



*Philadelphia  
Methodism  
Walking Tour*

Benjamin L. Hartley



*Welcome to the Philadelphia Methodism Walking Tour! The tour begins outside of St. George's United Methodist Church – by the church sign – at the corner of Fourth and New Streets. This document is written as a script which may be read verbatim or summarized for groups wanting to move more quickly in their walking tour of Philadelphia Methodism.*

## **Introduction:**

When the Methodist movement began in this city in the mid-1700s Philadelphia would have looked and sounded a lot differently than it does today. The tallest building in the area was the Anglicans' Christ Church steeple just a few blocks away. You could hear horses clopping on cobblestone and birds singing in the trees without the dull roar of traffic crossing the Ben Franklin Bridge. But Philadelphia was not quiet.

The city was booming in the mid-1700s as the nation's center for commerce, politics, and a wide array of mostly Christian religious movements. (Jews in Philadelphia built their first synagogue in 1782 just two blocks south of St. George's.) Philadelphia was the largest city in the nation until 1830.<sup>1</sup> Methodists in the 18th and 19th centuries could be heard in this city praying quietly through open windows or preaching loudly on Philadelphia's streets. Philadelphia had changed a lot from when William Penn established his "green country town" in 1682. It grew from a mere 2,000 residents in the early 1700s to about 13,000 by the time of Methodism's arrival in Philadelphia in the Fall of 1739. Migration to the colonies between 1760 and 1775 was even more profound. Germans, Scots, and Irish immigrants contributed the most to the growth of this boomtown.<sup>2</sup>

African Americans in Philadelphia were just under eight per cent of the city's population in 1767. Of the 1,500 African Americans here at that time only a few dozen were free, and two-thirds of the Africans living in Philadelphia in 1767 were recent arrivals from Africa. This was the time of the greatest infusion of African culture in the city's history.<sup>3</sup> Still, for all its diversity, growth, and busyness at the time of the Revolution one could still walk around the periphery of this city in under two hours.

Historians have applied a variety of lenses to studying the followers of John Wesley who were called Methodists from the very beginning. But the lens which brings the Methodists into focus the best is one that sees them as people who believed God had called them to a great work of personal and social reform in – what they called – spreading Scriptural holiness throughout the land. They were people on a mission. And so, it is the mission of Methodism carried forth by a diverse bunch of people that will be the focus of this tour of 18th and 19th century Methodism in Philadelphia.

It is important to state at the outset that the Methodist people discussed in this tour were sometimes heroic and holy in what they did and that sometimes they made tragic mistakes which were contrary to the very Gospel they sought to live out. In short, they were sinful human beings who still strove after holiness in heart and life. This walking tour will try to give a balanced picture of these early Methodists.

Today, as you go through this approximately ninety minute walking tour of Philadelphia Methodism, I invite you to use your imagination and take a step back in time. Try to see this city, this nation, and this world as Methodists would have seen it in the 1700s and 1800s. Ask yourselves and one another (if you're doing this as a group) questions about what you see and hear. You will hear stories of buildings –

bricks and mortar – but also of conflict, heroism, and quiet faithfulness. Some of the stories will sound strange to your ears while others may sound very familiar. If you are a Methodist today taking this tour – and even if you are not – we hope that your faith will be strengthened as you follow in the footsteps of these Christian and Methodist forebears.

To navigate this walking tour it will be important that you have a map of the sites we will be covering. You can use the excerpt shown on the next page. Although a particular route has been followed in the design of this tour, it is possible to skip some stops to accommodate whatever time restraints you may have. Most of our sites – but not all – are within the bounds of the National Historic Park.

Before we begin, a word about safety is necessary. Please be mindful of cars, trucks, and other pedestrians as you cross streets in this city, and always be courteous toward fellow pedestrians and city residents. It is important to also “get your bearings” as far as directions are concerned. Numbered streets in Philadelphia run north-south. Lower numbers are closer to the Delaware River and thus east of higher numbers.



*I am grateful for the collaboration and encouragement I received from Alfred T. Day, General Commission on Archives and History, and Maridel Whitmore and Donna Miller at Historic St. George's United Methodist Church.*

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1. Historic St. George's UMC
2. Loxley Court
3. Arch Street Meeting House
4. George Whitefield's Preaching House
5. Union Church
6. Ben Franklin's grave
7. Home of James Dexter
8. President's House
9. Independence Hall
10. St. Thomas African Episcopal
11. Benjamin Rush's home
12. Common Sense
13. St. Paul's
14. Bishop Richard Allen's Home
15. Mother Bethel AME
16. W. E. B. DuBois's Home
17. Bedford Street Mission
18. Lewis C. Levin
19. Absalom Jones
20. Methodist Sailors Home
21. Korean War Memorial
22. Dock Street



## Stop #1: St. George's UMC

Our tour of Methodism in Philadelphia begins at St. George's. While the first Methodist preaching and worship did not happen here, this is the oldest Methodist church building in continuous use in North America.

At the time that Methodists began meeting in this place in the late 1760s, Methodism was still a tiny movement. In late 1760s Pennsylvania there were already 142 Lutheran churches, 64 meeting houses belonging to Quakers, 24 Anglican churches, a handful of Roman Catholic

parishes (but only three in the city), and sizable numbers of

Presbyterian and German Reformed congregations.<sup>4</sup> But Methodism grew fast to become the largest Protestant movement in America by the middle of the 1800s. In the Philadelphia area alone, in a span of less than 70 years, the Methodist Episcopal Church established 82 congregations.<sup>5</sup>



photo by Tom Crane ©



Tours of St. George's are available to the public by appointment, so we will not review the details of the church building or the famous and tragically infamous events of its history in this tour. We will take this opportunity, however, to speak about one of the portraits that hangs in the sanctuary of this church. It is a portrait of a man who influenced the shape of early American Methodism more than any other person. Any guesses?

If you guessed Francis Asbury then you are correct. Asbury preached regularly here at St. George's, but the portrait that hangs in the sanctuary seems to depict someone who was uncomfortable in the midst of the comforts of the city.<sup>6</sup> Another portrait in St. George's sanctuary – literally on the other side of the aisle – depicts another early pastor of this church, Joseph Pilmore, whom Asbury criticized for loving the comforts of the city too much!<sup>7</sup>

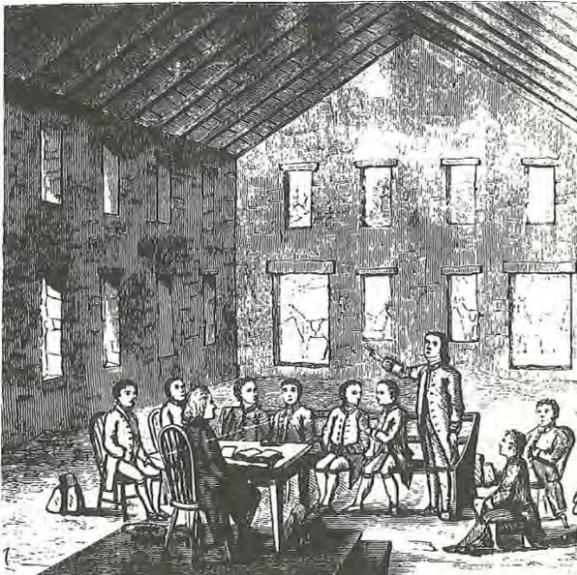
The son of an English farm laborer, Francis Asbury was not a highly educated man, and his preaching was unremarkable. He did, however, love the preachers under his charge and he was devoted to the mission of Methodism. His journal records his decision at the age of twenty-six to leave his parents in England to begin his ministry in the colonies. He never went back. Before leaving he wrote: "Whither am I going? To the New World. What to do? To gain honour? No, if I know my own heart. To get money? No: I am going to live to God, and to bring others to do."<sup>8</sup>

His biographer, John Wigger, has described him as an "American Saint" and says that:

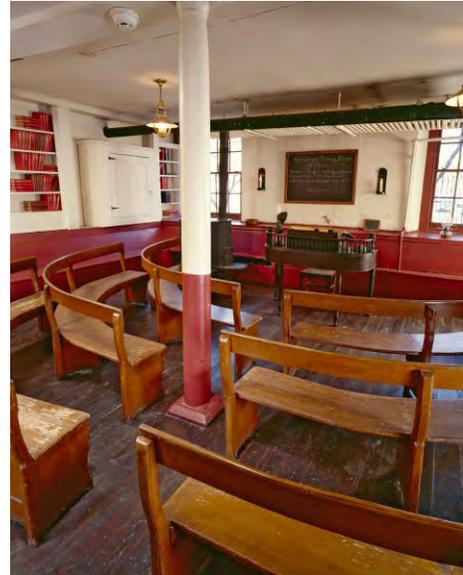
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[Asbury] never claimed that he was especially holy or pure, though he diligently tried to be. Like any good eighteenth – or early nineteenth – century evangelical, Asbury was never satisfied with his own piety or labors. Yet people saw in him an example of single-minded dedication to the gospel that they themselves had never managed to attain, but to which, on their better days, they aspired. In their eyes he was indeed a saint. Though he spent his life traveling, he insisted on riding inexpensive horses and using cheap saddles and riding gear. He ate sparingly and usually got up at 4 or 5 am to pray for an hour in the stillness before dawn. No one believed that Asbury was perfect, and even his most ardent supporters admitted that he made mistakes in running the church... Yet his piety and underlying motivations seemed genuine to almost everyone.<sup>9</sup>

Asbury died in 1816 after forty-five years' service in America. Know that as we visit nearly every other stop on this walking tour that the people whose stories we tell at those other sites were often deeply influenced by Francis Asbury.



*St. George's was just a shell of a building with a dirt floor until after the American Revolution.*



*Original benches where Methodists met, sang, and prayed together at St. George's.*

***Staying on the east sidewalk of 4th Street, go south for two blocks to Arch Street and turn left. On Arch Street you will go by a large bust of Benjamin Franklin whom we will talk about shortly. Twenty feet beyond the Franklin bust, between 321 and 323 Arch Street, is the entrance to Loxley Court. The sidewalk through this court is a public thoroughfare even though it does not feel that way. Go ahead and enter and quietly proceed to the courtyard fifty feet ahead of you.***

## Stop #2: No. 8 Loxley Court



Loxley Court is named after Benjamin Loxley, a carpenter who helped build Independence Hall among other places. He lived at #2 Loxley Court, the key for which was used by Ben Franklin in his famous kite flying experiment. The kite and the key have absolutely nothing to do with Methodism though, so let's move on!<sup>10</sup>

No. 8 Loxley Court is a house number that is no longer in this courtyard, but local historians believe it was the house tucked in the corner furthest to the northeast facing south. This was the second place where Methodists met before they began gathering at St. George's. (Their first meeting place was on Dock Street to the East.) Number 8 Loxley Court was a tavern or "pot house" that the Methodists took over in 1768. They held prayer meetings on the first floor. Sometimes a preaching service would be held with the preacher in the second story window addressing people gathered in the courtyard and somewhat shielded from the noise of horses, wagons, and people jostling along the cobblestone streets.<sup>11</sup> They

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didn't meet here very long because they were growing too fast. In 1769 the Methodists were able to purchase the building which is now St. George's.<sup>12</sup> Many Methodists also continued to attend local Anglican churches – especially St. Paul's which was born out of the fervor of revivalism itself in 1761. (We'll be walking by St. Paul's later in our tour.)

The home-like atmosphere of Loxley Court is an especially good setting for us to think about what made Methodists tick. The Methodist movement was personal – even intimate – in its expectations that members of a society (what today we might call congregations) hold one another accountable in their pursuit of holy living. One of the things early “class meetings” – small groups of people – would read together was John Wesley's General Rules which set forth expectations for being a Methodist.<sup>13</sup> The General Rules were crafted by Methodism's founder John Wesley and are still found in the United Methodist Book of Discipline. With many details for upright Christian behavior left out here's what it says:

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.” But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced...[a list follows] Second: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men...[a list follows] Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God...[a list follows]. And all these we know [God's] spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account.<sup>14</sup>

People were drawn to this stress on holy living, an emphasis in serious Christian discipleship they sometimes found lacking in other churches.

***From the entrance to Loxley Court on Arch Street retrace your steps back to the corner of Arch and 4th Street and cross Arch Street and enter the grounds of the Arch Street Meeting House of the Philadelphia Quakers. There is an entrance in the wall surrounding the meeting house nearly directly across the street from Loxley Court.***

## Stop #3: Arch Street Meeting House



At Loxley Court Methodists would have spoken passionately about how they were experiencing God and how they longed to grow more holy. On this, they shared a great deal in common with the Quakers who would have been meeting across the street in the 18th century as they still do today.<sup>15</sup>

Quakers and Methodists alike were critics of more staid expressions of faith. Although the beginnings of the Quakers in the late 1640s pre-dated the rise of Methodism by almost a century, their respective founders – George Fox and John Wesley – were both young Englishmen who desired to live more seriously Christian lives.

Both movements also appealed a great deal to women. Between 1794 and 1801 women comprised up to 64% of Methodist society membership. Quakers were alone among Christian groups for affirming the ability of women to speak freely in services of worship. Methodists did as well but more as an exceptional circumstance than as a regular part of their belief in these early years. Methodists also shared a similar arrangement to Quakers in separating men and women in their preaching places. This was in contrast to family pews which existed in Anglican and Congregationalist churches in the city of Philadelphia.<sup>16</sup>

Quaker leadership in the anti-slavery movement was also something many early Methodists held in common with them. Superintendent of the Methodist movement in America in 1773 Thomas Rankin

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befriended famous abolitionist Quakers like Anthony Benezet and Israel Pemberton.<sup>17</sup> Anthony Benezet's anti-slavery pamphlet was so well-liked by John Wesley that he drew from it extensively in his own more emotionally-charged condemnations of slavery.<sup>18</sup>

Eighteenth century Methodists were also quick to point out their differences with Quakers. John Wesley, for example, thought they went too far in dismissing church traditions which he loved. The enthusiasm Quakers had for mysticism also worried him. John Wesley tried to be kind though in a letter to a Quaker friend even if he also couldn't help but take a jab at Quaker founder George Fox in the process:

"O be content!" John Wesley urged, " I love you well; do not constrain me to speak. I do not want to say anything of George Fox; but I hope he was stark mad when he wrote that medley of nonsense, blasphemy, and scurrility styled his 'Great Mystery.' But I love and esteem you and many of the present Quakers; and am, Your real friend."<sup>19</sup>

Methodist evangelist George Whitefield – whom we will speak about at our next stop – shared his cabin with a Quaker onboard a ship going to America. He too expressed concern about some Quaker beliefs but these were outweighed for him by the practical benefits of what he liked about life in the Pennsylvania colony which the Quakers had shaped. The Quakers' belief in religious tolerance allowed him to preach to his largest crowds here.<sup>20</sup>

***Walk across the 4th Street from the Quaker Meeting House toward the Wyndham Hotel. Just to the south of the hotel is a plaque noting the site of an early Unitarian church. Before it was a meeting place for the Unitarians, however, it was George Whitefield's preaching house and "Charity School."***



## Stop #4: George Whitefield's Preaching House



George Whitefield by David Martin, 1770

ohn Wesley's House & The Museum of Methodism

In 1740 George Whitefield's preaching house was erected for him on this site soon after he began preaching in Philadelphia. In 1740 this "New Building" was the largest building in the city measuring 100 feet long by 70 feet wide. Edward Evans, a member of Arch Street Meeting House across the street, was a Quaker convert to Whitefield's preaching who served as one of the trustees for the building and went on to serve as a leading Moravian and Methodist evangelist in the Philadelphia area.<sup>21</sup>

When George Whitefield arrived for the first time in Philadelphia in 1739, stories of a great revival occurring in Massachusetts were spreading across the colonies and across the ocean. Philadelphia was ready for Whitefield's preaching. Few people know George Whitefield's name today. But during his six tours of the American colonies from 1739 until his death in 1770 he

was the most famous man in the colonies. He came back to Philadelphia nearly every year to preach. He drew big crowds wherever he went from Georgia to New England.

Many of Whitefield's hearers at this preaching house were African Americans in the city who were drawn to his enthusiastic preaching and his announcement to establish a school for blacks in Philadelphia.<sup>22</sup> The school for the poor Whitefield hoped to establish here didn't last long though and, in 1749, Ben Franklin helped to organize an Academy at this site which, in 1779, became the University of Pennsylvania. To this day, on the University of Pennsylvania's campus some thirty blocks west of here, stands a statue to the evangelist George Whitefield.<sup>23</sup>

During Whitefield's stay in Philadelphia he befriended Ben Franklin. (We'll say more about Ben Franklin's and George Whitefield's friendship at our next stop.) Although never a Methodist or even very religious, Whitefield impressed Ben Franklin with the way he affected the city. Franklin wrote: "It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants; from being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seems as if all the world were growing religious; so that one could not walk thro' the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families on every street."<sup>24</sup>

Ben Franklin was right about the singing. Hymn singing was an important part of what made Methodists Methodist – then and now. In fact, Philadelphia was the first place in America to print a Methodist hymnal. The proceeds went to support Whitefield's orphanage in Georgia. In the spirit of those early Methodists feel free to hum a hymn as you stroll a short distance to our next stop.

***Walk a half block north from the Unitarian plaque to the next street corner (4th Street and Arch Street). Here again you will see a plaque erected by a University of Pennsylvania class to honor the place where their university began – again, after it was first established as a place for Whitefield to preach. It also became a site for another Methodist Church years after Whitefield's death.***

## Stop #5: Union Church and the Growth of Methodist Episcopal Bureaucracy



In addition to being the site of Whitefield's preaching house, this block, in 1801, became the site of a new Methodist Episcopal Church. Ironically, it was called Union Church even though it began because of congregational disunion at St. George's Church a few blocks north. The fifty members who left St. George's rented space in Whitefield's Academy which, by 1801, was occupied by the University of Pennsylvania. A few years later they built a church of their own on this block (*pictured here*).<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the most famous pastor Union Methodist Episcopal Church ever had was John Price Durbin (1800-1876), but he was not famous for pastoring. He was famous for being Chaplain of the United States' Senate in 1831 and later led the mission agency for the Methodist Episcopal denomination from 1850 to 1872. Durbin transformed the mission society from being little more than a voluntary society to being an integral part of the Methodist Episcopal Church's growing organizational machine. Support for home and foreign mission under Durbin was encouraged at every level of the denomination's structure. Regional ministry areas Methodists call "Conferences" outlined multi-pronged strategies for promoting the work of mission which included monthly missionary prayer meetings in each church, promotion of the denomination's mission newspaper, twice-a-year offerings to support mission, and the list went on. For a number of years, the Philadelphia Conference led the Methodist Episcopal Church denomination in giving to the Mission Society. Durbin accomplished a great deal in the eyes of fellow clergy even if today Methodists might wonder about the transition Durbin presided over of a denomination that became less a mission itself than a large denomination that had missions organized from a strong central structure.<sup>26</sup>

Let's pause for a moment and reflect on the story of Durbin and the growth of the Methodist Episcopal bureaucracy in the 1850s. We tell this story less than a block from where Methodists first met in Loxley Court. Nearly a hundred years went by between our stories in these two places, but like layers of sediment in the Grand Canyon, stories in a city walking tour can be found lying close together even if the contexts of these stories historically are far apart.



*John Price Durbin*

***From the southwest corner of 4th and Arch, continue west down Arch Street for one block to Ben Franklin's grave observable through the cast iron fenced opening in the brick wall.***

## Stop #6: Ben Franklin's grave: A Memorial to an Unlikely Friendship

Benjamin Franklin's grave gets more visitors than any other in Philadelphia. It is a fitting testimony to someone who clearly valued friendship – even friendship with a Methodist evangelist with whom he strongly disagreed on religion.

For those familiar with Ben Franklin's colorful life it may come as a surprise that he and George Whitefield were friends. Franklin got to know Whitefield when Franklin began publishing reports about Whitefield's large evangelistic rallies in Britain.

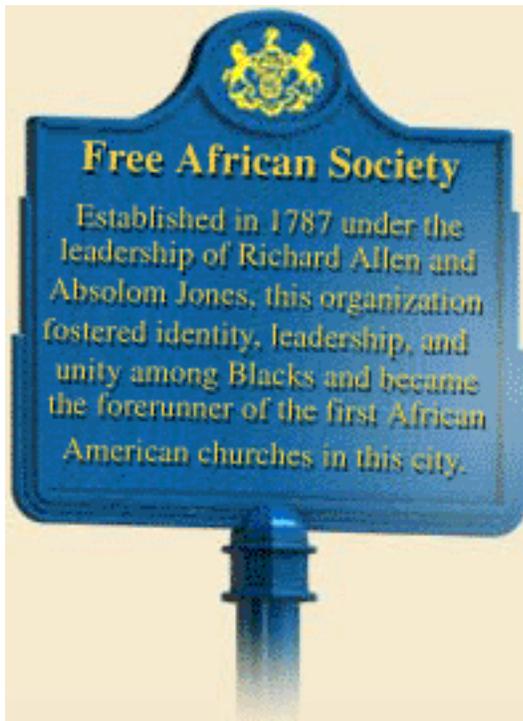
These reports helped him sell newspapers, and Franklin soon learned that publishing Whitefield's sermons and journal would be even more lucrative. In 1740 half of the book and pamphlet titles Franklin sold were books or pamphlets by or about Whitefield! This helped Franklin make money, and it helped Whitefield expand his evangelistic reach beyond the spoken word.



The friendship between Franklin and Whitefield, however, was bound together by more than just the desire for profit or publicity. They genuinely liked each other and became quite close over their nearly thirty-year friendship. Whitefield never saw Franklin embrace Methodism or any other form of heart-warming evangelical faith; earlier in their friendship Franklin seems to have been occasionally annoyed by Whitefield's appeals that he follow in the Methodist way. Franklin had a more rationalistic religious understanding, but he still regularly attended Christ Church with his wife, Deborah. At the end of his life, Franklin expressed a wish to Whitefield that they could together go on an adventure to settle on the Ohio River. Without even a hint of haranguing his friend, Whitefield too expressed an eternal hope that the two of them would "be in that happy number of those who in the midst of the tremendous final blaze shall cry Amen."<sup>27</sup>

***Head west and cross 5th Street and, if the weather is warm, stop under a bit of shade 20 feet from the corner behind the colonial-era structure, another Quaker Meeting House.***

## Stop #7: Home of James Dexter and the formation of The Free African Society



North across Fourth Street from where you are standing is the National Constitution Center which celebrates a document written in 1787. The Methodist Episcopal Church was established as a denomination in America in 1784 – three years before the U.S. Constitution was signed.<sup>28</sup>

Our main purpose in stopping here, however, is not to recount these famous events of 1784 or 1787, but rather to tell the story of another early friend of the Methodists who is relatively unknown today. A block north of us, near where you might see busses parked on the right side of the National Constitution Center, is where the home of free African American leader Mr. James Dexter once stood.<sup>29</sup>

The National Constitution Center is an ironic backdrop to the Methodist-related story to be told here. The US Constitution, unlike the Declaration of Independence, does not proclaim that “all men are created equal.” In fact, for

early abolitionists like James Dexter the US Constitution was seen as a betrayal of the Declaration’s ideals.

After gaining his freedom from slavery in 1767 James Dexter organized the black community of Philadelphia to establish a black burial ground in what is today known as Washington Square a block southwest of Independence Hall. Whites would sometimes refuse blacks’ ability to bury their dead in integrated cemeteries even though rigid neighborhood segregation in Philadelphia was not practiced until the mid-1800s.<sup>30</sup>

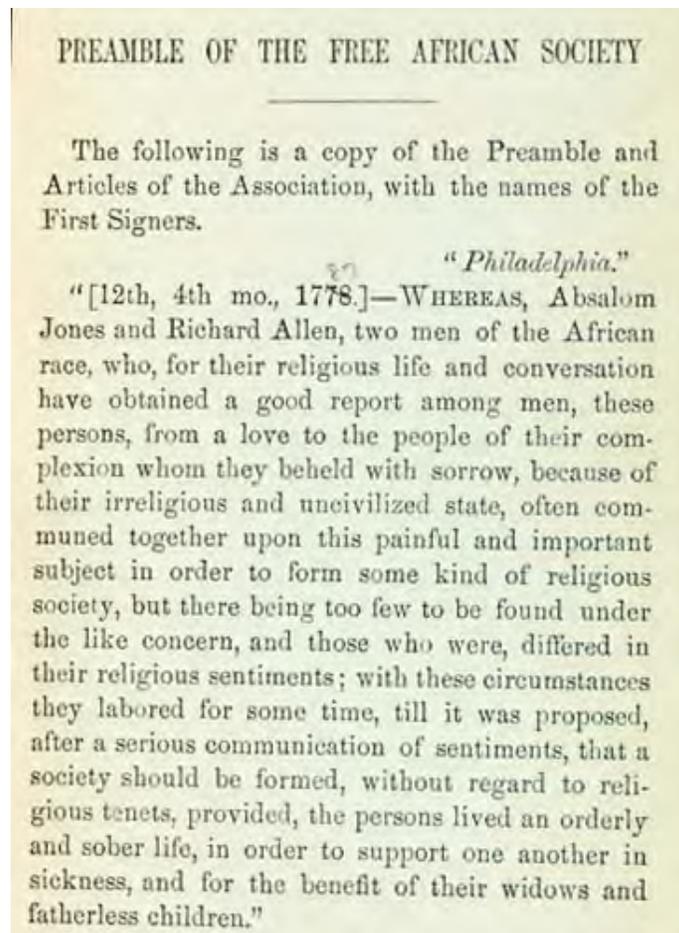
In 1787 the Free African Society was established by Dexter, Methodists Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, and others. Richard Allen would soon become the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. A European-American Quaker named Joseph Clarke served as the group’s first treasurer.

The Free African Society provided support for free Africans in a way that the Constitution had failed to do when it was signed the very same year. The Free African Society was a kind of early health and life insurance arrangement for members who contributed regular dues. It also served as a kind of lobbying group for African Americans. The Free African Society was open for all free Africans regardless of religious belief, but members like James Dexter and Richard Allen were starting to talk about forming independent black churches around the time when the Free African Society was formed.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the organizational plans for what became the nation’s first African Episcopal Church, St. Thomas, was drawn up in Dexter’s home in December of 1792.

Members of the Free African Society along with James Dexter and Richard Allen also wrote a petition to the US government around 1792 requesting government funding to support a colony for free African Americans in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Such a colony had already been successfully established in Sierra Leone in 1792 with the support of Methodist and other evangelical abolitionists from Great Britain. The successful settlement in Sierra Leone was led by Methodist and Baptist African preachers from the American South. It has been described as the first success story in the modern Protestant missionary movement.

There were two sides to this desire for emigration from America. On the one hand, a desire for emigration especially among Christian African Americans contained an evangelistic motive to share the Gospel with West Africans. On the other hand, these emigrationist desires also represented something tragic; even in 1792 some free Africans were skeptical about their chances for opportunity in this new nation with its new Constitution.<sup>32</sup>



***Walk south now along the sidewalk through the lawn that stretches between the National Constitution Center and Independence Hall. Public restrooms are available in the Visitor's Center to your right. From the front entrance to the Visitor's Center continue south crossing Market Street and spend some time looking at the displays for the President's House partially rebuilt floor plan.***

## Stop #8: President's House



George Washington lived here when Philadelphia was our nation's capital. George Washington was not a Methodist, but Richard Allen's successful chimney-sweeping business counted this early "White House" as one of its customers. Historians do not know if Allen ever met President Washington, but he could have. George Washington donated money for the construction of a future African Church in the early 1790s. Richard Allen also admired Washington a great deal having composed a beautiful eulogy to honor Washington for his sympathy to the anti-slavery cause. Washington was a slaveholder, but his will declared that they were to be set free upon the death of Mrs. Washington. Allen highlighted this decision in his eulogy which was reprinted in New York and Philadelphia newspapers. An excellent preacher, Richard Allen used Scripture to simultaneously praise Washington's anti-slavery sentiment and also to condemn Americans who did not follow his lead.<sup>33</sup> The National Park Service has erected a couple of displays about Richard Allen here in the President's House site, so be sure to note those as well before you move on to your next stop.

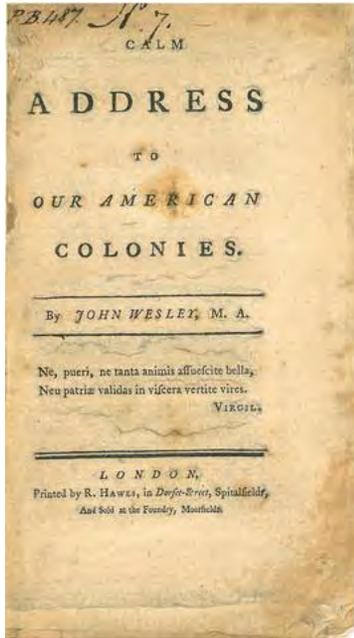
***From the President's House continue to head south toward Independence Hall. Cross the street in front of Independence Hall to the left of that building along 5th Street and continue walking toward the other side of Independence Hall. Feel free to rest here under one of the many shade trees.***

## Stop #9: Independence Hall and Wesley's attitude toward the Colonists



Imagine that today is a beautiful spring day in May of 1775. But the mood is not cheery. The air feels charged with tension. It has been just a month since a bloody battle took place between British and colonial forces in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. The Second Continental Congress has just convened in what is today "Independence Hall." Gathering just a week later, the Methodist preachers are also meeting in conference at St. George's. Here the preachers called for a "General fast in all our Societies for the prosperity of the work of God & peace of America and great brittain[.]"<sup>34</sup> These were hardly "fighting words" for the Methodists, but it was all that was recorded in the Minutes concerning the conflict with Britain. The American Methodists were a people with diverse and quickly-changing political views. As a whole they did not "take sides" in the conflict. A call for prayer and fasting for peace, the preachers discerned in conference, was best.

Wesley himself changed his attitude toward the American Revolution dramatically. A month after the Methodist preachers met at St. George's he expressed being sympathetic toward colonists' protests. A few months later, in September 1775 he saw it differently. His pamphlet, the *Calm Address to Our American Colonies*, argued that Britain was totally justified in its taxation of the colonies and strongly criticized the rebellious American colonists. Wesley went so far as to call the colonists "dupes" who were the naïve accomplices in a conspiracy by the French to overthrow the English government. Wesley remained strongly opposed to the colonists' cause throughout the war. His pamphlet was debated extensively in Britain where there was a lot of pro-American sentiment. In America it was barely read at all since ports



were closed to ships from Britain. The story of this pamphlet being burned by Methodists to prevent its distribution is most likely not true.<sup>35</sup> Americans did learn of Wesley's diatribe, however, and it was a source of embarrassment to people like Francis Asbury. Asbury wrote that he was

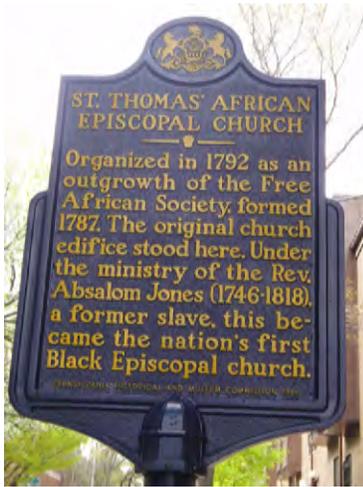
“[t]ruly sorry that the venerable man [John Wesley] ever dipped into the politics of America. There is not a man in the world so obnoxious to the American politicians as our dear old Daddy, but no matter, we must treat him with all respect we can and that is due to him.”<sup>36</sup>

American Methodists were not of one mind about the Revolution either. They included pacifists, American soldiers, British loyalists, and even a spy for the British army. Captain Thomas Webb who had helped organize Methodists in Philadelphia in the late 1760s claimed after the Revolutionary War that he had even told the British military commanders of Washington's planned Christmas Eve crossing of the Delaware River – just thirty-five miles north of where we are standing. Fortunately, for the Americans, this was a bit of military intelligence the British army failed to heed.<sup>37</sup>

After the Revolutionary War, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America still struggled with its relationship to British Methodists led by John Wesley. American Methodism may have succeeded in spite of rather than because of the American Revolution. With Wesley condemning the colonists and a Methodist leader caught as a spy it is not hard to imagine why Methodists could have suffered from quite a public relations problem! It is worth reflecting on why they didn't.

***From the southern, shady side of Independence Hall – the side not facing the National Constitution Center - walk to the corner of 5th and Walnut streets and cross Walnut street. Continue walking south on 5th on the west (right) side of the street for one block. You will notice - after crossing a small street - a historical marker for the original site of St. Thomas African Episcopal Church.***

## Stop #10: St. Thomas African Episcopal Church



Although a small minority of African Americans today are members of the Episcopal Church, in the late 18th century it may be the case that the majority of African Americans in America were Episcopalians or Anglicans – as the denomination was called prior to the Revolutionary War.<sup>38</sup> St. Thomas African Episcopal Church was the first Episcopal Church under African American leadership and the first free black church of any denomination in the northern states of America.<sup>39</sup>

Absalom Jones, the first priest of this congregation (ordained in 1802 at Philadelphia's Christ Church) had previously been a leader at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church until a racist action on the part of St. George's white members prompted a large walk-out in 1792 of many – but not all – of the African American members from that church. Together with Richard Allen, Absalom Jones founded The African Church which soon became St. Thomas.

Preferring Methodism at first, Absalom Jones was initially lukewarm to the idea of aligning with the Episcopal Church, but many of the first members of this congregation couldn't stomach the idea of aligning with the Methodists as Jones would have preferred. A clean break, they thought, was needed, and Absalom Jones obliged.<sup>40</sup>

Ground was broken in March of 1793, and it was Richard Allen who turned the first spade of dirt. This congregation would be led by his friend Absalom Jones instead of him, but since Allen was the first to propose an independent church the humble Absalom Jones suggested he be the first to break ground. St. Thomas would not be dedicated until July 17, 1794 – just twelve days before Mother Bethel AME had a similar ceremony.<sup>41</sup>

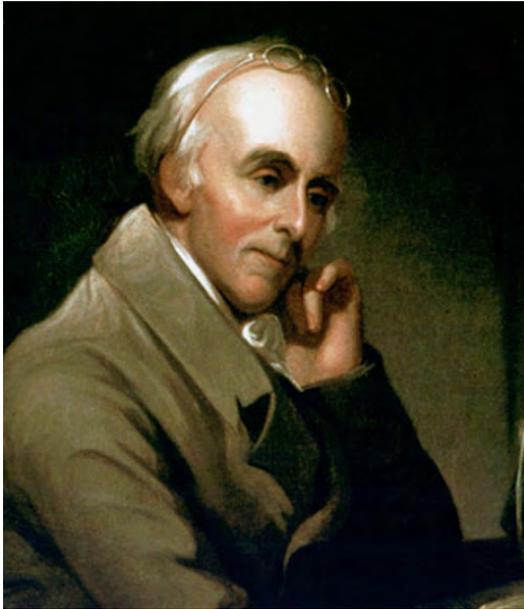
Both of these dedications symbolized not only the start of a new chapter in American church history but also the rebirth of the city starting to recover from the devastating 1793 yellow fever epidemic.

In spite of the epidemic, Philadelphia was growing and the African American population along with it. The number of African American Philadelphians tripled between 1790 and 1800 to over 6,000 people. In a dramatic reversal from the 1760s, now only fifty-five were enslaved in the city because of the gradual abolition laws which had been put in place in Pennsylvania a few years earlier. The St. Thomas congregation grew quickly. Beginning with nearly 250 members it soon had over 400 – most of whom were some of the most affluent free Africans in the city.<sup>42</sup> Mother Bethel AME eventually surpassed it in membership and by 1831 had over three thousand members.<sup>43</sup>

St. Thomas African Episcopal Church lives on today in the Overbrook neighborhood on the western edge of today's city. The Reverend Absalom Jones' ashes are enshrined there and the Episcopal Church USA to this day celebrates February 13th as Absalom Jones's Feast Day.<sup>44</sup>

***Retrace your steps one block by walking north to the corner of 5th and Walnut and turn right (east). Walk two blocks to the corner of 3rd and Walnut.***

## Stop #11: Benjamin Rush's home and African Methodists' role in the Yellow Fever Epidemic



*Dr. Benjamin Rush*

by Charles Willson Peale, circa 1818

Just to the west of the corner of 3rd Street and Walnut stood the home of Dr. Benjamin Rush – one of the most well-connected people in late 1700s Philadelphia. He was a famous physician and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. In 1787 he also threw himself into working for the anti-slavery cause even if he himself was still a slave-owner at the time. One night Benjamin Rush had a dream where he was magically transported to the shores of Africa. In the dream an old African man showed Rush the African paradise from which countless Africans had been stolen to serve the evil slave trade. Rush awakened with renewed passion to fight slavery. This dream combined with his own reading of abolitionist authors propelled Rush into action. He helped Absalom Jones draw up plans for the African Church of Philadelphia which became St. Thomas.<sup>45</sup>

Benjamin Rush was also the physician who declared that the yellow fever epidemic had struck Philadelphia.<sup>46</sup>

He pleaded with Richard Allen and Absalom Jones to organize the African American community to care for the sick and dying. Rush believed blacks were immune from the sickness and that the African American community's assistance with this epidemic would help them win allies in their quest for greater freedom. Unfortunately, Benjamin Rush was wrong on both counts. Jones and Allen did organize the African American community for this cause though. Many died as they sought to care for people of all backgrounds – black and white – who, in some cases, were left alone to die.

Francis Asbury wrote about the horrors of the yellow fever epidemic in his journal when he visited the city to preach at the height of the epidemic in September of 1793. That Asbury visited this city when thousands were fleeing it by itself tells us a lot about Asbury's compassion. He wrote in his journal:

“We rode to the city. Ah! How the ways mourn! How low-spirited are the people whilst making their escape. I found it awful indeed. I judge the people die from fifty to one hundred in a day: some of our friends are dying, others flying... The streets are now depopulated, and the city wears a gloomy aspect. All night long my ears and heart were wounded with the cry of fire! O! how awful!”<sup>47</sup>



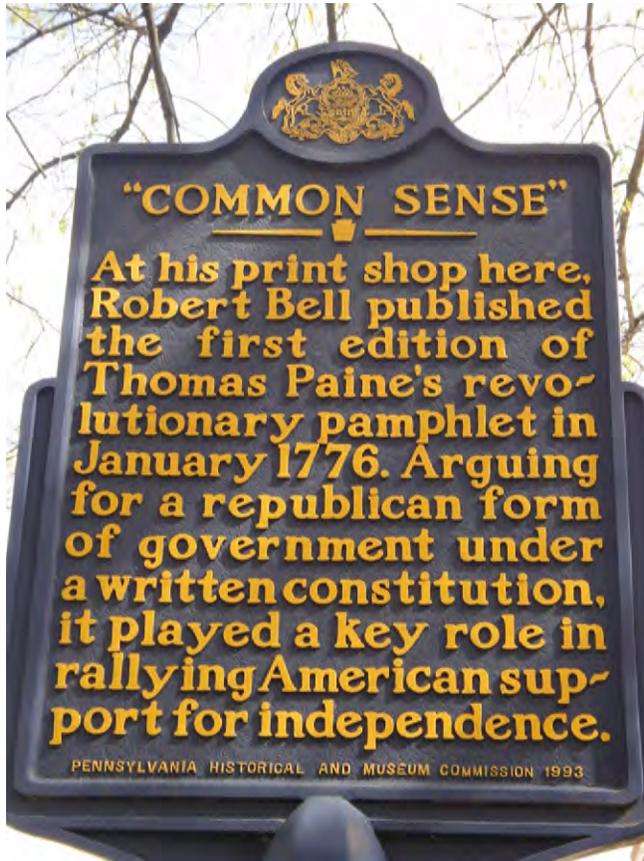
Map produced by Billy G. Smith and Paul Sivitz, Montana State University. The red lines indicate streets that lost between 20 and 67% of their population to the disease.

[philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/](http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/)

Sadly, African Americans did not receive warm expressions of Philadelphians' gratitude for their self-less actions during the Epidemic of 1793 as Rush had predicted. Instead, one pamphlet writer slandered the African American community for treating whites badly and even laughing at whites' illnesses during the epidemic. Richard Allen and Absalom Jones fired back a rigorous defense of African American actions during the epidemic. Their pamphlet made the two friends the first copyrighted black authors in America.

***On the east side of 3rd Street at the corner of Walnut walk a half block south to a historical marker for Thomas Paine's Common Sense.***

## Stop #12: Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" – A bestseller "Methodist" pamphlet?



Thomas Paine published *Common Sense* on January 10, 1776. The previous fall, the Second Continental Congress had been divided on the question of whether to declare independence or not. Paine's *Common Sense* played a role in changing the hearts and minds of a people. It was a runaway best-seller with fifty-three reprints in the first year alone. Philadelphians were all reading it as were people throughout the colonies.

But what made it so successful? One reason may be that its rhetoric sounded familiar. Paine's *Common Sense* sounded Methodist even if Paine himself was not one. But in his twenties he was drawn to Methodist preachers he heard preach throughout England.<sup>48</sup> Their powerful appeal to common people in plain language was something he never forgot. Now almost forty years old and writing his *Common Sense*, Paine knew that "fence-sitting" colonists who did not want to commit to American independence

could be swayed by making a political appeal in a religious and even Methodist way. And so he did.<sup>49</sup>

Paine's use of religious rhetoric was not lost on early American preachers who came after him either. If Paine could use Methodist language to make a political argument it seemed that preachers like Lorenzo Dow could – and did – make Paine's political language make a religious argument as well! Lorenzo Dow was one of the most famous and wild-eyed evangelists in early American Methodism. He sometimes started his sermons with a quote from Thomas Paine.<sup>50</sup>

***Walk another few steps further south on 3rd Street to St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, 225 South 3rd Street.***



## Stop #13: St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church and Joseph Pilmore

St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church still stands today as the headquarters of the Episcopal Community Services. St. Paul's was built in 1761 and was the Anglican Church many followers of the Methodist movement attended even while also being committed to the St. George's Methodist Society and its accompanying class meetings. This church's connection to the Methodist movement continued even after the American Methodist Episcopal Church was established as a separate denomination from Anglicanism in 1784.

It was in 1784 that former Methodist preacher Joseph Pilmore came to lead St. Paul's Episcopal Church. IN 1769 Pilmore had been sent by John Wesley to help lead the fledgling Methodist movement in America. He did so at St. George's UMC until 1774 at which point he returned to England along with a number of other Methodist preachers. After a decade in England, however, Pilmore returned to Philadelphia and was ordained in the Episcopal Church. He was serving as the assistant rector at St.

Paul's in 1790 when the Free African Society began holding services of worship. His anti-slavery views were strong – and likely made stronger still when he married the niece of Quaker Anthony Benezet who



*Methodist Walking Tour of Philadelphia*

had been a benefactor of the black community in Philadelphia decades earlier. Pilmore offered hospitality to the African American community and even worked beside them through the yellow fever epidemic of 1793.<sup>51</sup> Thirty-one black couples were married at St. Paul's Episcopal Church between 1789 and 1794.<sup>52</sup> Pilmore made sure they were welcome.

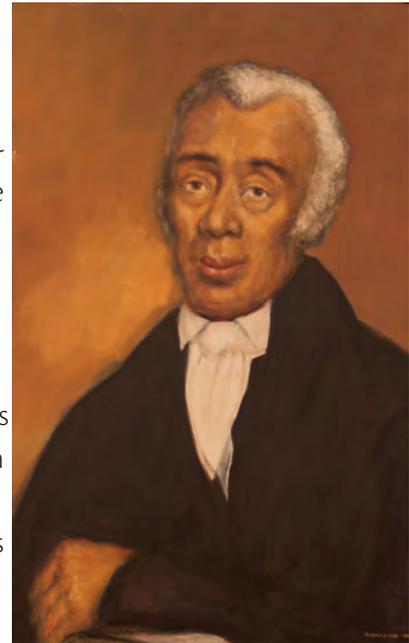
The surrounding neighborhood was well known to the African American community as a place of hospitality for reasons which extend beyond Pilmore himself. Anthony Benezet's school for Africans was located just a few footsteps away in nearby Willings Alley to the south. St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church a block to the west in Willings Alley also excelled in its hospitality toward Africans. In the summer of 1793 five hundred French-speaking Roman Catholic African slaves from the island of Haiti arrived in Philadelphia together with their white owners who fled a slave revolt which eventually led to Haiti's independence from France. Many of the French-speaking Africans began attending St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, the oldest Catholic parish in the city.<sup>53</sup> We will be walking by St. Joseph's shortly.

***From St. Paul's, walk across the street (west) to Willings Alley. Continue walking until 4th Street and then turn left (south). In 2 ½ blocks turn right (west) on Spruce Street for ½ block. Stop when you come to Lawrence Court, a brick walkway running south from Spruce. Richard Allen's home was located here at the middle of the block on Spruce between 4th and 5th Street.***

## Stop #14: Bishop Richard Allen's Home

Richard Allen's home on this block (which is not marked) was not his first home in Philadelphia. He lived at 59 Dock Street near where South and 2nd street are today from 1788 to 1791. His first home was not in a very desirable location. Not so with this second location. Grocers, sailors, a shoemaker and other middle class residents – both white and black – lived here. His friend Absalom lived just a few blocks away as well.<sup>55</sup>

What is perhaps most striking about this location is that we are standing almost precisely halfway between Independence Hall and Mother Bethel AME. It is a good place to pause and think about Richard Allen's influence. It is important to stress that Allen shaped the early American republic politically as well as religiously. His most recent biographer, Richard Newman, suggests this in the very title of his book – *Freedom's Prophet*.



Richard Allen by Virginia Jackson Kia



Sarah Allen

But Allen was more than just a public and religious leader in Philadelphia – and he did not do his work alone. He was also a husband and father who shared meals and played with his six children in his Spruce Street home. Shortly before moving here he married Flora, an ex-slave like Richard, and also a devout Methodist who attended class meetings and shared Richard's vision of establishing a black church. They married in October of 1790 and began raising their family. They were known to entertain the friendless as well as the powerful in their home; an official emissary from the President of Haiti came here.<sup>56</sup> Flora worked alongside her husband in their common ministry. In March of 1801, however, Flora died after a long illness. Richard soon married Sarah who had attended St. George's with Richard and was

a founding member of Mother Bethel Church. She worked hard in caring for the sick during the yellow fever epidemic too. This impressed Richard. He even wrote a pamphlet about her entitled simply "Sarah Bass." When they married, Sarah – like Flora –partnered with Richard in their common ministry at Bethel Church and in the city at large.<sup>57</sup> She once organized an "all-night sewing brigade" when she and Richard realized how poorly-dressed many of the AME preachers were who came to meet with Bishop Allen. Sarah was also a friend and great encouragement to Jarena Lee, the first AME female preacher. Sarah Allen and Jarena Lee died the same year, in 1849.<sup>58</sup>

**Continue walking west on Spruce Street for 1 ½ blocks to 6th Street. Turn left (south) for four short blocks until you see Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a large brick structure on your left just before Lombard Street.**

## **Stop #15: Mother Bethel AME**



As is the case with our first stop on this tour, St. George's UMC, Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church is deserving of a special visit of its own. Members of this congregation still provide tours of their church building upon request. The church's museum is one of the best of any church in the city.

Rather than recount the stories of Mother Bethel's founding years in the 1790s which is featured in the church museum, we will instead talk a bit about how the African Methodist Episcopal denomination grew after its establishment as a distinct denomination in 1816. In its first decade, the AME denomination grew from just a handful of churches in the region and a thousand members to one of 10,000 people spread across the Mid-Atlantic region. In 1822 the second largest AME congregation in the world was even in the heart of the slave South, in Charleston, South Carolina. By the mid-1820s an AME church was getting established in Canada and Bishop Allen was looking across the ocean for possibilities.

Although too old to go there himself, Bishop Allen encouraged African Americans to emigrate to Haiti as president of the Haitian Emigration Society of Philadelphia. He also carried on a lively correspondence with the president of independent Haiti, Jean-Pierre Boyer. His motivation for doing so was not solely

out of a desire for church growth; white hostility toward blacks in Philadelphia was growing in the 1820s and the black republic of Haiti was a place where Bishop Allen believed freedom could be attained more fully.<sup>59</sup>

In the summer of 1824 Bishop Allen agreed to permit fifty members of Mother Bethel AME to go to Haiti. His own son, Richard Jr., also traveled to Haiti and lived there for a number of years. It didn't take long for AME churches to be established in Haiti with missionaries approved by Bishop Allen to care for them.<sup>60</sup>

***At the corner of Lombard and 6th Street just south of the Mother Bethel AME Church building cross the street to the west side of 6th Street. Continue walking a half block to the historical marker for W. E. B. Du Bois.***



## Stop #16: W. E. B. DuBois's Home during His Research Study

As noted in this historical marker about W. E. B. Du Bois, the brilliant intellectual and writer lived in this neighborhood of Philadelphia for fifteen months of intensive interviewing of residents of the 7th Ward, a neighborhood which extended from 6th street to 23rd street. This area comprised the greatest concentration of African Americans in the city in the late 1890s. Du Bois's research findings were published in 1899 as *The Philadelphia Negro*. This research also influenced Du Bois in the writing of his masterpiece, *The Souls of Black Folk*, a few years later.

Du Bois learned a great deal about the Philadelphia African American community at the end of the 19th century, and Mother Bethel AME was a critical part of his research. Although never an AME member himself, Du Bois had a deep appreciation for Christian spirituality – something which some scholars of Du Bois's work have failed to appreciate. But, as Edward Blum notes, Du Bois “was not antireligious; he was against faith used for fraud, belief used to bully, and Christianity when used to control. Du Bois had much to teach about religious organizations, the power of belief, the intersections of religion and violence, the necessity of faith for social resistance, and the vitality of spiritual symbolism.”<sup>61</sup>

Du Bois admired the work of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the ministry of late 1800s AME leader Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, in particular. Although not a Philadelphia resident, Turner was a major leader in his denomination in organizing mission outreach in southern Africa. Du Bois eulogized Turner as “the last of his clan: mighty men, physically and mentally, men who started at the bottom and hammered their way to the top by sheer brute strength; they were the spiritual progeny of ancient African chieftains and they built the African Church in America.”<sup>62</sup>



***From the W.E.B. Du Bois marker continue walking South across (the very busy) South Street. One block south of South Street turn right on Kater Street. A half block down Kater Street stop in front of #619 Kater Street. This is now a private residence.***

## Stop #17: Bedford Street Mission

If we could go back in time to the middle of the 1800s you would now be standing in the middle of what was the poorest neighborhood in the city. It was sometimes called “Philadelphia’s Five Points” in reference to the infamous neighborhood of Five Points in New York City. Over one hundred taverns dotted the neighborhood in just a few blocks radius from the Mission. In 1852 alone over eight hundred people in Philadelphia died of smallpox or scarlet fever and over a thousand of tuberculosis. Malaria and cholera were also common. Many of the victims of these diseases were concentrated in this particularly densely populated neighborhood. Many of the residents of this neighborhood were African Americans who, in the middle of the 1800s, also suffered through five major race riots. (You may have walked by one historical marker next to Mother Bethel AME that recounted one of these riots in the 1840s.)



The Bedford Street Mission (as the street was then called) was here to minister to the poor of this neighborhood. Organized in 1853, the Bedford Street Mission served the poor here until the 1930s. Meals, clothing, healthcare, and even showers were provided for area residents along with the Mission’s evangelistic outreach. One missionary who worked at Bedford Street Mission was Rev. John Dixon Long who, together with his wife and family, served in this neighborhood from 1866 to 1882. In 1858 Rev. Long had become famous – and despised by some – for exposing the fact that some preachers in the Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church were holding slaves. A strong opponent of slavery, Long’s work in this neighborhood was a continued expression of his passion for justice.<sup>63</sup>

***Retrace your steps north on 6th Street two blocks and turn right (east) on Lombard Street just before Mother Bethel AME Church. Begin walking east on Lombard for two blocks. (Along the way, there are two additional sites to briefly point out. First, just to the east of Mother Bethel AME stands B’nai Abraham Synagogue, the oldest Jewish synagogue in continuous use in Philadelphia. This synagogue purchased their first building on this site from Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church which had split off from Mother Bethel AME in the early 1800s. Another block east on Lombard, on your left, you will walk by the Presbyterian Historical Society which contains the archival holdings for the Presbyterian Church USA denomination as well as the National Council of Churches of Christ. Methodists played a major role in the National Council of Churches in the latter half of the 20th century. The Presbyterian Historical Society has exhibits in their lobby and are open to the public.) Walk east on Lombard Street until Fourth Street. Our next story took place on one of the corners before you. We don’t know which one.***

## Stop #18: Fighting Methodist: Lewis C. Levin

The race riots briefly mentioned at our Bedford Street Mission stop were not the only riots which took place in Philadelphia in the mid-1800s. Methodists and other Protestants were also involved in riots against Roman Catholics who were becoming more numerous in 1840s Philadelphia because of the growth of Irish immigrants escaping the famine in their country. Irish immigration to Philadelphia was never as large as it was in Boston or New York City, but it was still seen as a threat. Protestant pastors from all major Protestant denominations in Philadelphia joined together to form the American Protestant Association. They hoped, with this organization, to prevent the spread of “Popery” which they feared was a threat to the American Republic and its democratic values.

The Reverend Lewis C. Levin, who lived in this neighborhood, was the most outspoken Methodist pastor against Roman Catholicism in the riots of 1844. But here on the corner of 4th Street and Lombard Levin didn't just speak against Catholics. Here he had fistfight. As he was walking with his wife and two children on May 2, 1844 another pedestrian insulted Levin. Levin wheeled around and punched his accuser knocking him to the ground. A full-blown brawl was on. A naval officer who lived nearby finally broke it up. Unfortunately, this encounter didn't deter Levin in his efforts to stir up Protestants against Catholics. It foreshadowed tragic events to come. Less than a month later and again in the July he gave rousing anti-Catholic speeches before the riots which destroyed property, burned Catholic churches, and killed people on the streets of Philadelphia.

The son of Jewish parents, Lewis Levin was born in South Carolina in 1808 and converted to Methodism as a young man. He had a hot temper and a propensity for violence his whole life. As a young man he was involved in at least two gun duels – one of which was said to be with the future president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis.

After gaining fame in his leadership of the anti-Catholic movement in the early 1840s Levin was elected to three terms in the US Congress. In spite of his conversion to Methodism he is still sometimes considered the first Jewish congressman in American history. Sadly, things did not end well for Lewis Levin. He eventually was deemed out of his mind and spent the last four years of his life in the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane. He died in 1860. National newspapers reported his death. Ironically, Lewis Levin's wife, Julia, and one of his children became Roman Catholics after his death.<sup>64</sup>



***From the corner of 4th Street and Lombard continue walking east for one more block to 3rd Street. Turn left (north) on 3rd Street. Walk north for one block to Pine Street.***

## Stop #19: Home of Absalom Jones



On the southeast corner of Pine and Third Streets stood the home of Rev. Absalom Jones, first African American priest to be ordained in the Episcopal Church in the United States. We have already discussed his leadership of St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. Here we will talk more about his personal life. Born in 1747, Jones was thirteen years older than his friend, Richard Allen. As a young man Jones was a slave who came from Delaware to Philadelphia with his master and worked in his dry goods store for years. His master permitted him to learn to read and even to attend the Quaker Anthony Benezet's school for Africans on Willings Alley a few blocks north of where we stand.<sup>65</sup>

In 1770, at the age of twenty-three, Absalom Jones married Mary Thomas while both of them were still slaves. They were married at St. Peter's Anglican Church across the street. Immediately, Absalom Jones began to work to secure his wife's freedom which he was able to do finally in 1778 after often working late into the night to earn extra money. Absalom Jones, however, remained a slave for five more years. He finally purchased his freedom in 1785 at the age of 38. Although now free, he continued to work in the store of his former master while also beginning to work with his friend Richard in the Free African Society which began in 1787.<sup>66</sup>

Absalom and Mary Jones attended St. George's for Methodist meetings along with Richard and Flora Allen during these years. Both Absalom and Richard were lay preachers there.<sup>67</sup> It was Absalom Jones who was forced by one of the white members of St. George's to leave the place where he was praying in spite of Jones' pleas to just wait until prayer was over. The white member's refusal to do so prompted the walk-out of many African Americans from the church.

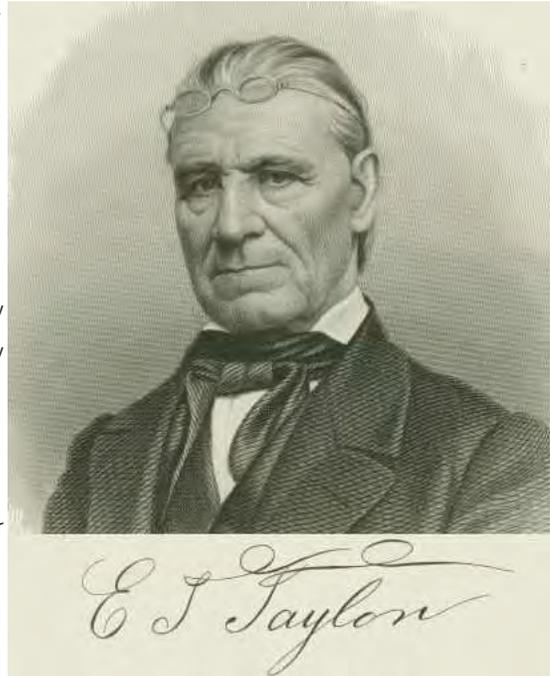
The movement to create an independent black church now could more easily garner support from sympathetic white leaders of Philadelphia. They received that support and soon both St. Thomas African Episcopal Church and Mother Bethel AME Church were established.

Here at Absalom and Mary's home one can't help to wonder about the dinner conversations which may have been shared between Absalom, Mary, Richard, and Flora in this home during the initial years of forming their respective "first churches." What struggles did they share with one another? What was their friendship like? Some of those conversations may have happened on the streets between the Allen's home and the Jones' home. These streets were just a part of these early Methodists' "commute."

***From the corner of 3rd Street and Pine continue walking east along Pine Street for two blocks until Front Street. Here you have a decision to make. The next site was located two blocks south on Front Street near the intersection with South Street. You may either walk those two blocks and then retrace your steps north to our next stop or listen to the story of the Methodist Sailors Home here. There is no architectural trace of the Methodist Sailors Home today as the freeway construction radically changed this area.***

## Stop #20: Methodist Sailors Home

On July 4th 1831 seven young men from Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church (which was also located a few blocks from here) were inspired by the sailor preacher Rev. Edward T. Taylor of Boston when he was in town to preach. Known as "Father Taylor," this gruff but passionate preacher made his appeal: Methodists needed to establish a ministry to help the many sailors who came ashore in Philadelphia. Moved to action, the seven young men pooled money they had been saving and did what Father Taylor asked. First they rented a third floor sail-loft near South and Front Street. For two years they met in this rented space until, in November 1833, they moved a few blocks further south and finally, in 1845, they built what became the Methodist Episcopal Mariner's Bethel near what is today Front Street and Bainbridge Street. (The actual street configurations have been dramatically altered over the years making the precise location of Penn Street and Bainbridge Street difficult to ascertain.)



The inaugural sermon at the newly constructed Mariner's Bethel in 1845 was given by none other than Father Taylor who first inspired the young men to establish this ministry.<sup>68</sup> Father Taylor today is perhaps most famous for being the likely inspiration for Herman Melville's character, Father Mapple, in *Moby Dick*.<sup>69</sup>

Herman Melville described his Father Mapple preaching about the biblical story of Jonah like this:

While [Father Mapple] was speaking these words, the howling of the shrieking, slanting storm without seemed to add new power to the preacher, who, when describing Jonah's sea-storm, seemed tossed by a storm himself. His deep chest heaved as with a ground-swell; his tossed arms seemed the warring elements at work; and the thunders that rolled away from off his swarthy brow, and the light leaping from his eye, made all his simple hearers look on him with a quick fear that was strange to them... There now came a lull in his look, as he silently turned over the leaves of the Book once more; and, at last, standing motionless, with closed eyes, for the moment, seemed communing with God and himself.<sup>70</sup>

One wonders how similarly Father Taylor may have preached here many years ago.

The Mariner's Bethel ministered to sailors for many decades and changed locations a number of times. Today, a few former members of the Mariner's Bethel – now closed – still worship at Clifton United Methodist Church in Clifton Heights, Pennsylvania.

***Minutes of the Philadelphia Annual  
Conference of the Methodist Episcopal  
Church 1902:***

The Sailors' Home, 422 South Front Street, offers a safe and comfortable retreat to sailors in the port of Philadelphia, second to none in this country. Skilled medical attention is always within reach, free of charge. Legal aid is available for those who may have suffered injustice at the hands of unscrupulous ship-owners and others, who too often prey upon the ignorant and unsuspecting sailor.

Sailors may deposit their earnings with the lessee of the Home for safe-keeping. More than three thousand dollars have so been placed this year.

... Four hundred sailors have availed themselves of the privileges and comforts of the Home during the present year... The success of the Pennsylvania Seaman's Friend Society is due in no small degree to the untiring zeal and consecrated enthusiasm of the corresponding secretary, Rev. George W. Maclaughlin, D.D., a member of this Conference.

We cordially commend him and his cause to the consideration of philanthropic minds within the bounds of the Conference, and recommend his reappointment.

***From the site of the Methodist Sailors Home retrace your steps and continue walking north along Front Street for four blocks (from South Street) to Spruce Street. At Spruce Street continue to walk north into the Korean War Memorial Park.***

## Stop #21: Korean War Memorial: The Methodist Connection



A Korean War memorial may strike some people as a rather strange stop on a tour of Philadelphia Methodism. But it is important to remember that the Methodist movement in Korea began due to the missionary efforts of Pennsylvanians Henry and Ella Appenzeller in 1885. As a young man Henry Appenzeller was a preacher at what is now First United Methodist Church of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. That church is still visited by Korean Methodists today to celebrate the memory of Henry Appenzeller and the beginning of the Methodist movement in their country. Methodist and other Christians in Korea were key leaders opposing Japanese colonialism between 1905 and 1945. Pyongyang, Korea (now located in North Korea) was the site of one of the most dramatic revivals of the early 20th century. Sometimes called the “Korean Pentecost,” the revival of 1907 in Pyongyang involved many Methodists.<sup>71</sup> Korean Methodism now has well over a million members. The largest Methodist church in the world is located in that country.

The connection between Methodism and this Korean War Memorial is evident in other ways as well. Throughout the Korean War in the early 1950s Methodist missionaries and Methodist Korean pastors worked together to help the Korean people suffering from the ravages of war. Korea was a major focus of the work of the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief in the 1950s – both during and in the immediate aftermath of the war. Food, clothing, and housing were provided through the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief in partnership with Korean Methodist leadership. From 1953 to 1957 no other country received more support than Korea did from American Methodists through the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief.<sup>72</sup>

***From the Korean War Memorial continue walking to the northwest corner of the memorial and then continue to walk along the winding Dock Street. Feel free to stop anywhere along Dock Street for our last stop.***



## Stop #22: Dock Street Location of first Methodist meeting.

In his famous poem, *Four Quartets*, T.S. Elliott wrote:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

It was on Dock Street where the Methodist movement first began to meet regularly in a sail loft that they very quickly outgrew. It is fitting to end our walking tour where the Methodists began. It is our hope that through this tour, “at the end of all your exploring” you will know the Methodist movement in some ways “for the first time.”

The Methodist movement continues to this day in this country and around the world. Some thirty million people comprise the World Methodist Council, a worldwide organization of many Methodist denominations. The American part of the story had one of its beginning points here. Other beginning stories of Methodism in America could be told in Savannah, Georgia, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Wilmington, Delaware, New York City, and Baltimore, Maryland. If you ever visit these other places we hope you will take some time to learn about the stories there too of the people called Methodists.

***To return to Independence Hall continue walking north on Dock Street on 2nd Street for a half block and then west on Walnut Street for three blocks.***



## Endnotes

- 1 Edwin Wolf II, "The Origins of Philadelphia's Self-Depreciation, 1820-1920," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 104, no. January (1980): 58.
- 2 In the Pennsylvania of 1770 Germans may have been 1/3 of the total population. Joseph F. DiPaolo, "The 'Odd Couple': William Otterbein and Martin Boehm at Long's Barn," *Annals of Eastern Pennsylvania: Journal of the Historical Society and the Commission on Archives and History of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church* 7, (2010): 52.
- 3 Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the Ame Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 31. Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom : The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 11.
- 4 Dee E. Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 38.
- 5 Harold C. Koch, *The Leaven of the Kingdom: The Amazing Growth of Methodism in the Philadelphia Conference, 1767-1968* (Ephrata, PA: Science Press, 1983), 1.
- 6 John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 388.
- 7 Ibid., 50-53.
- 8 Andrews, 43.
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