KENTUCKY WESLEYAN COLLEGE AND ITS STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

By William C. Caywood, Jr.
Editor, *The Winchester Sun*

Paper read before The Filson Club on June 4, 1951

In no church has the desire to provide educational facilities for its boys and girls been stronger than in the Methodist Church of Kentucky, and in no denomination have so many disappointments been endured.

Latest in the long list of educational nightmares is Kentucky Wesleyan College which today is in the process of being moved from Winchester to Owensboro.

"Nightmare" is a fitting word because it is true that the best brains of the church have spent restless nights for decades—almost from its opening at Millersburg in 1866—in planning for Wesleyan. Born at the close of the War between the States, Wesleyan seems to have been unable to rid itself of the restlessness so prevalent at the time of its establishment. The great ministers of the Methodist faith and the ablest laymen of the church have spent many sleepless nights in the cause of Wesleyan.

During the coming summer, the hopes of the church are to be centered upon giving new life to the little college from whose halls so many outstanding men have gone forth into all professions.

It is quite obvious that there is much to be said for relocation of the college, and certainly there are grounds for disagreement. Colleges, by their very nature, are just not in the category of something which can be moved with ease. The obstacles always are present, while the benefits—if any—are not visible because they are definitely in the future.

Naturally, Winchester will feel the cultural and economic loss of Kentucky Wesleyan College. It is something like the death of an old friend and counsellor—one who has been at your side for decades; in fact, for 61 years. Yet, there are those in Winchester who having watched the college struggle through a good half-century of financial strain believe that Owensboro holds the only hope for Wesleyan's survival.

The Methodists of Kentucky and the people of Owensboro must certainly realize that money in the millions must be forthcoming in the not-too-distant future if Wesleyan is to go on. And the "down payment" for new buildings and equipment must be followed by a perpetual flow of cash—an experience Wesleyan has never known.

All privately-owned schools are hard-pressed for finances in 1951. Many of the smaller ones may close their doors. Sad as it may be, the toll is heaviest among the small church-supported colleges who place emphasis upon Christian education.

Hence, the relocation of an accredited four-year college because of financial troubles becomes a highly interesting subject not only to Wesleyan graduates and to members of the Methodist church, but to all Kentuckians.

It must be stated that Wesleyan and all other Methodist educational undertakings in Kentucky have been stricken by no malady which could not have been cured with money.

The removal of Wesleyan to Owensboro where it will open the fall term in churches and other temporary quarters is a wager which the church felt it must make as the only means of saving the college from financial suffocation. With heavy competition from the University of Kentucky, 18 miles to the west; Morehead State College to the east, and Eastern Kentucky State College in adjoining Madison County, Wesleyan, dependent upon tuitions and gifts from the church, has been pocketed at Winchester in an area overstocked with state-financed educational institutions. In the same section also will be found Centre, Georgetown, Transylvania and Berea — all with endowments far above that of Wesleyan.

Wesleyan's trustees are not committed to the belief that the small church college is doomed to oblivion by the abnormal growth of the huge tax-supported colleges and universities. They are planning upon success at Owensboro and the prayers of the thinking people of the commonwealth will go with Wesleyan to Owensboro in the fervent hope that the college will grow to the position of security and permanence which it deserves.

On the practical side, it might appear that to abandon the really-excellent college plant at Winchester was a mistake. It might be said that the vote to move the college and to sacrifice property non-replaceable for an estimated $5,000,000 in return for a gift of $1,000,000 from Owensboroans was simply bad business. Sixty-one years of tradition and growth can not be discarded without some degree of doubt as to the merit of the action. Wesleyan did not fail at Winchester. Whether it could have survived obviously can never be answered. One point is certain. In the period Wesleyan operated at Winchester, it never was adequately supported in money or in students by the Methodist churches of the state. At their conferences, they set up fund campaign goals each year, they adopted repeated resolutions of

support, and great plans were made. The results were disheartening to the Methodists themselves, as their conference reports will show. During the 61 years' operation in Winchester, the student body averaged less than 200 boys and girls. Of this number, Winchester and Clark County annually provided an average of one-fourth. The more than 1,000 Methodist churches in Kentucky provided less than one student per year from every seven churches.

With recent operating costs exceeding income from tuitions and contributions from the churches of the state; with increasing costs of operation in prospect for the immediate future; with the universal military training program threatening to absorb even more of the diminishing student body, and with investment income from its $360,000 endowment shrinking in the national inflationary cycle, the Methodists of Kentucky simply voted to move their college to Owensboro because it looked like a good bet, and the only way for the college to survive.

They believe that a larger endowment will be attracted along with a larger student body because of the present shortage of higher educational facilities in the wealthy Owensboro area.

Methodism and all of its activities in Kentucky, for the greater part, are today controlled by two conferences, known as the Kentucky conference, comprising Central and Eastern Kentucky churches, and the Louisville conference, made up of the Louisville and Western Kentucky Methodist family. In some instances, Methodist churches on the state borders belong to conferences of other states for operational convenience.

Presiding bishop of the two conferences in Kentucky is W. T. Watkins, who resides at 1820 Casselberry Road, Louisville.

The conferences meet separately each autumn when a minister and lay delegate from each church join in business sessions. Occasionally, a joint meeting of the two conferences is held.

It was at such a joint meeting, called at the Fourth Avenue Methodist Church in Louisville on August 16, 1950, that Wesleyan's future was changed. Upon recommendation of the 24-member joint board of education of the two conferences, the conferences voted to relocate Wesleyan. The vote, by standing count, was 59 to 57 among the delegates for the Kentucky conference, and 146 to 18 by the Louisville or Western Kentucky conference. The matter was debated openly on the floor. Spokesmen for Winchester and for Owensboro had their say.

The plan was approved upon condition that Owensboro raise a fund of $1,000,000 by March 1, 1951. In the regular 1950 autumn meetings of the two conferences, the action of the special

Louisville session was upheld. Owensboro subsequently met its requirement, and at Winchester on March 9, 1951, the joint board voted unanimously to open the college at Owensboro in September, 1951.

Today at Winchester, the faculty is supervising the crating of records and college equipment of all kinds preparatory to moving to Owensboro bag and baggage in time to set up classwork routine for the opening of the 1951-52 school year September 25.

Within a few short weeks, the seven large buildings, a half-dozen college-owned residences and a 10-acre campus will be vacant. Excluding the residences and a large gymnasium-auditorium, the property has little realty value in the opinion of Winchester business men.

The administration, library and science buildings, along with the men's and women's dormitories are situated in a semi-circle, facing a central driveway. The campus arrangement is typically small-college and the uses to which such property might be put are limited. Another college for Winchester is hardly conceivable since the trend today is to fewer colleges, not to more. A state or federal agency of some type possibly could occupy the buildings to advantage for office space. A factory would not be practical.

Hence, it may be seen that the Methodists are giving up and moving away from college property which, it is carefully estimated, would not possibly sell in the open market for more than $500,000 complete, or about 10 per cent of its college-plant value.

Today, the Methodists of the two conferences own Wesleyan and Lindsey Wilson, a two-year junior college at Columbia. They pro-rate their receipts in church gifts with Union College at Barbourville, a Methodist-related college. Asbury, at Wilmore, is not owned or supported by the Methodist church as most people believe.

Wesleyan, Lindsey Wilson and Union have shared equally in the College Day collections in Methodist churches one Sunday each year. The highest amount ever contributed to the three schools was $31,791.07 in 1946, about $10,000 for each of the three.

Union, established in 1879 as a privately-owned institution, was bought by the now-dissolved Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) after the school went broke in 1886. It is today a Methodist-related college, as distinguished from Lindsey Wilson and Kentucky Wesleyan which are owned and operated by the Kentucky and Louisville conferences of the Methodist Church, successors to the old M. E. Church, South.

(The establishment of the M. E. Church, South, brought on by a slavery split, was effected at the Fourth Avenue church in Louisville, May 1, 1845. Anti-slavery churches held to the original name, whereas, the "secessionists" added the word, "South." The national unification in 1939 made it "The Methodist Church.")

Union, winning favor and gifts from eastern U. S. Methodists as a "Kentucky mountain school," has weathered the financial storm, and is operating in the black with more than 500 students.

Lindsey Wilson, a product of the old Louisville Conference of the M. E. Church, South, began classwork on January 4, 1904. The name was selected in memory of Lindsey Wilson, nephew of Mrs. Catherine Wilson of Louisville, who contributed $6,000. Today it has 300 students.

Of the annual three-way division of the College Day offering, Bishop Watkins told a group of Methodist educators at Louisville on April 4, 1951:

"We have trough enough for one horse and three are trying to eat out of that trough."

That sage remark seemed to sum up the 162 years' struggle of Methodism's education program in Kentucky.

At this point, one might reasonably ask these questions:

"Why not consolidate efforts in one strong college around Union at Barbourville?"

"What about Asbury?"

As for Union College, it simply has eased its way from under direct control of Kentucky Methodism. Union has a more or less self-perpetuating board of trustees. The disappearance of its ruling body, the Kentucky Conference of the M. E. Church, northern branch, in 1939, left it practically free from dictation by any localized group of Methodists. Possibly the national or unified Methodist Church could be described as the group which would have to sign the deed if Union were sold. The national church has enough problems without forcing an issue in a college which is doing a good job. In other words, Union is enjoying independence and success.

On the other hand, Kentucky's two Methodist conferences have a financial stake in, and complete authority over two schools, Wesleyan and Lindsey Wilson.

It is doubtful that Kentucky Methodists would ever entertain the thought of giving up ownership and control of these two schools in any consolidation move with Union. It is doubtful also that the trustees of successful Union would consider adop-

tion of Wesleyan and Lindsey Wilson if it meant placing Union under the direct supervision of the Methodist churches of Kentucky.

The Asbury College story is something different. Asbury was established in 1890 by Dr. John Wesley Hughes, a pastor in the M. E. Church, South, Kentucky conference. It is worth noting that Dr. Hughes opened his school the same year Wesleyan was moved from Millersburg to Winchester.

Asbury, from the start, has been a privately-owned school, receiving blessings from the Kentucky conference in an indirect manner. Asbury has grown rapidly until today it has an enrollment of almost 1,000 students. Asbury educates men for the Methodist ministry—the same original basic purpose as Wesleyan, although the latter has a much broader field in the liberal arts. Asbury graduates, totaling 3,500 for 61 years, have a strong voice in both the Kentucky and Louisville conferences of the Methodist church. For example, of the some 225 ministers in the Kentucky conference last year, there were 69 Asbury men. In the 1951 spring meeting of the Danville district conference at Berea, there were 21 candidates for the ministry, by way of the Kentucky conference. Nineteen of the 21 were Asbury men. Since Wilmore is situated in the Kentucky conference, the proportion is higher than in Western Kentucky. However, the Louisville conference has many ministers who received their training at Asbury.

Hence, it may be readily seen that the largest college in Kentucky dedicated to the training of Methodist ministers is not owned, controlled or supervised by the Methodist church. These Asbury ministers, a solid bloc in both conferences of the church, are naturally loyal to their alma mater with regard to prospective students.

It would thus take the wildest imagination for anyone to conclude that Wesleyan, weakened by many obstacles and keen competition within its own sponsoring church denomination, is heading for Owensboro with the complete support, enthusiasm and financial backing of all the Methodist churches of Kentucky.

If the Wesleyan-Lindsey Wilson supporters in the two Kentucky conferences can close ranks and give their undivided attention to supporting Wesleyan at Owensboro, there are those who feel success is assured. Should they fail, there are Methodist leaders who foresee a municipally-operated Wesleyan at Owensboro. This situation is not new; in fact, it has occurred many times in the Methodist and other churches. A perfect example

was the former-Methodist school in Indiana, now Evansville College.

It should be emphasized here that the speaker's reference to Asbury's success and the pastorates filled by her sons should not be construed as any criticism of that college. Inclusion of the Union and Asbury explanations has been made solely for the purpose of showing student problems facing the Wesleyan of the future.

Literally scores of colleges, academies and high schools have been established or supported by the Methodists of Kentucky since 1789. Practically all of them have vanished. The exact number is so indefinite, and the charting on ownership or support so complex, that no historian in the church has been able to compile an accurate list or to tabulate the mortality rate.

For example, here's a quick summary of some of the casualties in the Louisville conference alone:

Logan College at Russellville, Logan County, became the property of the Louisville conference in 1860. It lived 70 years as a girls' school, closing in 1930.

Vanderbilt Training schools at Elkton and Smith's Grove lived short lives. Warren College, opened in 1872, died in 1877.

Support from that conference of the old M. E. Church, South, also went to Methodist-related schools at Louisville, Middletown, Hardinsburg, Morganfield, Princetown, Greenville, Cedar Bluff, Pewee Valley, Highway and Glasgow. In the recent words of Dr. J. W. Weldon, church historian, "All have long since ceased to be schools related to anything."

* * * * *

American Methodism was formally organized at Baltimore, Md. as the Methodist Episcopal Church by Bishop Francis Asbury and Bishop Thomas Coke on Christmas Eve in 1784—the year in which John Filson published his first history and map on Kentucky.

From Founder John Wesley, Methodists brought to this country the desire to give every child its true inheritance intellectually as well as spiritually. In England, Wesley founded the Kingswood school even before building chapels for preaching.

Methodism had been in this country on a formal basis only one year when a school known as Cokesbury College was established in 1785 at Abingdon, Md., on the equivalent of $5,000. Ten years later, 1795, Cokesbury burned to the ground to the apparent relief and general satisfaction of the church. Of Cokesbury, the good Bishop Asbury said:

"If any man should give me 10,000 pounds per year to do and suffer for that house, I would not do it!"

Of another school—also at a Cokesbury, but this time in South Carolina, Bishop Asbury commented:

"Alas for our poor school! The preachers are indifferent, and the people are too stingy."

The Methodist church was late in getting established in Kentucky, at least later than the Baptists and Presbyterians who were entrenched early at Fort Boonesboro where Kentucky's first religious service was held May 28, 1775.

Eight years later, two Methodist leaders, John Francis Clark, a preacher, and John Durham, a teacher, arrived in Kentucky from Mecklenburg County, Virginia. The first Kentucky Methodist groups, then called Methodist Societies, were established by Clark and Durham in 1783.

As soon as the first few families in the wilds of Kentucky had finished building a church and a few cabins, they were on their way to establishing a school, moving it, taking on another, closing it and so on for 162 years—as of today.

In 1789, the less than 1,000 Methodists scattered over Kentucky, which was still three years away from becoming a state, called upon their church conferences of North Carolina and Virginia for funds to establish a college.

One John Lewis of what is now Jessamine county gave 100 acres of land in 1790, and Bethel Academy, the first Methodist college venture in Kentucky, was born to live a short life. Bethel was Bishop Francis Asbury's "nightmare." A three-story brick building was started almost immediately. Classes began by the time the first floor was completed; and by the time the third floor was finished, Bethel was practically bankrupt. Nathaniel Harris was the first master, and in 1798, the Rev. Valentine Cook took over the leadership of Bethel. He soon resigned to take a teaching position at Harrodsburg. His successor was the Rev. John Metcalf. Brother Metcalf, without authority from Bethel's trustees, moved the academy's equipment and classes to Nicholasville. For this breach of diplomacy, he was suspended from the ministry for one year.

Bishop Asbury, speaking before the Methodist conference at Bethel Academy in 1800, said:

"I came to Bethel . . . . . I was so dejected that I could say little, but weep. Here is Bethel, eighty by thirty feet, with high roof and finished below. Now we want a fund and an income of three hundred pounds per year to carry it on; without which it will

be useless. . . . But it is too far distant from public places; its being surrounded by the Kentucky river in part, we now find to be no benefit. Thus, all our excellencies are turned into defects."

Here, in Methodism's first educational enterprise in Kentucky, the church found fault with its location.

From 1800, Bethel Academy began to die away. Nathaniel Harris went back to carry on a private school there, and Brother Lewis reclaimed his land because technically, if not physically, Bethel had moved to Nicholasville.

The last mention of Bethel in the minutes of the church, with relation to support, was an allocation of the equivalent of $33.50 as charity to the trustees of Bethel in 1808. A few years later, dilapidated Bethel was torn down. Perhaps its only real hour of glory came in September, 1933, when the Kentucky conference erected at Wilmore a historical marker, built from the stones of Bethel's foundation.

But never let it be said of the early-day Methodists that they were inclined to become discouraged.

By 1821, they had decided to open a college along the banks of the Ohio River through acquisition of Bracken Academy at Augusta. In December, 1822, the institution was chartered by the Legislature of Kentucky as a college and the Methodists again were on the way. The administration building was constructed in the autumn of 1823 and classes were in full swing in 1824.

With Augusta off to a reasonably good start, the Methodists opened their pocketbooks to another school destined to even greater success, Science Hill Female Academy, opened at Shelbyville March 25, 1825 by the Rev. John Tevis and his wife, Julia A. Hieronymous Tevis, both Methodists.

To help finance operation of Augusta College, the Methodists ventured into strange fields for revenue. They established a community newspaper known as *The Augusta Herald.* As soon as the paper got into operation, the church decided to buy the ferryboat line across the Ohio River at Augusta. What revenue the two enterprises yielded—if any—was not enough to save the college from eventual bankruptcy.

By 1837, Augusta was in great financial distress. Tuition fees were held low to accommodate students from poor families. Faculty salaries went down. President Henry Bascom, then in his tenth year as the college administrator, drew less than $500 for a year's work. He had been employed at $1,500 per year.

Doom for Augusta—although it was to suffer a few years longer—was sealed on September 22, 1841, when the Kentucky

conference voted to spread the church's protective, if not wealthy, wing over Transylvania University at Lexington.

In 1842, the Methodists took over Transylvania, operating it until 1848, most of the time under the presidency of Dr. Bascom who was "borrowed" from Augusta.

Transylvania did fairly well under the Methodists, at least for a few years. However, internal dissensions among faculty members, denominational jealousies and the failure of Methodists to support the school forced the church to abandon Transylvania.

And what was happening to Augusta?

By 1849, Augusta was gasping for its last breath and the Methodists of Kentucky were rubbing their eyes after another educational nightmare. One of the few records in the church on the twilight years of Augusta were resolutions of a conference committee showing startling parallel to recommendations before and after on Methodist colleges. A paragraph from the resolutions read:

"The location of the college at Augusta was the subject of comment in Methodist circles throughout the state, and the opinion was commonly expressed that a removal to some other place was requisite if the church desired to maintain an institution of learning of high grade."

The slavery problem had its effect on Augusta since northerners did not want to send their boys and girls into a slave-holding state, and the southerners were reluctant to enroll their children in a school so close to Ohio.

Meanwhile, the Kentucky conference was spreading its school funds in many spots. A girls' school was established at Mt. Sterling, and aid went to preparatory schools at La Grange, Bardstown, Richmond and Greensburg. The Rev. R. T. P. Allen of Kentucky Military Institute, called for and received support for K. M. I., as did Dr. T. N. Ralston for his new girls' school at Lexington.

The Methodists in the decade following the collapse of Augusta were never without their dreams for a four-year college. In the late 1850's, they added Millersburg Female Collegiate Institute to their patronage list, and that step was destined to lead to the establishment of Wesleyan.

On September 12, 1860, the Kentucky Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, became a corporate body by act of the Legislature. Under this charter, Kentucky Wesleyan College—to be known until 1875 as Kentucky Wesleyan University—was opened in September, 1866, at Millersburg, the six-year delay having resulted from the War between the States.

Dr. Charles Taylor of South Carolina, the first president, served four years.

During the early years of Wesleyan, the conference continued to support the Millersburg girls' college, Science Hill, K. M. I., Shelbyville Male High School, and for a short while, Greenwood Seminary at Frankfort, and Harmonia College at Perryville.

In 1869, the conference bought Millersburg Female Collegiate Institute from its private owners to prevent it from falling into the hands of another denomination.

Wesleyan's first graduating class, in 1870, totaled 10 men. The student body was 144.

The Millersburg schools of the church became known in 1875 as Kentucky Wesleyan College and Millersburg Female College. For the next ten years all went well. Methodist education seemed to have prospered even without funds.

The clouds began gathering without warning at the Kentucky conference meeting in 1886. The resolutions on education included this paragraph:

"The time has come when we should consider the question of the future location of Kentucky Wesleyan College and for the furtherance of such purpose we do now invite propositions from any and all places within the bounds of the Kentucky Annual Conference, said propositions to be forwarded before the first of June, 1887."

Winchester—working much in the same fashion in 1887-88 as Owensboro in 1950-51—called out its leading citizens, raised a fund of $35,000 and donated five acres of land.

The Methodists at their 1887 meeting voted to abandon their successful college at Millersburg and to accept Winchester's offer, even after Millersburg residents had offered $20,000 to hold the college.

Millersburg challenged the relocation, finally losing a decision in the Court of Appeals, which upheld the Bourbon Circuit Court.

During the litigation, Millersburg held onto the college, but when the 1889-90 school year came to a close, the college was packed up and moved to Winchester where classrooms were set up in churches and public buildings. In 1890, the K. W. C. property at Millersburg was sold to E. P. Gamble for $5,000.

In 1892, the conference voted to accept women students at Kentucky Wesleyan College and the presence of 17 young ladies during that year was recorded as "elevating and refining."

The conference spread its wings again in 1898, establishing a Kentucky Wesleyan Academy at Campton with 205 students, and

a Kentucky Wesleyan Academy at Burnside with an enrollment of 105. That strategy for attracting students to Wesleyan failed as the enrollment when the twentieth century started was only 121, much less than the average for 20 years before at Millersburg. The academies evaporated.

First major calamity in Winchester was a fire on February 14, 1905, destroying the administration building. Winchester citizens pitched in with $24,508.95, added $20,000 in gifts from J. C. C. Mayo and Andrew Carnegie and insurance settlements. By the summer of 1906, the college's present huge three-story administration building was completed.

The church opened Kentucky Wesleyan Academy on the campus in 1906. It lived 15 years.

A Carnegie gift of $15,000 led to a library in 1915. The college's first gymnasium, converted from a broom factory with a gift of $400 by Winchester sportsmen, was opened the same year.

A new dormitory for girls, Garnett Hall, was built in 1917, and a second dormitory for men, Batson Hall, followed in 1922.

Winchester citizens contributed to the construction of a $120,000 auditorium-gymnasium in 1925, dedicated to grand old Professor B. T. Spencer, long revered member of the faculty.

Wesleyan began receiving direct aid from Western Kentucky Methodist churches on February 25, 1926, when the Kentucky conference was combined with the Louisville Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in its educational efforts through a joint board of education, 12 churchmen from each conference.

The 1950 decision to go to Owensboro was not exactly a new thought.

In 1940, the two conferences considered moving Wesleyan to Louisville. Surveys were made by an education commission. At the end of extensive research, the commission gave its official report to the conferences at their 1941 meetings. The published report follows:

"Kentucky Wesleyan College (in Winchester) is so located to be in a position to serve the needs of the entire state; and, while it is true that it is located in the vicinity of other colleges, this feature may have its advantages as well as its disadvantages. The best thing that Kentucky Methodism can do, therefore, is to concentrate its efforts in the development and maintenance of a fully-accredited college at Winchester."

It is historical fact that after the adoption of favorable resolu-

tions such as the above, the Methodists, restless souls that they are, have been quick to begin something else.

Oddly, the motion in 1940 to move the college to Louisville failed by two votes in the Louisville conference itself; whereas, the Kentucky conference voted overwhelmingly to move Wesleyan. In 1950, the Kentucky conference favored the Owensboro plan by only two votes, and the vote in the Louisville conference was a landslide for relocation.

By 1948, Wesleyan's indebtedness was erased and for the first time in its history, it was on the fully-accredited list of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. By 1950, the endowment had grown to its highest figure, $360,377.38. Since the vote to move to Owensboro, the college has operated in the red, and with 25 per cent fewer students than the average for the past decade. The total this year was 175.

The Owensboro Wesleyan committee which directed the fund-raising campaign and under whose assistance the new college structure will be designed is deserving of the very highest praise.

Owensboro has gone about the entire program of moving the college in a business-like manner. It should also be recorded that Owensboro is not taking Wesleyan from Winchester, but, moreover, it is simply providing a new home for a college whose trustees felt that a relocation was imperative. At Owensboro, a 40-acre campus has been purchased at the city's outskirts. Plans are in the making for a suburban college community development with ample residential facilities adjacent to the college sector. A committee has been named to plan an administration building.

Owensboro, one of the state's wealthiest communities, can support a college such as Wesleyan if the citizenry is so inclined. Whether any material support can be expected from the Methodist church is conjecture. The most Wesleyan ever received from the church in any one year was the College Day collection of around $10,000 in 1946-47. During its history, the annual contributions have dipped below $1,000.

Considerable resentment developed in the Kentucky conference meeting at Richmond last autumn. Newspaper accounts of that meeting showed a well-organized movement among laymen and ministers to revoke the relocation action. However, the insurgents relaxed and the conference cast a vote of confidence and pledged itself to support Wesleyan. Any Methodist in the Kentucky conference will admit that some feeling against relocation still exists. Whether that will continue or subside remains anyone's guess. One matter which definitely could benefit the Owensboro plan

would be an early and profitable sale of the "ghost campus" standing on the western rim of Winchester. As of today, the committee on disposition of the property has reported no offers. Methodists may be reluctant to give money to new buildings while an adequate college plant stands vacant at Winchester.

Notwithstanding, the Methodists have approved a million-dollar fund-raising campaign for the Owensboro Wesleyan. There is little question but that such an amount could be obtained easily if the church is serious about the campaign. Certainly, Wesleyan needs now more than ever this financial expression of confidence.

Sentimentalists who might be disposed to over-valuing the tradition, lore, history and good-will of the 61-year-old location of a college are to be reminded that it long since has been accepted as fact that ample endowment and a steady flow of five and six-figure donations are more important to sustenance. The ivy-covered college strong in its tradition and weak in its treasury belongs to the glory of the past. Privately-owned and church-supported colleges of today are costly luxuries dependent upon the wavering generosity of their respective constituents.

Wesleyan's walls have been stripped of ivy and the books have been packed. The college is moving into a new home on high spirit and to the cheers of its students, alumni and friends. Her goals are higher than ever and the determination for success is stronger.

To South Carolina, the Methodists turned for Wesleyan's first president in 1866, and to the same state they turned only last week to call Dr. Oscar William Lever, minister and educator, to the presidency of the new Wesleyan at Owensboro.

Whatever success the future Wesleyan may enjoy, it is certainty that come what may there will be following the college to its fondest dreams the prayers and the faith of those grand old men of early-day education in the Methodist church in Kentucky.

Out of the shadows and down the path to Owensboro will march the spirit of Francis Clark and John Durham, the first teachers in the wilderness; Nathaniel Harris, the first schoolmaster at Bethel; Francis Asbury, Kentucky's first bishop; John and Julia Tevis of Science Hill; Henry Bascom from Augusta; Charles Taylor, Wesleyan's first president 85 years ago, Professor Benjamin T. Spencer and others like him who gave their lives to Kentucky education in America's largest protestant church.

May there be no more educational nightmares for these courageous churchmen and may the struggle be proven worthwhile!

SOURCES FOR HISTORICAL REFERENCES

Kentucky Annual Conference minutes (1864-1891).
Kentucky Annual Conference minutes (1892-1905).
Methodism on the March—A Study of Methodism as Mobilized: by Charles C. Jarrell.
Music in Methodist Schools: by Ruth Stallings.
History of Methodism in Kentucky, by W. E. Arnold. Pentecostal Herald Press, Louisville. 1935-1936. Vols. I & II.
Encyclopaedia Britannica (Methodism): 1951 Copyright.