Dedication of Windows from the Former Tremont Street MEC Held in Conjunction with 150th Anniversary Celebration of the Organization of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, Now United Methodist Women

On Saturday, March 23, around 150 people gathered at Boston University School of Theology to commemorate the founding of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) of the Methodist Episcopal Church which took place exactly 150 years to the day at the former Tremont Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston. Prior to that, however, on March 21, a dedication ceremony took place for a number of windows which had previously hung in the Tremont Street Church, memorializing the early leaders and founders of the WFMS.

In 1889 two windows listing the names of the original eight women who met on a stormy day in March, 1869, and determined to organize a society of women which would minister to the needs of women and children overseas, were installed at the back of the sanctuary of the Tremont Street Church. A little more than 50 years later, windows were installed throughout that church that recognized the first missionaries and early leaders of the WFMS, the early leaders of the Deaconess movement in Boston, and many others memorializing leaders and ministers who had served the church.

Despite the fact that the church was sold in 1972 to the New Hope Baptist Church, an African American congregation, the integrity and history of the windows continued to be respected by the new congregation which supported the designation of the building as a United Methodist Historic Site in 2000 and as a Heritage Landmark in 2004. By 2011, however, the New Hope Congregation had determined that it no longer was able to support the upkeep of this nineteenth century gothic building and decided to sell it to a developer, who has since reconstructed the internal portion of the building into high-end condominiums.

The windows, on the other hand, were offered back to the United Methodists and subsequently eleven different windows were claimed by various organizations. Seven windows were originally taken by Boston University School of Theology (BUSTH) honoring Isabella Thoburn, the first female missionary to be sent out by the WFMS; Clara Swain, the first female physician sent out by any missionary organization; Mrs. Bishop Osman C. (Mehitable) Baker, the first president of the WFMS; Mrs. William Fairfield (Harriet) Warren, the first editor of the Heathen Woman’s Friend; The Rev. Dr. William and Clementina Butler; Miss Clementia Butler; and Mary E. Lunn, the first superintendent of the Deaconess Home and Hospital in Boston.
The windows listing the original eight women founders were taken by the New England Conference Commission on Archives and History (NECCAH) and a window honoring The Rev. T. C. and Emma Watkins, who were very early leaders of the deaconess movement, was taken by the Abundant Life Deaconess Communities, now headquartered in Concord, MA. Subsequently, however, the Clara Swain window and a window from the sanctuary which was originally purchased by the Philadelphia Unit were taken by members of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

All of the windows taken by BUSTH along with the two Wm and Clementina Butler Window windows originally taken by NECCAH have now been hung in the Reading Room of the Library at BUSTH, and it was these windows that were dedicated in a special ceremony held at the School on Thursday afternoon, March 21. The Dedication was opened by Dean Mary Elizabeth Moore, who expressed her appreciation to Maurice Cottman, from the New Hope Baptist Church, for his support of and role in returning the windows to the United Methodists, to Rev. Pat Thompson for her facilitation of this process over many years, and to Kara Jackman, archivist at BUSTH for her role in seeing that the windows were originally transported to the School, stored for a number of years, and finally hung in the windows of the library.

Dr. Dana Robert, Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission, at BUSTH, then made a presentation which described the relationship between the women involved in the organization of the WFMS with the men, who were, at the same time, organizing Boston University, including William Fairfield Warren, the husband of Harriet Merrick Warren, who would become the first President of the University. Bishop Osman C. Baker had taught at the General Methodist Biblical Institute in Concord, one of the predecessor institutions of the Boston Theological Institute, the first school in what eventually became Boston University.

The two windows which were taken to Pennsylvania are currently in the process of being re-framed and will be hung at First United Methodist Church in Lancaster, PA. The original plan had been to display them in the archives room at St. George’s United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, but there was no space available there.

The final window, the one dedicated to the Watkins and the Deaconess’ movement in Boston, currently hangs in the Chapel at the Abundant Deaconess Communities headquarters in Concord, MA.

Kara Jackman, our archivist at BUSTH, has developed a brochure that describes the windows and gives information about each one. Over the summer, Rev. Pat
Thompson, Historian for the New England Annual Conference, will be revising the page in the General Commission on Archives and History’s *Heritage Landmarks: A Traveler’s Guide to the Most Sacred Places in The United Methodist Church* which describes the former Tremont Street Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as the brochure describing the windows, so that anyone who wishes to visit the sites where the windows now hang will be able to do so.

Then, on Saturday, the 23rd, the actual celebration of the founding of the WFMS took place, beginning with a Continental Breakfast in the Community Room in the basement of the School of Theology, with greetings extended by Dean Mary Elizabeth Moore. Following the breakfast, the opportunity was given for participants to view the newly dedicated windows in the library on the second floor, along with a window dedicated to the Rev. Anna Howard Shaw, the second woman to graduate from Boston University School of Theology in 1876 and the first Methodist woman in New England to have been ordained, when she was ordained by the Methodist Protestant Church in 1880. The stained glass window, which is installed in the stairwell between the first and second floors, was originally installed in the Methodist Protestant Church in Tarrytown, NY, where she was ordained.

The formal program for the day took place in the Colloquim Room in the Photonics building across the Street from the School of Theology, beginning with worship led by Vermont District Superintendent, the Rev. Jill Colley-Robinson and the Rev. Elizabeth Bachelder Smith, current President of the New England UM Historical Society.

Following worship, presentations were made by Rev. Pat Thompson and Dr. Dana Robert. Pat made a powerpoint presentation entitled, “A Handful of Women,” unveiling the information she had found about the eight women founders of the WFMS. Her presentation was summarized in the Late Winter issue of the *New England United Methodist Messenger*. Dr. Robert’s presentation was essentially the same one which she had made the afternoon of the dedication of the stained glass windows, tying together the women founders and leaders of the WFMS with the founders and early leaders of Boston University.

Leeda Marsh, Conference Biographer of the NECCAH and one of the organizers of the 150th Anniversary Celebration, made a powerpoint presentation on the history of the former Tremont Street MEC and its current status, housing a number of high-end condominiums. She shared pictures of the inside of some of the condos.

Remarks were also made by Thomas Kemper, General Secretary of the Board of Global Ministries, Harriet Olsen, United Methodist Women CEO, and Bishop Devadhar, who shared the influence that missionaries had had on his life and ministry. Two skits were also presented, one which re-enacted the founding meeting of the WFMS and one with a dialogue between Isabella Thoburn and Dr. Clara Swain. A Birthday Cake was presented and shared at the end of lunch.

After lunch, Pat Thompson made another presentation entitled, “Woman’s Work for Woman Continues Women’s Mission Work in Boston,” in which she tied some of the women involved in the work of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society with work which continued with home missions in Boston. She began with a quote from *Evangelicals at the Crossroads: Revivalism and Social Reform in Boston*, by Benjamin Hartley:
A few years after its own work in foreign mission began, the WFMS was strong enough to lend a hand to urban mission efforts in Boston... By the 1880’s the WFMS’s finely tuned organizational apparatus was instrumental in helping several more urban mission and temperance efforts to gain support as the “Woman’s Work for Woman” mission theory seamlessly expanded into urban ministry concerns.

This work included: The Woman’s Home Missionary Society which began work in 1881; the East Boston Immigrant Home, established in 1888; and the New England Deaconess Association which was established in 1889.

In 1880, a sister organization to the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society was established under the name of the Woman’s Home Missionary Society (WHMS). The organizing meeting of the New England Conference WHMS took place in June, 1881, the motion to establish the Society having been made by the Rev. Varnum Cooper, Superintendent of the Home for Little Wanderers, an ecumenical orphanage still in existence today. The WHMS would soon become integrally involved with the New England Deaconess Association.

One of the earliest projects of the WHMS in the Boston area, was the development of an Immigrants’ Home to serve the needs of the many immigrants, especially females, who were arriving daily from Europe. This project was first advocated by the Rev. Daniel Sorlin, pastor of the Swedish Mission in Boston. In the winter of 1887-88, he approached Rev. Varnum A. Cooper and his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth F.K. Cooper, who was the President of the Conference WHMS at the time, and together they approached both the Boston Preacher’s Society and the WHMS.

The result was the establishment of an Immigrants’ Home in 1888, rented first at 10 Haynes Street, then eventually at 56 Marginal Way. Mrs. Amanda C. Clark, of Lynn, MA., an English-speaking Swede, was employed as Missionary. Her duty was to be at the wharf on the landing of all incoming steamers, and to take to the Home all unprotected and friendless young girls, also women and children waiting for friends, or in need of advice. These, if able, were to pay twenty-five cents a night for lodging, and could either board themselves or pay for the cost of food. One hundred and forty-four were cared for the first six months. Prayer meetings were held two or three nights in each week. The General Executive Board of the WHMS met at Tremont Street Church, Boston, the following October [1889]. A plea was made to them, by the local Board, to adopt this work. They did so and supported the East Boston Immigrants’ Home until 1931, when the decreasing number of immigrants greatly reduced the need for the project.

In the meantime, however, by 1910/11, the need had become so great that a permanent home was needed and a Building Committee was established with both the Rev. Varnum Cooper and his daughter, Hattie, serving as members. (Mrs. Cooper had died in 1894). Hattie served as the Treasurer of the Committee and later as the Treasurer of the Home for many years. Ground was broken in 1912 and Rev. Cooper laid the Cornerstone at 72-74 Marginal Way, which became the permanent location of the Home until its closure.

Amanda C. Clark remained as the Superintendent until her retirement in 1927 – almost 40 years. The Boston Globe article which reported her silver jubilee, in 1913, Final Immigrants’ Home stated that, “During the past 25 years members of the society have met at steamers or trains 2017 [this figure must have been a typo given the remaining figures] persons, and the home cared for
20,922 immigrants; the lodgings furnished are 67,661; the number of meals served, 338,424; the society has helped in a financial way 23,774.

The office of Deaconess was officially recognized by the 1888 General Conference in order to give women of at least 25 years of age an official avenue of Christian Service. From the beginning it was closely allied with the WHMS. This movement grew out of the work of the WFMS and the actual petitions to establish the office of the Deaconess in 1888 originated with Isabella Thoburn, who was, at that time, living in the United States. Ben Hartley says, “The establishment of a deaconess home and training school for New England Methodists in 1889 was the culmination of Methodist women’s ministry efforts in Boston in the late nineteenth century.” The stated purpose was, “to train evangelistic workers in both home and foreign fields and to utilize the energies of Christian women in active religious work.”

A Deaconess Home and Training School was established at 45 East Chester Park (now 693 Massachusetts Ave.) right around the corner from the Tremont Street MEC. Harriet Merrick Warren and Emma Watkins were listed as two of the original Trustees, and Harriet Warren and Eliza Flanders were on the original Board of Managers, as well as Rev. T. C. Watkins. The Centennial of New England Methodism states that, “No report can give an adequate idea of the grand work done by the Deaconesses. The homes of the poor, the haunts of sin, the chambers of the sick, all have felt their sweet influence. Here is an opportunity for consecrated, intelligent women to put themselves in the way of doing grand work for God and humanity.” Mary E. Lunn, who had graduated from the Chicago Training School, the first of the deaconess training schools, was secured as the first Superintendent of the Home. She and Clara Organ were the first two deaconesses to be consecrated by the New England Conference. Clara Organ went on to work with Harriet Cooke at the Medical Mission in the North End (see below).

The need for a hospital soon emerged, as well, and that was established in 1896, in the building adjacent to the Home and Training School quarters. Mary Lunn then became the superintendent of the Hospital, as well, and the second window dedicated to the deaconesses bears her name. She remained as the superintendent until 1901, the same year that the Deaconess Home and Training School reincorporated as the New England Deaconess Association, incorporating the Hospital with the Home and Training School.

The Deaconess Home continues to exist today under the name Deaconess Abundant Life Communities, based in Concord, MA, with five other locations, as well. The Training School moved to rented quarters and eventually merged with the Boston University School of Religious Education in 1918. A new and much larger hospital was dedicated in 1905 and today the hospital continues as a part of Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital.

In January 1893 Methodist evangelicals in the area established the University Settlement House in the North End of Boston. Nine months later, Harriet Cooke arrived from Iowa and established a Medical Mission two doors down on 40 Hull Street to minister to Jews, Russians, Italians and Portuguese. The Medical Mission became a separate enterprise from the Settlement House when the WHMS assumed official oversight of the mission in 1895 – the first medical mission of the general WHMS. Clara Organ, offered a sewing school in addition to making regular home visitations to the mostly Russians and Polish Jews who were living there at the time.
Harriet Cook remained as Superintendent for 14 years. Two years later, she was succeeded by Mrs. E.M. (Mary Elizabeth) Taylor, who had served and continued to serve for at least two more years as the President of the New England Conference WHMS. She served as Superintendent for at least ten years before becoming the Bureau Secretary for City Mission Work for the general WHMS. She reported in 1914 that there was a staff of 15 physicians, along with a head nurse and three student nurses. 16,203 treatments had been given, 278 operations performed, 169 obstetrical cases cared for, and 3,860 calls made by nurses and social workers.

The Medical Mission continued at least into the 1950’s.

The final mission which was presented was that of the **Hattie B. Cooper Community Center** which is still in existence today and is supported by UMW Units throughout the New England Area. The Center had its origins in 1916 with the Rev. Albert L. Scott, a newly ordained deacon in the MEC, who had been appointed to serve the Fourth MEC in Boston (now Union UMC), the only Methodist Episcopal church in Boston that served African Americans. He married in June of that year, Edith Leonard, a social worker from New York. When she noticed the large number of South End children who had nothing to do but play in the streets, she began to hold activities for them in her parsonage apartment.

Scott appealed to the conference society of the WHMS to do something for the children of his neighborhood. The appointment of Miss Hattie B. Cooper as Chairman of the committee to study the situation assured action. The center opened its doors to 69 children in 1916. With Hattie Cooper’s support the WHMS purchased a property in 1919 for the establishment of the Settlement House. Then, in 1920, at the January Executive Board meeting of the New England Conference WHMS, it was voted to call the Settlement House the Hattie B. Copper Community Center in honor and recognition of the loving service put into that work by Miss Hattie Cooper, the daughter of one of the founders of the New England Conference WHMS. Hattie served as Chairman of the Board of the Cooper Center for 26 years before her death in 1949.

In 1949, when Fourth Methodist Church purchased the former Union Congregational Church on Columbus Avenue, and moved there to become Union Methodist Church, Cooper Community Center moved into the former Fourth Methodist church property on Shawmut Avenue, which was its home until 1974, when it moved into a new building. In 1953/54, however, it was decided that there was need for additional space and the conference WSCS and local units raised $65,000 for an addition which was dedicated in October, 1954. In 1970, knowing that the Center was to be demolished as a part of an urban renewal project, the Benevolent Fraternity of Unitarian Churches offered to construct a new building for Cooper. As noted above, the Center continues today, though it currently receives funding beyond that of United Methodist Women.

Today, the Center provides a wide range of community services, including infant and toddler programs, pre-school and after-school programs, activities and programs for elderly people, drug and alcohol education programs, counseling and job placement, recreation and camping, legal aid assistance, as well as, and classes in computer training and public access hours at its Timothy Smith Computer Center. And as they look to the future, “Cooper has an enormously rich history of generations of service, and its graduates can be found everywhere in the greater Boston area, as officials in State and Municipal Government agencies, as local business leaders, and as committed members of the community. The children of Cooper today are the leaders of tomorrow!”

**Please note:** On March 22nd, between the Dedication of the Windows at BUSTH on the 21st and the 150th anniversary celebration on the 23rd, the NECCAH and NEUMHS held their spring meeting at Central UMC in Brockton, MA. A report on that meeting and our new Heritage Center will appear in the Late Summer issue of the **New England United Methodist Messenger**.
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BENEFITS OF JOINING THE NEUMHS:

- Receive quarterly The New England United Methodist Messenger with articles pertaining to United Methodist history in New England, including notices of meetings and other programs
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- Enable you to be involved in the Ministry of Memory in the United Methodist Church
Note from the Editor: Dues for the Historical Society of the UMC went up as of January, 2019, to cover the increasing cost of publications. The dues below reflect the new dues structure.

Name_________________________________________ e-mail __________________________ Date__________

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I wish to join the New England United Methodist Historical Society - NEUMHS (membership is currently renewed by quarter: Jan-March; April-June; July-September; October-December):

   Individual: $10.00
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   Individual: $20.00
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   No reduction in dues for life members:

   Life member: $800.00

Total due: _________

Please total all lines and make one check payable to the New England United Methodist Historical Society (NEUMHS) and mail to the name and address below. Your dues will be recorded by quarter and a renewal will be sent to you during the quarter you paid your dues.

Everett Simpson
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(revised 05/2019)