

----- Through The Years -----

In a world turned upside down due to COVID-19, one of the most affected areas of life is that of education. Our students and teachers have had to adapt to continue learning. Congratulations goes out to the many Mentor United Methodist scholarship winners. Our church has a distinguished record in offering financial aid for education. I will be sharing more about our scholarship donors in future columns.

The United Methodist Church itself has a very long and proud history of establishing institutions of higher education. By the year 1820 the Methodist movement had grown strong in numbers and financial stability. The one thing the church was lacking was any colleges or universities. Methodist students had to go to institutions run by other denominations. That changed with the General Conference of 1820. The church began to establish colleges and academies. The oldest surviving college is Wesley University in Middletown, Connecticut. It was founded in 1831. From 1830 to 1861, a total of fifty-three colleges were established in the United States with the Methodist Church founding thirty-two of them! It is an impressive record. While many of these schools have little or no direct U. M. connection today, it is still a legacy of which the church should be proud.

One Institution that continues its religious connections is the Chautauqua Institution in New York State. The Institute was founded by two men, Lewis Miller and Reverend John Heyl Vincent. Miller was a philanthropist based in Akron, Ohio. He made his fortune by inventing the first combine (harvester-reaper machine) with the blade mounted efficiently in the front of the driver, to the side of the horse, rather than pulled behind. Miller donated much of his wealth to Methodist causes. He also invented the Akron Plan layout for churches and Sunday schools in conjunction with Rev. Vincent and architect Jacob Snyder. His daughter, Mina, married Thomas Edison.

Rev. Vincent, who later was made a Bishop, set up the Chautauqua Institute as a training ground for Sunday school teachers. Teachers would arrive by steamboat on Chautauqua Lake. The park was used to teach the geography of the Holy Land. The Institute developed its programs for religion, arts, music and education. It was later called the Chautauqua movement and was adopted elsewhere. The Institute is on the National Register of Historic Places and is designated a National Historic Landmark. This great center for culture had its beginnings thanks to a Methodist pastor and a Methodist philanthropist.

Stay safe and continue to follow Christ, our strength and our Redeemer!

Do you have any MUMC history you would like to share with the congregation? Please send it to:

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