

Through The Years

It is interesting to learn that one of the key people in the early Methodist movement in the United States was someone who had been a member of the British army. Thomas Webb was a Captain in His Majesty's Army and fought in the French and Indian War. He was part of the unsuccessful attempt to take Fort Duquesne in what is now Pittsburgh. He was twice wounded seriously in Quebec, resulting in the loss of an eye. He retired from the British army and was given a civilian appointment as a barrack-master in Albany, New York. His wife died, and he left his infant son in the care of a family on Long Island, New York. Depressed, he returned to England.

While in England, he heard the preaching of a Moravian preacher named Carey. Soon after, Carey introduced Webb to James Rouguet who then introduced him to the Methodist Society. After filling in for a preacher, it was apparent that Webb had the gift to preach. Soon John Wesley instructed him to go back to America to preach to the colonists. While in New York, to visit his son, Webb was introduced to the New York Methodist Society and preached regularly in a sail loft on Barrack Street. Later, he became the most significant donor to help buy the land that became the John Street Methodist church in lower Manhattan. His gift of 30 pounds sterling would be worth over \$4,700 today. This church is still in existence today and remains one of Methodism's founding churches. When preaching, Webb must have been quite a sight wearing his scarlet military uniform and green eye patch, with his sword by his side. He seemed intimidating until he joined in a Charles Wesley hymn. His preaching moved many and later Webb helped found Methodist societies in Philadelphia, Delaware, and Maryland.

Webb returned to England in 1772 and appealed for more preachers to go to America. He went back to the U. S. and met a new Methodist preacher, Francis Asbury.

When the American Revolution began, Webb was eventually arrested and charged with being a spy. He was sent to a prisoner of war camp in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. George Washington permitted him to return to England, at the urging of his second wife, Gracie. This left Francis Asbury as the only English Methodist preacher still in the United States. Thomas Webb settled in Bristol and continued preaching until his death in 1796.

Francis Asbury would go on to establish the church we know today in our country.

Do you have any MUMC history you would like to share with the congregation?
Please send it to: Don Humphrey, 7330 Holly Park Dr., Concord, Ohio 44060-6704 or e-mail to: dhumphrey@ameritech.net