jersey City, N. J., Wesleyan Publishing Co. 1896. Large 8vo. 458 pp. Cloth. It treats of the American period prior to 1774, and is a most valuable contribution.

* * *

The First American Annual Conference assembled at St. George's Church in Philadelphia, July 14, 1773, and continued three days. Those present were all Europeans: Thomas Rankin, Richard Boardman, Joseph Pilmoor, Francis Asbury, Richard Wright, George Shadford, Thomas Webb, John King, Abraham Whitworth, and Joseph Yearbry. Strawbridge's name appears in the printed minutes, but he was not present, nor was Embury.

* * *

O'Kelly had great warmth of friendship and was by nature extremely impulsive. He was not converted to Asbury's opinions, but he agreed to a truce. Asbury left him a presiding elder for some years beyond the limit of such appointments. As in the case of Strawbridge, he knew how to make exceptions when the preacher was of such influence with the people, and of such personal assertion as to make it unsafe to use the rod.

* * *

Dr. Scudder, in his "American Methodism," 8vo, cloth, 1870, illustrated, furnishes a conspicuous instance how pseudo-Methodist historians draw upon their imagination for their facts. In Chap. XII., he describes at length the substance of an interview between Asbury and Lee at this time, so adroitly framed as to mislead Rev. G. C. Bacon in his booklet on the "Polity of the M. E. Church, and the Baltimore Conference resolutions of 1895," into quoting from Scudder a section of this imaginary conversation of Asbury and Lee as fact and not fiction. Scudder is full of errors, notably locating Strawbridge's log church "in Fairfax County, Va.," etc., etc. His book is a literary romance, but utterly unreliable for reference.

* * * * *

Part 4

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY ABEL STEVENS

Taken From: Stevens' M. E. History, Vol. 1 -- hdm0216

[I have included the endnotes with this excerpt. -- DVM]

The Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, giving a "brief account of the rise of Methodism" in their preface to the Discipline, in 1790, say, after alluding to the labors of Embury, that "about the same time Robert Strawbridge, a local Preacher from Ireland, settled in Frederick county, in the state of Maryland, and preaching there, formed some Societies." Robert Strawbridge was born at Drumsnagh, near the river Shannon, in the county of Leitrim, Ireland. An ardent Hibernian [of or concerning Ireland, Oxford Dict. -- DVM], his zeal for religion provoked "such a storm of persecution" among his neighbors as induced him, not long after his conversion, to escape their opposition by removing from his native place to the county of Sligo, where "his labors were signally blessed of God through a considerable district." [1] He labored also in the county of Cavan, where, for many years, aged Methodists delighted to talk of his zeal and humble but heroic preaching, and "highly prized his piety and gifts." They "recognized him as a man of more than ordinary usefulness. He was very ardent and evangelical in his spirit." He subsequently preached in the county of Armagh, residing mostly at Tanderagee. He "sounded the alarm" through all that populous rural district. Terryhugan, mentioned by Wesley as the "mother-church of these parts," was "a place to which he often resorted, and among its lively Methodists, warm in their religious affections, he found many a heart that beat in unison with his own." His name remained embalmed in the memories of the latest Methodists of that generation in Terryhugan. One of their devoted young women became his wife, and emigrated with him to America, according to some accounts, in 1760, according to others in 1764 or 1765. [2]

Strawbridge, being an Irishman by nativity and education, if not by blood, had the characteristic traits of his countrymen: he was generous, energetic, fiery, versatile, somewhat intractable to authority, and probably improvident. In his various migrations he never bettered his temporal fortunes, but he never lost the warmth or buoyancy of his religious spirit. He came to America to secure a more competent livelihood -- "which object, however, he never accomplished" [3] -- and plunged at once, with his young wife, into the "backwoods;" for Frederick county, where he settled on "Sam's Creek," had but recently been reclaimed from the perils of savage invasion. He opened his house for preaching; formed in it a Methodist Society; and, not long after, built the "Log Meeting-house" on Sam's Creek, about a mile from his home. [4] He buried beneath its pulpit two of his children. It was a rude structure, twenty-two feet square, and, though long occupied, was never finished, but remained without windows, door, or floor. "The logs were sawed on one side for a doorway, and holes were made on the other three sides for windows."

He became virtually an itinerant, journeying to and fro in not only his own large county, (then comprehending three later counties,) but in Eastern Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia; preaching with an ardor and a fluency which surprised his hearers, and drew them in multitudes to his rustic assemblies. He seemed disposed literally to let the morrow, if not, indeed, the day, take care of itself. "During his life he was poor, and the family were often straitened for food; but he was a man of strong faith, and would say to them on leaving, 'Meat will be sent here today.' " His frequent calls to preach in distant parts of the country required so much of his time that his family were likely to suffer in his absence, so that it became a question with him "who will keep the wolf from my own door while I am abroad seeking after the lost sheep?" His neighbors, appreciating his generous zeal and self-sacrifice, agreed to take care of his little farm, gratuitously, in his absence.

The Sam's Creek Society, consisting at first of but twelve or fifteen persons, was a fountain of good influence to the county and the state. It early gave four or five Preachers to the Itinerancy. Strawbridge founded Methodism in Baltimore and Harford counties. The first Society in the former was formed by him at the house of Daniel Evans, near the city, and the first chapel of the county was erected by it. The first native Methodist Preacher of the continent, Richard Owen, was one of his converts in this county; a man who labored faithfully and successfully as a Local Preacher for some years, and who entered the itinerancy at last, and died in it. [6] He was long the most effective co-laborer of Strawbridge, traveling the country in all directions, founding Societies and opening the way for the coming itinerants. The first of the latter raised up in the colonies has recorded his simple but warm-hearted eulogy; giving nearly the only information we have of the man who must bear forever the peculiar pre-eminence of being the first native standard-bearer of the Methodistic movement in the Western hemisphere. "On my way home," writes William Watters, "I saw my old friend and fellow-laborer, Richard Owen, in Leesburg, dangerously ill, and it proved the last time of my seeing him, for in a few days he resigned his soul into the hands of his merciful God. He was the first American Methodist Preacher, though for many years he acted only as a Local Preacher. He was awakened under the preaching of Robert Strawbridge. He was a man of a respectable family, of good natural parts, and of considerable utterance. Though encumbered with a family, he often left wife and children, and a comfortable living, and went into many distant parts, before we had any Traveling Preachers among us, and without fee or reward freely published that Gospel to others which he had happily found to be the

power of God unto his own salvation. After we had regular Circuit Preachers among us, he, as a Local Preacher, was ever ready to fill up a gap, and, by his continuing to go into neighborhoods where there was no preaching, he was often the means of opening the way for enlarging old or forming new circuits. Several years before his dissolution, after his children were grown up and able to attend to his family concerns, he gave himself entirely to the work of the ministry, and finished his course in Leesburg, Fairfax circuit, in the midst of many kind friends, but at some distance from his home. As his last labors were in the circuit where I lived, I had frequent opportunities of being in his company, both in public and in private, and had every reason to believe that he had kept himself unspotted from the world, and had the salvation of souls much at heart. I wish it was in my power to hold him up in his real character, as an example to our present race of Local Preachers. He was plain in his dress, plain in his manners, industrious and frugal; he bore a good part of the burden and heat of the day in the beginning of that work which has since so gloriously spread over this happy continent, and was as anxious to be a general blessing to mankind as too many now are to get richer and make a show in the world. I shall need to make no apology for giving this short account of so worthy a man to any who knew him."

Owen's temperament was congenial with that of Strawbridge. He clung to the hearty Irishman with tenacious affection, emulated his missionary activity, and at last followed him to the grave, preaching his funeral sermon to a "vast concourse," under a large walnut tree. "Richard Owen, the first Methodist Preacher raised up in America," says our best chronicler of these dim, early times, "was a Local Preacher in Baltimore Circuit. Although his name was printed in the Minutes, it is not said that he was received into the traveling connection until 1785. At the time of his death he had been preaching fifteen or sixteen years. Though he had charge of a large family, he traveled and preached much as a Local Preacher, in what was then the back settlements, when Methodism was in its infancy. He was a man of sound heart, plain address, good utterance, and solid judgment; and for the last two years of his life he gave himself up wholly to the work of saving souls." [7]

Several Preachers were rapidly raised up by Strawbridge in his travels in Baltimore and Harford counties: Sater Stephenson, Nathan Perigo, Richard Webster, and others; and many laymen, whose families have been identified with the whole subsequent progress of Methodism in their respective localities, [8] if not in the nation generally. We have frequent intimations of Strawbridge's labors and success in the early biographies of Methodism, but they are too vague to admit of any consecutive narration of his useful career. We discover him now penetrating into Pennsylvania, [9] and then arousing the population of the Eastern shore of Maryland; now bearing the standard into Baltimore, and then, with Owen, planting it successfully in Georgetown, on the Potomac, and in other places in Fairfax county, Virginia; and by the time that the regular itinerancy comes effectively into operation in Maryland, a band of Preachers, headed by such men as Watters, Gatch, Bowham, Haggerty, Durbin, Garrettson, seem to have been prepared, directly or indirectly through his instrumentality, for the more methodical prosecution of the great cause. At last we find his own name in the Minutes (in 1773 and 1775) as an itinerant. But it disappears unaccountably. It is probable that his Irish spirit could not brook the stern authority of Asbury and his British associates, especially the requirement which they and their party so stoutly enforced, that the administration of the sacraments by Methodist Preachers should be suspended. The Revolution, as we shall hereafter see, not only dissolved the English State Church in America, but drove out of the country most of the Anglican clergy; the Methodists who had resorted to their

churches for the sacraments were therefore left without these means of grace. For months, and even years, many societies were destitute of them. A considerable party of the Preachers undertook to supply them, and a schism was imminent in the denomination. The Conference of 1773, unable to deter Strawbridge from a course which seemed to him justified by the clearest expediency, if not by moral necessity, allowed him to persist if he would do so under the direction of Rankin, Wesley's "Assistant," and practically the "Superintendent" of the Church; but Strawbridge declined this restriction. He seems to have become settled as Preacher to the Sam's Creek and Brush Forest Societies; the latter being in Harford county, and its chapel the second built in Maryland. We trace him at last to the upper part of Long Green, Baltimore county, where an opulent and generous public citizen, [10] who admired his character and sympathized with his poverty, gave him a farm, free of rent, for life. It was while residing here, "under the shadow of Hampton," his benefactor's mansion, that, in "one of his visiting rounds to his spiritual children, he was taken sick at the house of Joseph Wheeler, and died in great peace;" probably in the summer of 1781. Owen, as has been remarked, preached his funeral sermon in the open air, to a great throng, "under a tree at the northwest corner of the house." Among the concourse were a number of his old Christian neighbors, worshippers in the "Log Chapel," to whom he had been a Pastor in the wilderness; they bore him to the tomb, singing as they marched one of those rapturous lyrics with which Charles Wesley taught the primitive Methodists to triumph over the grave. He sleeps in an orchard of the friend at whose house he died -- one of his own converts -- under a tree, from the foot of which can be seen the great city which claims him as its Methodistic apostle, and which, ever since his day, has been pre-eminent among American communities for its Methodistic strength and zeal. [11]

The scattered allusions to Strawbridge in our early records are nearly all favorable to his Christian character, his apostolic zeal, his tireless labors, his self-sacrifice, his hearty Irish fervor. He was of "medium size, of dark complexion, black hair, had a sweet voice, and was an excellent singer." Garrettson describes him as a good converser. "Mr. Strawbridge," remarks that Methodist veteran, "came to the house of a gentleman, near where I lived, to stay all night; I had never heard him preach, but as I had a great desire to be in company with a person who had caused so much talk in the country, I went over and sat and heard him converse till nearly midnight, and when I retired it was with these thoughts: I have never spent a few hours more agreeably in my life. He spent most of the time in explaining Scripture and in giving interesting anecdotes." [12]

Asbury's prejudice against Strawbridge, for his Hibernian [Irish -DVM] independence, in the sacramental controversy, continued to the last. "He is no more," wrote the great but rigorous bishop, "he is no more; upon the whole I am inclined to think the Lord took him away in judgment because he was in a way to do hurt to his cause, and that he saved him in mercy because from his deathbed conversation he appears to have had hope in his end." [13] Owen, who knew him better, and loved him as a son, had no such equivocal opinion of his end. He proclaimed, as his text, over the coffin of the devoted though headstrong evangelist, "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Thus did Methodism begin simultaneously, or nearly so, in the north and in the middle of the opening continent. Its first two chapels were befittingly humble; their very humbleness being not only an adaptation to its peculiar mission among the poor, but giving, by contrast with the grandeur of its still advancing results, a peculiar moral sublimity, a divine attestation to the great

cause of which they were the first monuments. Each was in its lowly sphere an evangelical Pharos [lighthouse, Oxford Dict. -- DVM], shedding out a pure though modest light, the rays of which extended, blended, and brightened, till they streamed, a divine illumination, over the whole heavens of the nation, and fell in scattered radiance, like the light of the morning, on many of the ends of the earth. And, judging from the present prospect, he may not be an extravagant prophet who should venture to predict that "Wesley Chapel" of New York, and the "Log Chapel" of Maryland, shall yet assume a purer and a sublimer glory in Christian history than the splendid structures of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Sophia. For still is it true, and will be to the end, that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

* * *

Two private members of the Society raised up by Strawbridge, were the first Methodists who visited Kent County, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. They came to one John Randal's, conversed and prayed with the family, and left behind them some salutary impressions. This created a desire for Methodist preaching; and shortly after Strawbridge himself paid them a visit, and preached to them the Gospel of Christ. He was followed by Robert Williams; and in December following, Asbury went into Kent County. Through the persevering labors of Asbury, and others associated with him, a gracious work was commenced on this peninsula, which has resulted in great good to the souls of thousands."

* * *

Strawbridge, as we have seen, contended sturdily for the right of the people to the sacraments, and could not be deterred by Asbury or Rankin from administering them. He had founded the Church in the regions whence now nearly one half of its members were reported; he had administered to them the sacraments before any English itinerants appeared in the country, and being an Irishman, he shared not in the deferential sympathies of his English brethren for the Establishment; as for any other sentiments, the actual character of the representatives of the Establishment, clerical and lay, around Him, could claim none from him but pity or contempt. Its clergy were known chiefly as the heartiest card-players, horse-racers, and drinkers of the middle colonies. Robert Strawbridge was doubtless imprudent in the Irish resolution with which he resisted the policy of the English itinerants; for the intuitive foresight with which he anticipated the necessity of the independent administration of the sacraments, should have suggested to him the certainty of their concession in due time, and therefore the expediency of patient harmony in the infant Church till that time should come. Discord was extremely perilous at this early stage of the denomination. He was firm, however, and though the first rule adopted by this Conference seems absolute, yet we learn from Asbury that it was adopted with the understanding that "no preacher in our connection shall be permitted to administer the ordinances at this time except Mr. Strawbridge, and he under the particular direction of the assistant." A concession so singular shows the extraordinary consideration in which Strawbridge was held, the influence he had obtained over the Societies of Maryland and Virginia, perhaps also the conscious necessity of the independent administration of the sacraments in that chief field of the denomination. As we shall hereafter see, this just claim of American Methodism could not be effectually refused; it led to increasing

contention., and at last, providentially, gave birth to the organization of the "Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America."

* * *

Philip Gatch -- "It pleased God, however, to send the Gospel into our neighborhood, in January, 1772, through the instrumentality of the Methodists. Previous to this time Robert Strawbridge had settled between Baltimore and Fredericktown, and under his ministry three others were raised up, Richard Owen, Sater Stephenson, and Nathan Perigo. Nathan Perigo was the first to introduce Methodist preaching in the neighborhood where I lived..."

* * *

With his usual promptness Asbury was in the saddle, on the last day of the Conference of 1773, leaving Philadelphia for his great Baltimore Circuit, and praying, "May the Lord make bare his holy arm, and revive his glorious work!" He preached continually on his route, and the next week writes, "My soul has enjoyed great peace this last week, in which I have rode near one hundred miles since my departure from Philadelphia, and have preached often, and sometimes great solemnity has rested on the congregations. On Tuesday morning my heart was still with the Lord, and my peace flowed as a river. Glory be given to God! On Wednesday, at New Castle, the company was but small, though great power attended the word. Perhaps the Lord will yet visit this people, though at present too many of them appear to be devoted to pride, vanity, and folly." He soon reached his circuit, for it comprehended all the Societies in Maryland, and nearly half the Methodists of the country. On August 2d he held a Quarterly Meeting at Joseph Presbury's. "After our temporal business was done," he says, "I read a part of our minutes, to see if Brother Strawbridge would conform, but he appeared to be inflexible. He would not administer the ordinances under our direction at all. Many things were said on the subject, and a few of the people took part with him.

* * *

Shadford's colleagues, on the Baltimore Circuit, were Robert Lindsey, Edward Dromgoole, and Richard Webster. Lindsey, an Irishman, was admitted on trial at the Conference of 1774. He continued to itinerate in this country about three years, after which he returned to Europe, and labored in the Wesleyan ministry till 1788. Dromgoole was also an Irishman. He had been a Papist, but was led, in 1770, by Methodist influence in his native Country to renounce Popery, by reading, publicly in a church, his recantation. In the same year he arrived in Baltimore with a letter of introduction to his countryman, Robert Strawbridge. He heard Strawbridge preach, and induced him to visit Fredericktown. Methodism was thus introduced into that community. Dromgoole still deemed himself an unregenerate man; but after a period of deep mental distress, he received the peace of God while upon his knees on a Sunday evening. He began to preach in 1773; the next year he was employed, till the Conference, on the Frederick Circuit. The Conference sent him, as a Co-laborer with Shadford, to Baltimore Circuit. He labored in various places, but chiefly in Virginia and North Carolina, till 1786, when he located on the Brunswick Circuit, where he continued to be useful. Richard Webster, Shadford's other colleague, was one of the earliest Methodist converts of Harford County, Maryland, where he joined the Church under Strawbridge,

in 1768; in 1770 his house was a "preaching place" of the denomination; about the same time he became a public laborer in the cause; in 1772 Asbury sent him out to travel with John King, on the Eastern Shore of the state. He seems to have been an unpretentious "Helper;" for though his name appears in the appointments for 1774 and 1775, he was never received on trial, but traveled under direction of the "preacher in charge." He is not recorded in the classified catalogue of regular itinerants, given by the earliest historian of Methodism.

* * *

Strawbridge, as we have seen, was abroad in Maryland, and Garrettson met him and other itinerants. Their message was, at first, a mystery to him; yet he believed "they preached the truth," and he "dared not to join with the multitude in persecuting them."

* * *

He was welcomed by Rev. Martin Boehm, in Lancaster County. Boehm, as we have seen, was one of the founders, and at last one of the bishops of the "German Methodists," or, "United Brethren." Strawbridge had visited and labored with him;

* * *

Taken From: Stevens' M. E. History, Vol. 2 -- hdm0219.tex

The name of Edward Dromgoole appears, frequently and honorably, in the primitive publications of Methodism. We have had occasion already to notice his early co-operation with Strawbridge. His itinerant labors were extensive, mostly in Virginia and North Carolina, and continued down to 1786, though his name appears very irregularly in the Minutes. After his location he settled in Brunswick County, Va., near North Carolina, and continued to be a useful laborer till his death in 1835, at the age of eighty-three. As late as 1815, Asbury, passing through Virginia, preached in his house, and ordained the veteran as an elder." He has been," says the bishop, "a faithful local preacher, respected and beloved. Two of his sons are local Deacons."

* * *

Richard Webster retired at this Conference. He has already been noticed as one of the first Methodists of Harford County, Md.; a convert under the ministry of Strawbridge. After four years of faithful services, domestic necessities required him to limit his labors; but he pursued them zealously in his own vicinity, and lived a long, a pure, and useful life. Nearly half a century after the date of his location, we catch a glimpse of the veteran as he was just stepping into heaven. His old friend, Freeborn Garrettson, visiting the scenes of his own early ministry in Maryland, writes: "On the Lord's day morning I preached with much satisfaction in the Abington Church, and then rode six miles, and preached in a neat church lately built in the forest under the direction of old Mr. Webster, who at this time was dangerously ill. I was sent for to visit him, and found him nigh unto death, joyfully waiting until his time should come. He was among the first who embraced religion, when the Methodist preachers made their entrance into this part of the country, about fifty-six years ago. He is now about eighty-five years of age, and has been a preacher more than

forty years. He has a large family of children and grandchildren, settled around him, while he, like a ripe shock of corn, is waiting to be taken to the garner of rest. I had sweet fellowship with him. A few days after I left him he took his departure. I bless God for this opportunity of conversing with him."

* * *

Fourteen preachers were received on trial, and eight admitted to membership. Among the former was Caleb B. Pedicord, one of the saintliest men of his age. His personal appearance is remembered as peculiarly interesting; his aspect was beautiful in its combined expression of intelligence, moral refinement, and pathos. His voice in both singing and preaching, had a dissolving power of tenderness. Marvels are told of the quiet, pathetic force of his sermons. He was a native of the Western Shore of Maryland, and was probably an early convert of Strawbridge in Frederick County, where was also his first appointment by the Conference. He continued in the itinerancy till his death, traveling and preaching with great popularity in Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and Virginia. He was on Baltimore circuit at the time of the Episcopal organization of the denomination in that city, and probably shared in its proceedings. His gentle, yet commanding, character could not protect him from the persecutions of the times. Soon after he had entered upon his circuit, in Dorchester County, Md., he was attacked, on the highway, till the blood dripped down his person. He took shelter in the house of a friend, and, while his stripes were being washed, a brother of his assailant entered, and ascertaining the cruel grievance, mounted his horse, and hastily rode away, indignantly threatening to chastise the persecutor. The latter was soon overtaken, and so severely beaten that he promised never to trouble another itinerant. Pedicord could not approve such a vindication, but he might well rejoice afterward over one of those striking coincidences which so often attended the labors and sufferings of the early itinerants, for both these brothers were subsequently seen sitting, "in their right minds," in the communion of the persecuted Methodists. The itinerant bore the scars of his wounds to his grave.

Pedicord's labors in New Jersey, in 1781, were greatly successful. He found Abbott in his new home, on Lower Penn's Neck, where the honest evangelist was much perplexed and dejected at his own comparatively slight success. "I had preached again and again," says Abbott, "and all to no purpose. I found there a set of as hardened sinners as were out of hell." Gladly, therefore, did he welcome Pedicord, hoping for a word of consolation in his discouragement. Pedicord was so distressed by Abbott's statements that he could not eat his breakfast, but retired to his chamber to pray. After some time he reappeared with a cheerful aspect. "Be not discouraged," he cried to his host, "these people will yet hunger and thirst after the word of God." In a few months "there was a great work going on in this Neck. This prophet of the Lord had such access to him as made him confident that the Lord would work."

A memorable instance of his usefulness occurred on this circuit. He was an excellent singer; while riding slowly on the highway to an appointment at Mount Holly he was singing,

"I cannot, I cannot forbear,
These passionate longings for home;
O! when shall my Spirit be there?
O when will the messenger come?"

A young soldier of the Revolution, wandering in a neighboring forest, heard him, and "was deeply touched not only with the melody of his voice, which was among the best he ever heard, but with the words, especially the last couplet." "After he ceased," writes the listener, "I went out and followed him a great distance, hoping he would begin again. He, however, stopped at the house of a Methodist and dismounted. I then concluded he must be a Methodist Preacher, and would probably preach that evening." That evening the youthful soldier heard him, and Caleb B. Pedicord thus became "the spiritual father" of Thomas Ware, one of the most pure minded and successful of early Methodist itinerants -- for fifty years a founder of the denomination from New Jersey to Tennessee, from Massachusetts to the Carolinas, and, by his pen, the best contributor to its early history. Pedicord's fine insight could perceive the pure worth of his young disciple, and when the latter began to labor in public the itinerant wrote him, from Delaware, an earnest summons to the itinerant field. "He who claims all souls as his own, and wills them to be saved, does sometimes, from the common walks of life, choose men who have learned of him to be lowly in heart, and bids them go and invite the world to the great supper. The Lord is at this time carrying on a great and glorious work, chiefly by young men like yourself. O come and share in the happy toil, and in the great reward! Mark me! though seven winters have now passed over me, and much of the way has been dreary enough, yet God has been with me and kept me in the way, and often whispered, 'thou art mine, and all I have is thine.' He has, moreover, given me sons and daughters too, born not of the flesh, but of God; and who can estimate the joy I have in one destined, I hope, to fill my place in the itinerant ranks when I am gone! Who then will say that mine was not a happy lot? 'Tis well you have made haste; much more than I can express have I wished you in the ranks before mine eyes have closed in death on all below. When Asbury pressed me to become an itinerant, I said, God has called me to preach, and woe unto me if I preach not; but I had no conviction that he had called me to itinerate. 'No conviction, my son,' said he to me sternly, 'that you should follow the direction of him Him who commissioned you to preach? Has the charge given to the disciples, "Go and evangelize the world," been revoked? Is the world evangelized?' He said no more. I looked at the world; it was not evangelized. The world must be evangelized; it should long since have been so, and would have been so, had all who professed to be ministers of Christ been such as were the first Gospel preachers and professors; for who can contend with him who is Lord of lords and King of kings, when they that are with him in the character of ministers and members are called and chosen and faithful? Here the drama ends not; but the time, we think, is near -- even at the door. Nothing can kill the itinerant spirit which Wesley has inspired. It has lived through the Revolutionary War, and will live through all future time. Christendom will become more enlightened, will feel a divine impulse, and a way will be cast up on which itinerants may swiftly move, and in sufficient numbers to teach all nations the commands of God." Thus, not long before his death, did he in this prophetic letter call out his "son in the Gospel" to bear forward the standard which was about to fall from his own trembling hand, and to verify, to no small extent, his sanguine predictions. "The fruit of his ministry in New Jersey was visible for at least half a century after he had passed to his reward, and the effects of his labors are probably felt to this day." In 1785 the Minutes record the decease of Pedicord in one sentence: "A man of sorrows, and, like his Master, acquainted with grief; but a man dead to the world, and much devoted to God." He was the first that fell in the itinerant field after the Episcopal organization of the Church.

* * *

In 1786 the itinerants reached Kentucky. James Haw and Benjamin Ogden were the first that appeared there. Ogden was born in New Jersey, in 1764. He served in the Revolutionary army, and had no little influence among his fellow-soldiers, many of whom he found afterward in his western travels. Kentucky was then a hunting-ground for Indian tribes, and the home of a few daring pioneers from Virginia and Maryland, whose lives were in continual jeopardy from savage foes, on which account they dwelt in communities within strongly defended forts called "stations." Among these pioneers was Thomas Stevenson, whose wife was one of Strawbridge's converts.

* * *

Taken From: Stevens' M. E. History, Vol. 3 -- hdm0226.tex

Henry Boehm began his long itinerant career in our present period. We have repeatedly alluded to the old homestead of his venerable father, Martin Boehm, who, expelled from the "Mennonites" for his "too evangelical Opinions," became a bishop among the "United brethren," or "German Methodists," a people founded, as we have seen, by the labors of Asbury's friend, Otterbein." He lived and died a patriarch of Methodism in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. His home at Conestoga is consecrated in the early Methodist records as the frequent shelter of Asbury, Whatcoat, and most of the Methodist leaders. We have noticed the achievements of Abbott in "Boehm's Chapel," and all the through its neighborhood. Henry Boehm, born in the homestead in 1775, was trained up under the best influences of Methodism and the benedictions of its best evangelists. "Morning and evening," he says, "the old family Bible was read, and prayer was offered. My father's voice still echoes in my ears. My mother, too, had much to do in molding my character and shaping my destiny. One evening as I returned home I heard a familiar voice engaged in prayer. I listened: it was my mother. Among other things, she prayed for her children, and mentioned Henry, her youngest son. The mention of my name broke my heart, and melted me into contrition. Tears rolled down my cheeks, and I felt the importance of complying with the command of God: 'My son, give me thine heart.' "

He was converted in 1793, through the instrumentality of Chandler, but concealed the fact for five years. "These," he writes, "were lost years; lost to myself, lost to the Church, and lost to the world. There is nothing in my early history I regret so much as the loss of these five years; a loss that tears and prayers cannot recall, for time once lost is gone forever."

He heard Strawbridge and Abbott, and most of the itinerant "sons of thunder," at Boehm's Chapel. This famous structure was planned by Whatcoat, and built, in 1791, of limestone, on a hill which commands a magnificent view of the surrounding country. "There were wonderful gatherings," he says, "at Boehm's Chapel.

* * * * *

Part 5

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY EZRA SQUIER TIPPLE

Taken From: Tipples biography of Freeborn Garrettson -- hdm0168.tex

This is not the place to discuss the question whether the work of Strawbridge in Maryland antedates the work in New York. The best historians in America, such as Stevens, than whom no greater denominational historian has yet been raised up among us; Atkinson, whose researches concerning the beginnings of the Wesleyan movement in America are both invaluable and as yet incontrovertible; Wakeley, Buckley, Faulkner, and others unite in giving the preference to New York. The date of Strawbridge's first sermon in Maryland may never be known, since the year of his arrival in America has not been definitely determined (Crook, who made a careful study of all the Irish line of evidence, does not think that he left Ireland before 1766); but whatever the year he began, whether before or after Embury, this man who founded Methodism in Baltimore and Harford Counties in Maryland, restless by nature, and conscious of the needs of the new settlements which were unvisited by the lethargic clergy of the English Church, went in every direction preaching with glowing lips the sure word of the gospel.

"Everywhere he went he raised up preachers," and whenever he preached sinners were converted. It was this flaming herald who was the first Methodist to be seen and heard by the young man in Maryland who had but recently returned from school and entered upon a life of carelessness and indifference. His picture of Strawbridge is doubtless the best one we have of that early preacher: "Mr. Strawbridge came to the house of a gentleman near where I lived to stay all night. I had never heard him preach, but as I had a great desire to be in company with a person who had caused so much talk in the country I went over and sat and heard him converse till nearly midnight, and when I retired it was with these thoughts, 'I have never spent a few hours so agreeably in my life.' He spent most of the time in explaining Scripture and giving interesting anecdotes." And it is not thinkable that that great winner of souls would have allowed the earnest young fellow who listened to him so eagerly to withdraw without some word concerning his personal salvation.

* * *

Taken From: "The Heart of Asbury's Journal" -- hdm0560.tex

[These excerpts come from Asbury's Journal. The bracketed remarks in this excerpt are not mine, as is this one, but are the remarks of Ezra Squier Tipple. -- DVM]

* * *

NOVEMBER 11, 1772 -- Many people attended preaching at friend Strawbridge's, among whom were some Baptists, who went away displeased.

* * *

NOVEMBER 18, 1772 -- The next morning I went to friend Strawbridge's, and found his family well. Here we had Dr. Warfield and several polite people to dine with us. I spoke to the ladies about headdresses; but the doctor vindicated them, observing that religion did not consist in dress. I quoted the words of St. Peter; I stayed about an hour, and then departed.

* * *

DECEMBER 23, 1772 -- Set off for James Presbury's, to attend our quarterly meeting. Many people attended, and several friends came many miles I preached from Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves," etc. After showing to whom the charge was given I proceeded to enforce the subject thus: 1. Take heed to your spirits; 2. Take heed to your practice; 3. Take heed to your doctrine; 4. Take heed to the flock: (1) Those that are under deep conviction; (2) Those that are true believers; (3) Those that are sorely tempted; (4) Those that are groaning for full redemption; (5) Those that have backslidden. I then urged the motives to this duty. We afterward proceeded to our temporal business, and considered the following propositions: 1. What are our collections? We found them sufficient to defray our expenses. 2. How are the preachers stationed? Brother Strawbridge and Brother Owings in Frederick County. Brother King, Brother Watters, and Isaac Rollins on the other side of the bay; and myself in Baltimore. 3. Shall we be strict in our society meetings, and not admit strangers? Agreed. 4. Shall we drop preaching in the daytime through the week? Not agreed to. 5. Will the people be contented without our administering the sacrament? John King was neuter; Brother Strawbridge pleaded much for the ordinances, and so did the people, who appeared to be much biased by him. I told them I would not agree to it at that time, and insisted on our abiding by our rules. But Mr. Boardman had given them their way at the quarterly meeting held here before, and I was obliged to connive at some things for the sake of peace. 6. Shall we make collections weekly, to pay the preachers' board and expenses? This was not agreed to. We then inquired into the moral characters of the preachers and exhorters. Only one exhorter was found any way doubtful, and we have great hopes of him. Brother Strawbridge received £8 quarterage; Brother King and myself £6 each. Great love subsisted among us in this meeting, and we parted in peace.

* * *

MARCH 30, 1773 -- Our quarterly meeting began. After I had preached we proceeded to business, and in our little conference the following queries were propounded, namely: 1. Are there no disorderly persons in our classes? It was thought not. 2. Does not dram-drinking too much prevail among our people? 3. Do none contract debts without due care to pay them? We found that this evil is much avoided among our people. 4. Are the band meetings kept up? 5. Is there nothing immoral in any of our preachers? 6. What preachers travel now, and where are they stationed? It was then urged that none must break our rules, under the penalty of being excluded from our connection. Discipline must be enforced!

All was settled in the most amicable manner. Mr. Strawbridge preached a good and useful sermon from Joel 2:17: Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar," etc. Many people were present at our love feast, among whom were some strangers; but all were deeply serious, and the power of God was much present indeed. Brother Owings preached a very alarming sermon, and Brother Strawbridge gave a moving exhortation. The whole ended in great peace. And we all went, in the strength of the Lord, to our several appointments.

* * *

JULY 14, 1773 -- Our Conference began: in which the following propositions were agreed to:

1. The old Methodist doctrine and discipline shall be enforced and maintained among all our societies in America.

2. Any preacher who acts otherwise cannot be retained among us as a fellow laborer in the vineyard.

3. No preacher in our connection shall be permitted to administer the ordinances at this time except Mr. Strawbridge, and be under the particular direction of the assistant.

[The action which was taken admitted no exception. According to Stevens the first rule agreed to was 'Every preacher, who acts in connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labor in America, is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.' but Strawbridge insisted that the people had a right to the sacraments and could not be deterred from administering them. Stevens further says that this singular concession as indicated by Asbury "shows the extraordinary consideration in which Strawbridge was held."]

4. No person shall be admitted more than once or twice to our love feasts or society meetings without becoming a member.

5. No preacher shall be permitted to reprint our books without the approbation of Mr. Wesley and the consent of his brethren. And that Robert Williams shall be allowed to sell what he has, but reprint no more.

6. Every assistant is to send an account of the work of God in his circuit to the general assistant.

There were some debates among the preachers in this Conference relative to the conduct of some who had manifested a desire to abide in the cities and live like gentlemen. Three years out of four have been already spent in the cities. It was also found that money had been wasted, improper leaders appointed, and many of our rules broken.

* * *

AUGUST 2, 1773 -- We began our quarterly meeting. After our temporal business was done I read a part of our minutes, to see if Brother Strawbridge would conform; but he appeared to be inflexible. He would not administer the ordinances under our direction at all. Many things were said on the subject, and a few of the people took part with him.

* * *

JUNE 24, 1774 -- Found myself better, and was much refreshed by letters from Maryland. But one of these letters informed me that Mr. Strawbridge was very officious in administering the ordinances. What strange infatuation attends that man! Why will he run before Providence? He ought not to do so.

[Strawbridge was not willing to submit to the demands made upon him. He was willing to preach, and willing to suffer, and willing to die; but he was not willing to refuse the ordinances to people who otherwise could not have them because these good churchmen said so.]

* * *

MARCH 12, 1775 -- Much of the power of God was felt at the Point, and a divine energy went forth among the people that night in town, while I discoursed from that awakening scripture, Rom. 2:8-10: "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil," etc. Christ was precious to my soul, which was filled with divine peace. I saw Brother Strawbridge, and entered into a free conversation with him. His sentiments relative to Mr. Rankin correspond with mine. But all these matters I can silently commit to God, who overrules both in earth and heaven.

* * *

MARCH 14, 1775 -- I parted with Brother Strawbridge, and felt my much depressed by temptations. But a holy flame glowed in my heart, while discoursing at night on the "cloud of witnesses." Believing that some souls were benefited, I commended myself to the divine protection, and slept in peace.

* * *

AUGUST 5, 1775 -- My spirit was a little dejected, but blessed with the peace of God. I had some conversation with Mr. Strawbridge, who said the people should be kept in society, if they did not meet in class; and intimated. that, instead of preaching the gospel, I had been exposing their faults. So this is part of what I have gained by my labor. But I let him know that our rules were intended for use, and not to be disregarded.

* * *

AUGUST 28, 1775 -- I set off for Mill Creek, to hold our quarterly meeting. We found it a peaceful, comfortable time. Mr. Strawbridge discovered his independent principles, in objecting to our discipline. He appears to want no preachers; he can do as well or better than they. But it is likely self-sufficiency is the spring of all this. After preaching at a few other places on the way I returned to Portsmouth on Friday and on Saturday we had a most remarkable storm -- the wind at northeast, and blew several vessels on shore, and among others the Mercury man-of-war. Houses were blown down, docks torn up, bridges carried away, abundance of trees broken and torn up by the roots, and several tracts of land overflowed with water. What a peculiar blessing is true religion!

* * *

SEPTEMBER 3, 1781 -- I visited the Bush chapel. The people here once left us to follow another: Time was when the labors of their leader were made a blessing to them; but pride is a

busy sin. He is now no more: upon the whole, I am inclined to think the Lord took him away in judgment, because he was in a way to do hurt to his cause; and that he saved him in mercy, because from his deathbed conversation he appears to have had hope in his end.

[Smith, in his Life of Asbury, thinks this an allusion to Strawbridge, and expresses the wish that the paragraph had not been written.]

* * *

MAY 1, 1801 -- We had about forty members present, and sat on Friday, Saturday, and Monday; on Tuesday morning we rose. We had great peace; and good news from several circuits--revivals of religion. On Sabbath day I preached from Matt. 28:18-20. 1. The authority of Christ, his natural, and his divin right as the coeternal Son, his right by redemption, his right by family compact, and the delegation of the whole Trinity, to the work of redemption and salvation; 2. The branches of duty appointed to his ministers: to preach the gospel in all its essential points; to administer the ordinances; and to rule the church of Christ; 3. "I am with you," at all times, and in all places, to support and to give you success as Christians and as ministers. We had six elders present, to wit, William Watters, John Phillips, Solomon Harris, Joseph Stone, John Cullison, and Alexander McCaine. There was preaching every day and every night. Our own people and our friends in the settlement were equally kind, and we had rich entertainment. This settlement of Pipe Creek is the richest in the state. Here Mr. Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland -- and America.

[This statement conflicts with one made previously in the Discipline by both Asbury and Coke, in which the priority is given to the New York society.]

* * *

Asbury's remains rested in the vault of the Eutaw church until June, 1854, when they were again disinterred and finally deposited in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Baltimore, where are buried many of Methodism's glorious dead, Robert Strawbridge, Reuben Ellis, Wilson Lee, Nathan Richardson, Jesse Lee, Hamilton Jefferson, John Haggerty, Abner Neal, James Smith, Enoch George, John Emory, Beverly Waugh, and many others. And there Methodism's greatest itinerant hero sleeps his last sleep.

* * *

Taken From: "Francis Asbury, Prophet of the Long Road" -- hdm0562.tex

There have been differences of opinion as to the place of the earliest planting in America, and to whom the credit belongs, whether to Embury at New York, or Strawbridge in Maryland. While this is not the place for any extended discussion of this question, a word or two at least must be said, For many years, three quarters of a century at least, there was no debate as to where Methodism in America began. All the Methodist historical writers of that period, with possibly one exception, concur in fixing the starting point of the movement in New York. And this is the judgment of the best historians of the denomination, such as Stevens, Wakeley, Buckley, and

Faulkner. Moreover, the question is discussed so exhaustively by Atkinson in *The Beginnings of the Wesleyan Movement in America*, and the proof which he furnishes is so cumulative and convincing that the starting point of American Methodism must be regarded as settled.

* * *

In this church, named Wesley Chapel, probably the first church to be called by Wesley's name, but now for many years known as Old John Street Church, Embury and Webb continued to preach for about a year, when the old order passed away and a new order began.

While these two were preaching in New York there was another religious awakening in Maryland, two hundred miles to the south, of which they knew nothing. The date of Robert Strawbridge's first sermon in Maryland may never be known, but the fact that he built a log chapel on Sam's Creek is well established. There was no need to circulate a subscription paper for the erection of this primitive meetinghouse. The site of the Wesley Chapel in New York cost six hundred pounds; here one could be had for the asking. Willing hands felled the trees and squared the logs. The building was a rude structure without windows, door, or floor, and though long occupied was never completed. 'Yet it was a true sanctuary. Beneath its rough pulpit Strawbridge laid to rest two of his children. Its unplastered walls echoed with the triumphant shouts of sinners redeemed through the mercy of God.' Restless by nature and conscious of the needs of the new settlements which were unvisited by the lethargic clergy of the Established Church, Strawbridge went in every direction preaching with glowing lips the sure word of the gospel. 'Wherever he went he raised up preachers,' and wherever he preached sinners were converted.

* * *

I think it is not too much to say that this first Conference in 1773, rather than at the Christmas Conference in 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church had its birth.

The following year another Conference was held in the same city. The hopes of the leaders for better discipline and more perfect harmony during the year had not been realized. Strawbridge had shown signs of insubordination. Rankin, while utterly sincere and devoted to his work, betrayed on the one hand an ignorance of American conditions, and on the other a lack of understanding of Asbury, which bred both dissatisfaction and distrust. At this Conference, however, the very important determination was made that the preachers should exchange at the end of every six months. This was what Asbury had desired from the beginning -- a circulation of preachers -- and was undeniably one of the chief means of the marvelous growth of Methodism in its first half century.

* * *

Asbury's intuitions were almost uncanny in their exactness. When in the latter years of his life (1813) a friend remarked on his ability to recall faces and names, he said, 'Ah, I am a mere child now. The time has been, when I got one good look at a man's face, I could know him anywhere.' He had none of Williams's wild earnestness; he was without the charm of Strawbridge or the gentle harmlessness of Richard Whatcoat. He had not the thorough humanness of Jesse Lee,

nor the mystical tenderness and strength of Freeborn Garretson.' But in practical sagacity, love of order, keenness of perception, promptness of mental actions, shrewd common sense, philosophic imperturbability, affable, dignified goodness none of his confreres surpassed or equaled him.

* * * * *

Part 6
STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY NATHAN BANGS

Taken From: Bangs' M. E. History, Vol. 1 -- hdm0008.tex

About the same time that Mr. Embury was laying the foundation for this spiritual edifice in New York, and Captain Webb was, to use his own language, "felling the trees on Long Island," and some other places, Mr. Robert Strawbridge, another local preacher from Ireland, came over and settled in Frederick county, in Maryland; and being a pious and zealous man, he commenced preaching in his own house, and other private houses, the doctrines of Jesus Christ as held and taught by Mr. Wesley. His word was attended "with the power and demonstration of the Spirit," and very soon a society was collected of such as "desired to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." Mr. Strawbridge succeeded in building a house of worship, near Pipe Creek, in Maryland, called the Log Meeting House, in which he continued for some time to preach to the people, and to watch over the society he had formed. The following anecdote is related of this good man by Mr. Garretson:--

"He came to the house of a gentleman near where I lived to stay all night. I had never heard him preach; but as I had a great desire to be in company with a person who had caused so much talk in the country, I went over and sat and heard him converse until nearly midnight; and when I retired it was with these thoughts -- I have never spent a few hours so agreeably in my life. He spent most of the time in explaining Scripture, and in giving interesting anecdotes; and perhaps one of them will do to relate here A congregation came together in a certain place, and a gentleman who was hearing thought that the preacher had directed his whole sermon to him, and he retired home after the sermon in disgust. However, he concluded to hear him once more, and hide himself behind the people, so that the preacher should not see him; it was the old story -- his character was delineated. He retired dejected; but concluded that possibly the preacher saw him, and said, 'I will try him once more;' he did so, and hid himself behind the door. The preacher took for his text, 'And a man shall be as a hiding place, &c.' In the midst of the sermon, the preacher cried out, 'Sinner, come from your scouting hole!' The poor fellow came forward, looked the preacher in the face, and said, 'You are a wizard, and the devil is in you; I will hear you no more.'"

Thus was at foundation laid by these two men of God, [Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge] who probably came to America for other purposes than that of preaching the gospel, for a permanent work of God in this country; and it was the Macedonian cry which was sent to England by these people, and more especially those in New York, which moved Mr. Wesley to send them, in answer to their petition, the help they so much needed.

* * *

We have already seen that Messrs. Boardman and Pillmore, after their arrival, entered upon their respective fields of labor with ardor and success. After spending some time in Philadelphia, hearing of the labors of Mr. Strawbridge in Maryland, Mr. Pillmore paid him a visit, and endeavored to strengthen his hands in the Lord. After preaching to the people in that part of Maryland, and rejoicing in the good which had been effected by the labors of Mr. Strawbridge, he visited some parts of Virginia and North Carolina, where he preached with success, and formed some societies.

* * *

Two private members of the society raised up by Mr. Strawbridge, were the first Methodists who visited Kent county, on the eastern shore of Maryland. They came to one John Randal's, conversed and prayed with the family, and left behind them some salutary impressions. This created a desire for Methodist preaching; and shortly after, Mr. Strawbridge himself paid them a visit, and preached to them the gospel of Christ. He was followed by Robert Williams; and in December following, 1772, Mr. Asbury went into Kent county.

"Before preaching," he says, "one Mr. R., a Church minister, came to me and desired to know who I was, and whether I was licensed. I told him who I was. He spoke great swelling words, and said he had authority over the people, and was charged with the care of their souls. He also said that I could not, and should not preach: and if I did, he should proceed against me according to law. I let him know that I came to preach, and preach I would; and farther asked him if he had authority to bind the consciences of the people, or if he was a justice of the peace; and told him I thought he had nothing to do with me. He charged me with making a schism. I told him that I did not draw the people from the Church, and asked him if his church was then open. He then said that I hindered the people from their work. I asked him if fairs and horse races did not hinder them; and farther told him that I came to help him. He said he had not hired me for an assistant, and did not want my help. I told him if there were no swearers or other sinners, he was sufficient. But, said he, What do you come for? I replied, To turn sinners to God. He said, Cannot I do that as well as you? I told him that I had authority from God. He then laughed at me, and said, You are a fine fellow indeed! I told him I did not do this to invalidate his authority: and also gave him to understand that I did not wish to dispute with him; but he said he had business with me, and came into the house in a great rage. I began to preach, and urged the people to repent and turn from all their transgressions, so iniquity should not prove their ruin. After preaching the parson went out, and told the people they did wrong in coming to hear me, and said I spoke against learning, whereas I only spoke to this purpose -- when a man turned from all sin he would adorn every character in life, both in church and state."

This quotation is given as a specimen of the sort of opposition the first Methodist preachers had to encounter in that part of the country. The clergy in general had but a name to live, while they were dead to spiritual and divine things, and were therefore unprepared to receive the true messengers of peace and mercy. Through the persevering labors of Mr. Asbury and others associated with him, a gracious work was commenced on this peninsula, which has terminated in great good to the souls of thousands.

* * *

5. Will the people be contented without our administering the sacraments? John King was neuter; brother Strawbridge pleaded much for the ordinances, and so did the people, who seemed to be much biased by him. I told them I would not agree to it at that time, and insisted on our abiding by our rules.

* * *

It is highly probable that some of the preachers had manifested an unwillingness to submit entirely to the authority of Mr. Wesley in all matters, and hence the reason and seasonableness of the above minute in respect to yielding obedience to his authority. That Mr. Strawbridge and some others had evinced a disposition so far to depart from Wesleyan Methodism as to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, we know; and that it required all the authority of Mr. Asbury to restrain them from this practice heretofore, is evident from a former quotation from his Journal. To prevent a repetition of this disorderly practice, it seems the above prohibitory rule was adopted in reference to this subject.

* * *

1774. On the 25th of May, of this year, the second conference was held in the city of Philadelphia ... It seems that Mr. Strawbridge did not continue in the regular itinerancy, as we do not find his name in the minutes of conference; the probability is, that he became disaffected on account of the opposition manifested to his administering the ordinances, to which he adhered with great pertinacity.

* * *

Taken From: Stevens M. E. History, Vol. 2 -- hdm0013.tex

The first Methodist society in America was formed, in the city of New York, in the year 1766, by a few emigrants from Ireland. About the same time, however, that Mr. Philip Embury and his associates were laying the foundation for such permanent good in this city, a similar society was formed in Frederick county, Maryland, through the instrumentality of Mr. Strawbridge, another local preacher from Ireland.

* * *

After continuing a short time in Philadelphia, Mr. Pilmoor made an excursion to Maryland, where he found Mr. Strawbridge, and preached with some success. He likewise visited some parts of Virginia and North Carolina; and witnessing the happy effects of his labors in the awakening of sinners, he formed some societies. In all places which he visited, he found people eager to hear the word, and kind to those who came to preach it. From hence he returned to Philadelphia

* * * * *

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY SAMUEL GARDINER AYRES

Taken From: "Methodist Heroes of Other Days" -- hdm0531.tex

The General Conference of 1916 had many memorials presented concerning the settlement of the historic fact as to the priority of the claim that Methodism was established in New York by Philip Embury, or the claim that Robert Strawbridge first blazed the way in Maryland. So far not enough data have appeared to reward the searchers for historic truth to enable us to impartially settle the question. Possibly it can never be settled. During the session of the General Conference a pilgrimage was made to the grave of Embury, and a service held there.

* * *

The first Methodist preacher that he [Philip Gatch] ever saw was Nathan Perigo, one of the three preachers raised up as the result of the preaching of Robert Strawbridge. Under Mr. Perigo's preaching Philip was awakened, but not converted.

* * * * *

Part 8

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY ADAM CLARKE

Taken From: The Autobiography of Adam Clarke -- hdm0074.tex

[I have included these excerpts to show the interesting fact of the intermarriage of some of the Strawbridge family and the Clarke family in Ireland. Whether there was any close family relationship between Adam Clarke and Robert Strawbridge I know not, but the thought of that possibility is interesting. -- DVM]

The [Clarke] family was originally English, but from what branch of the family, or from what county in England the subject of this Memoir descended, has not been satisfactorily deduced. The family tradition is, that they went over to Ireland in the 17th century, and had part of what were called the Debenture Lands, and settled in the county of Antrim, about Larne, Glenarm, and Grange, where they had considerable estates. They became matrimonially connected with the Higgisons, Strawbridges, Courtenays, and Boyds; the latter of whom deduce their origin in uninterrupted descent from the celebrated Boyds of Kilmarnock in Scotland: some of the Boyds, in virtue of the above alliance, still possess a considerable landed property in the above country.

* * *

Archibald Boyd, my great great maternal grandfather, was a Presbyterian clergyman, and the first who preached as Protestant, in Maghera, after the Revolution in 1688. He married Miss Catharine Strawbridge, a Scotch lady. Mr. Boyd's sister, married the Rev. Mr. Higgison, rector of Larne, in whose family that rectory still continues. of the rest of this family I think you have Adam Boyd's own account.

* * * * *

Part 9

A STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPT -- BY JOHN WESLEY ETHERIDGE

Taken From: "The Life of Adam Clarke" -- hdm0085.tex

[Again, I have included this excerpt to show the interesting fact of the intermarriage of some of the Strawbridge family and the Clarke family in Ireland. Whether there was any close family relationship between Adam Clarke and Robert Strawbridge I know not, but the thought of that possibility is interesting. -- DVM]

To retrace the footsteps of Adam Clarke's early youth, we should visit some obscure hamlets in Ireland, lying on the borders of the North Channel, in a champaign country abounding in landscapes where a Ruysdael or a Paul Potter would have found many a congenial subject for his pencil. The ancestors of Adam Clarke, though of English origin, had been settled in that part of Ireland for some generations, and were possessed of good landed property in the counties of Antrim and Derry. The family came into Ireland some time in the seventeenth century, and obtained a portion of what were called the "Debenture Lands." The property thus acquired was afterwards increased by intermarriages with the families of Strawbridge, Courtenay, Higgison, and Boyd. Dr. Clarke's great-great-grandfather, William Clarke, held the estates of Grange, in the county of Antrim,

* * * * *

Part 10

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY JESSE LEE

Taken From: Lee's Methodist History -- hdm0118.tex

Not long after the society was formed in New York, Robert Strawbridge, from Ireland, who had settled in Frederick county, in the state of Maryland, began to hold meetings in public, and joined a society together near Pipe Creek. Mr. Strawbridge was a useful man, and zealous in the cause of God; and spent much of his time in preaching the gospel in different places before any regular preachers were sent over by Mr. Wesley to this country.

The first Methodist meeting house that was built in the United States, was that in New York. By the influence of Captain Webb, the society purchased a lot of ground in John street, for the purpose of building a house for public worship. -- The house was built in 1768, and was sufficiently large to hold twelve or fourteen hundred people. On the 30th day of October, 1768, it was first opened for divine service, and Mr. Embury preached the dedication sermon. This was about twelve months before we had any circuit preachers in America.

There was another meeting house built by Mr. Strawbridge and his society, near Pipe Creek in Maryland, called the Log Meeting-House, which was erected for the use of the first Methodist society that was formed in that county.

The new meeting house in the city of New York, was first called Wesley's Chapel, which name it bore for several years after the itinerant preachers came to this country.

* * *

The first Methodists that came to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, were two private Christian men belonging to Mr. Strawbridge's society, who came over to John Randal's in Kent county, and talked to the family, and prayed with them: by which means there were some religious impressions made on the minds of some of the family. From that time the preachers were desired to come over and help them. Mr. Strawbridge came himself, and preached with them: sometime afterwards, old Robert Williams made them a visit, and preached among them a few times, and in Dec. following, which was on the 12th day, in 1772, Mr. Asbury preached in Kent county for the first time. From that time those people have been much favored with preaching by the Methodists; and that county has ever since been famous for a number of solid, steady Methodists.

* * *

Immediately after Mr. Rankin's arrival in Philadelphia he called the traveling preachers together, and on the 14th of July, 1773, the first conference that was ever held in America, began in Philadelphia.

The conference also agreed, that none of our preachers should administer the ordinances of baptism or the Lord's supper. The necessity of this rule appeared in the conduct of Mr. Strawbridge, a local preacher, who had taken on him to administer the ordinances among the Methodists without the consent of their preachers, who at that time were all lay-preachers. We were only a religious society, and not a church: and any member of any church, who would conform to our rules, and meet in a class, had liberty to continue in their own church.

But, as the most of our society had been brought up in the church of England (so called) and especially those of Maryland and Virginia, it was recommended to them to attend on the service of that church, and to partake of the ordinances at the hands of the ministers: for at that time the Church people were established by law in Maryland and Virginia; and the ministers were supported by a tax on the people. In many places for a hundred miles together, there was no one to baptize a child, except a minister of the established church; the greatest objection to this plan therefore was, that by far the greatest part of them were destitute of religion.

As it was thought improper to have many people among us where we were speaking of our experiences and of the deep things of God, a rule was adopted, "That no person should be admitted into our Love-feasts, more than twice or thrice, except he becomes a member." This prudent rule has continued among us ever since.

The rule formed for putting a stop to the printing of Mr. Wesley's books without his authority, and the consent of the preachers in this country, was well enough. Previous to the formation of this rule, Robert Williams, one of the preachers, had reprinted many of Mr. Wesley's books, and had spread them through the country, to the great advantage of religion. The sermons

which he printed in small pamphlets, and circulated among the people, had a very good effect, and gave the people great light and understanding in the nature of the new birth, and in the plan of salvation and withal they opened the way in many places for our preachers to be invited to preach where they had never been before. But notwithstanding the good that had been done by the circulation of the books, it now became necessary for the preachers to be all united in the same cause of printing and selling our books, so that the profits arising therefrom, might be divided among the preachers, or applied to some charitable purpose.

* * * * *

Part 11

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY P. P. SANDFORD

Taken From: "Memoirs of Wesley's Missionaries to America" -- hdm0520.tex

MR. ROBERT STRAWBRIDGE

He was an emigrant Irish Methodist, who came to America, and settled in Frederick county, Maryland, soon after Mr. Embury came to New-York. On his settlement in that place, he began to hold religious meetings, and raised a Methodist society at a place called Pipe Creek. This society built a house of worship in that place, which was known by the name of the "Log Meeting-house" Mr. Strawbridge labored in this and adjacent neighborhoods, and extended his labors in different parts of the state, before the arrival of the regular missionaries, who were sent over by Mr. Wesley from England. He afterward became an itinerant preacher, and had his name on the Minutes of the conference for the years 1773 and 1775, the first of which he was appointed to Petersburg in Virginia, and the last to Frederick in Maryland.

Mr. Strawbridge appears to have been a pious, zealous, and useful man, but unwilling to conform to the views of his brethren, and the rules of the Methodist itinerancy as they then existed, especially as it respected the administration of the sacraments of the gospel; and therefore, we hear but little further concerning him. He should, however, be had in grateful remembrance by the Methodist E. Church for those early labors, by which he helped to lay the foundation on which its superstructure is erected.

* * *

3. No preacher in our connection shall be permitted to administer the ordinances at this time; except Mr. Strawbridge, and he under the particular direction of the assistant.

* * *

Part 12

STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPTS -- BY MATTHEW SIMPSOM

Taken From: Methodist Character Sketches -- hdm0380.tex

[OWEN, RICHARD, elsewhere mentioned in this file, is below named Richard OWINGS by Matthew Simpson, and, I am inclined to believe that his spelling or version of the name is the right one. However, I have left the name as Owens in the other accounts. -- DVM]

OWINGS, Richard -- was the first native American Methodist preacher. He was converted under the preaching of Richard Strawbridge, and served several years as a local preacher. In 1772 he was stationed with Strawbridge in Frederick County, but was not formally received into the traveling connection until 1785. In 1781 he preached a funeral sermon over the remains of Mr. Strawbridge. He was a plain, earliest, industrious Methodist preacher, and his labors were frequently successful. He died at Leesburg in 1787.

* * *

Taken From: Methodist Character Sketches -- hdm0381.tex

STRAWBRIDGE, Robert -- One of the earliest local preachers in America, emigrated from Ireland about 1765 or 1766, and settled in Carroll Co. (than included in Frederick Co.), Md.. He had preached in Ireland, though it is uncertain whether he had ever been regularly licensed. He was an earnest Christian, and finding no religious services in the section where he settled, he commenced preaching in his own house, and subsequently a small log chapel was erected about a mile from his dwelling. This building, however, though sometimes spoken of as the first Methodist church in Maryland, was never deeded to the church, and was never finished. He preached in several places in Maryland, especially in Harford and Frederick Counties. In 1769 he was joined in his labors by Robert Williams, and in the following year by John King, and under their joint labors several societies were organized. Under his preaching Richard Owings, the first native American preacher, was converted. In 1773 his name appears on the minutes as one of the preachers assisting Mr. Asbury on the Baltimore circuit, but it does not appear that he continued in the work. He was a man of warm impulses, but of very limited education. There is no specimen of his handwriting now extant. In the deed of property to his son, and in the letters of administration, the name is written "Strobridge," though it appears in the minutes as "Strawbridge." He had but little regard for church order, and claimed the right, as an independent preacher, to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Conference, however, under the presidency of Mr. Rankin, resolved that "every preacher who comes into connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labor in America is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper." Mr. Asbury, in his journal, says that Mr. Strawbridge was made an exception, but it was resolved that he could administer only under the direction of an assistant. He, however, declined to recognize the authority of the assistant, and refused to accept the decision of the Conference, and ceased his connection with the circuit work.

In 1775 his name again appears as second preacher on Frederick circuit, but from a notice in Mr. Asbury's journal, which is rather obscure, we infer he declined to act in harmony with the preacher in charge. In 1776 he moved his family to a farm not far from Baltimore, the use of which was presented to him during his life by Captain Ridgely, its generous owner. The Revolution breaking out, and the ministers from England generally retiring from their work, there was a feeling of uncertainty with regard to the future of the societies, some of which made independent arrangements. He took charge of the society at Sam's Creek, where he had resided, and of Bush

Forest, in Harford County, and continued to be their preacher for about five years without recognizing any responsibility to the Conference. He died in the summer of 1781, and was buried on the farm of Mr. Wheeler, near Baltimore.

* * *

Taken From: "A Hundred Years of Methodism" -- hdm0519.tex

In North America the rise of Methodism was wholly incidental. A few persons connected with Mr. Wesley's Societies in England and Ireland emigrated to the Western Continent, and among them were two local preachers. One of these, Robert Strawbridge, from the north of Ireland, settled about the year 1764 on Sam's Creek, Maryland. Being an earnest Christian, he commenced holding religious services in his own house. Subsequently, at a date not specifically determined, he erected, with the help of his neighbors, a small log building, about a mile from his house, in which services were held. This building does not appear ever to have been finished, or to have been deeded to the Church. The farm on which it was erected passed into other hands, and hence it can scarcely be numbered among the Methodist churches. He also visited other neighborhoods, and was instrumental in the accomplishment of much good, though he does not appear to have organized many permanent Societies, or to have erected any permanent churches. Under his ministration, however, several were converted who became active and zealous preachers.

About the same time some emigrants from the west of Ireland, originally of German stock, settled in New York. Their ancestors had been expelled from that portion of Germany then known as the Palatinate by religious persecution, and had found an asylum in Ireland. Being a foreign people, they had not very readily assimilated with the native population, and their religious condition had been greatly neglected. Mr. Wesley visited their locality about 1750, and under his ministration many were converted, some of whom were among the emigrants mentioned. In 1776, at the earnest request of one of these -- Barbara Heck, a Christian woman -- Philip Embury (the other preacher referred to) commenced service in his own house, and shortly after in a larger room. One day the little Society was startled by the appearance in their midst of a British officer, (Captain Webb,) who they feared had come with a design to persecute them. They were both surprised and delighted in finding him to be an earnest co-worker. He had been converted in England, and licensed by Mr. Wesley as a local preacher. He was connected with the barracks in Albany, New York, and was a brave, bold man, who had lost an eye in his country's service. Hearing that Methodist services had been commenced in the city he had come to visit them. Under his zealous labors the Society was greatly enlarged. A sail-loft was rented for temporary services, and in 1768 a lot of ground on John Street was purchased. A building was soon commenced; but such was the intolerance of the age, that in New York no church was permitted to be erected except by the recognized denominations. In order to evade the law, they were obliged to build a fire-place in one end of the house, thus making it resemble a family residence. The building was finished in 1768, and an earnest application was made to Mr. Wesley for a minister, and also for some pecuniary assistance. At the Conference held in Leeds in August, 1769, occurs the following record: "Question 13th. We find a pressing call from our brethren in New York, who have built a preaching house, to come over and help them. Who is willing to go? Answer. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor. Question 14th. What can we do further in token of our brotherly love?"

Answer. Let us now make a collection among ourselves. This was immediately done, and out of it, fifty pounds were allotted toward the payment of their debt, and about twenty pounds given to the brethren for their passage."

Captain Webb not only preached in New York, and assisted in the erection of the John Street church, but with restless energy he made excursions to other parts of the country. He visited Long Island, where he gathered a Society, and he preached in the chief towns of New Jersey. He also introduced Methodism into Philadelphia, where, in 1768, he formed a class of seven members, who met in a sail-loft for worship. He was also active in the purchase of the first church property in Philadelphia, St. George's, on Fourth Street, which had been built by a German Reformed Society, but, in an unfinished state, had been sold to a private individual. He also penetrated into Delaware and Maryland, and thus laid extensive foundations for rising Methodism. He not only supported himself while he thus labored, but he contributed liberally to the erection of the chapels. He also corresponded with Mr. Wesley, and entreated him to send missionaries to the new field.

While great credit is due to Strawbridge for his efforts in Maryland, and to Embury for his faithful work in New York, (as a mechanic laboring in building John Street Church, and in occupying the pulpit which his own hands had built,) yet Webb merits the title of the chief apostle of Methodism, prior to the coming of Mr. Wesley's missionaries. His more extensive knowledge of Methodism in England, his better education, and his position in society, gave him more power to lay proper foundations. He was also a preacher of great earnestness and eloquence. During one of the sessions of the American Congress, John Adams describes him as "the old soldier, one of the most eloquent men I ever heard. He reaches the imagination and touches the passions very well; he expresses himself with great propriety." A Methodist writer says,

They saw the warrior in his face, and heard the missionary in his voice; under his holy eloquence they trembled, they wept, and fell down under his mighty word."

* * *

While the growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church has been rapid and continuous, as we have seen in the sketch of its history, there have from time to time been secessions and separations. Prior to the organization of the Church, at the close of 1784, several of the preachers had, for various reasons, withdrawn from the Church, and in a few cases they had taken individual societies with them. Thus the Forest Church, north of Philadelphia, became independent, and in 1776 Robert Strawbridge, unwilling to submit to the order and appointment of the Conference, settled north of Baltimore, and took charge of the Societies at Sam's Creek, in Carroll County, and at Bush Forest, Harford County. He remained independent until 1781, when he died. Both Societies, however, languished, and that on Sam's Creek became extinct. Strawbridge occasionally visited other places as an independent preacher. Several of our ministers, also, having received invitations, took charge of Churches of other denominations.

The first secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church was that produced by James O'Kelly, to which allusion has been made, and which resulted in the formation of the "Republican Methodist Church," which in a few years changed its name to the "Christian Church." For a time it

had a large membership in southern and middle Virginia, and also to some extent in Kentucky and Tennessee. But in the course of some fifteen years from its organization, and long before the death of O'Kelly, it completely disappeared. Its distinguishing features in church government were the abolition of the presiding eldership and of the episcopacy.

About the same time that O'Kelly seceded, a minister from England, Mr. Hammett, who had accompanied Dr. Coke to the West Indies, and who remained for a time there, came to Charleston, and, not being gratified in an appointment which he desired, established an independent Church. He succeeded in uniting with him two or three ministers, who established Churches at other points. In a few years after he died, and the members of the independent Churches returned to their union with the parent body.

* * * * *

Part 13

A STRAWBRIDGE EXCERPT -- BY W. H. WITHROW

Taken From: "Barbara Heck, Mother of American Methodism" -- hdm0544tex

It is a somewhat remarkable coincidence that shortly after Embury had introduced Methodism into New York, another Irish local preacher, Robert Strawbridge by name, was the means of its introduction into the Province of Maryland. Like Embury, he preached first in his own house, and afterwards in a humble "log meeting-house," the prototype of thousands such, which were destined to rise as golden candlesticks amid the moral darkness all over this vast continent.

* * * * *

Part 14

CONCLUSION

Though these excerpts are disconnected, I hope that the user has found them interesting and informative, and that after studying through them all will feel that they are at least better acquainted with the history of "Robert Strawbridge, Founder of Maryland Methodism." -- DVM

* * * * *

ENDNOTES -- (For The Strawbridge Material From Abel Stevens)

1 MS. letter of John Shillington, Esq., of Ireland, in the possession of the author.

2 Ibid. Mr. Shillington, the best Irish authority in the Methodist history and antiquities of his country, says, "not earlier than 1764, not later than 1765." The Rev. Dr. Hamilton (Meth. Quart. Rev., 1856, p. 485) supposed he had sufficient proof of the arrival of Strawbridge in America in the year of Embury's emigration, (1760,) but on examining Mr. Shillington's letter writes me, "that, after all, Mr. S. may be right, and, as he is still going on with his investigations, the difference will soon, it is to be hoped, be finally settled." Dr. Roberts argues for the earlier date, and also for the

claim of Strawbridge to priority as founder of American Methodism, Dr. Hamilton agreeing with him in the latter opinion. Lednum (chap. 1) follows the authority of Hamilton and Roberts. For the other side of the question see Wakeley, chaps. 17, 18, 19. The impartial student of early Methodist history will find it expedient to waive the decision of the question till further researches shall afford him more data. I shall hold my text subject to any revision which such researches may hereafter justify.

3 Hamilton.

4 Not Pipe Creek, as usually stated. -- William Fort, in Christ. Advocate, 1844.

5 Gatch's Memoir, by Judge McLean, p. 24. Cincinnati, 1854.

6 Life of Watters, p. 108. Alexandria, 1806. Watters himself was the first native Itinerant, but not the first native Preacher.

7 Lednum.

8 Thomas Bond, of Harford county, was one of his converts. His sons, Rev. John Wesley Bond (the traveling companion of Bishop Asbury) and Dr. Thomas E. Bond, as also his grandsons, have been prominent in the Methodist community.

9 The venerable Henry Boehm, (one of Asbury's traveling companions,) heard him preach at his father's house in Lancaster county, about 1779.

10 Captain Charles Ridgely.

11 Dr. Hamilton in the Meth. Quart. Rev., 1856. Lednum also gives nearly all our scanty knowledge of Strawbridge. "Rise of Meth. in America," chap. 1.

12 "Perhaps one of them," adds Garrettson, "would do to relate here: 'A congregation came together at a certain place, and a gentleman who was hearing thought the Preacher had directed his whole sermon to him, and retired home after the service in disgust. However he concluded he would hear him once more, and hid himself behind the people, so that the Preacher should not see him. It was the old story: his character was delineated. The Preacher happened to take his text from Isaiah, 'And a man shall be as a hiding place ' etc. In the midst of the sermon he cried out, 'Sinner, come from your scouting hole!' The poor fellow came forward, looked the Preacher in the face, and said, 'You are a wizard, and the devil is in you. I will hear you no more!' " -- Bangs' Life of Garrettson, p. 25. New York, 1839.

13 Journals, Sept. 3, 1781. A local reference in this entry shows that it relates to Strawbridge. Asbury's great military soul could pardon almost any offense but insubordination to authority. Not only Strawbridge's persistence in the administration of the sacraments, but his continued charge of the Sam's Creek and Brush Forest congregations, displeased the Bishop.

* * * * *

THE END