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C. Wesley Christman Archives New York Annual Conference

SUMMER 2010

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS
WE ARE BUILDING UP A HEALTHY BODY OF CHRIST

Starting a School in Korea, 1885

Mary Scranton was the first female Methodist missionary to arrive on Korean soil, traveling there in 1885 to accompany her only child, Methodist pastor / physician William Benton Scranton and his family. She was fifty-two then, and had been a widow for a little over a decade. Conditions were beyond deplorable when the Scrantons and their missionary party arrived in the country, then dubbed in its entirety as "The Hermit Kingdom." Sanitation systems were virtually non-existent, pestilence and disease were rampant...and women had no rights. Girls were not considered worth educating, so they were frequently not taught to read or write and sometimes, not even given names. Who better than this aging mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother to head up women's work in Korea?

Only a year after her arrival, in 1886, commencing with a single female student,

Mary Scranton founded Ewha Haktang, the country's first school for girls - a school which grew to become high schools, colleges, and a university. Today, the well-respected university in Seoul that bears the Ewha name comprises some 24,000 students, and for many decades has boasted its status as the largest all-female university in the world.

"Thank God for the inestimable privilege of working in Korea," Mary Scranton once wrote on her missionary records.

It seems fitting, then, that Korean people once called her as the *dae-puin*, the great lady. Her statue sits under sprawling conifers on the campus grounds of an all-female university in Seoul - a perpetual reminder that one person can indeed make a difference. Last year, Korea's president bestowed

...continued on page three

Can we help you clean house?

Do you have Methodist church records stored in your basement or attic? Maybe you have forgotten that you've got records from a church that's now closed permanently - perhaps these boxes are taking up space in your house and you'd like to find them a more appropriate home.

After a church is closed, sometimes historical records end up in a private home, soon to be forgotten. This can be a tragic dead end for someone

looking for birth or death records of a family member - if those records cannot be located, a family's history might be lost for good. The Commission on Archives and History wants to find historical records from old churches and house them in the Christman Archives - if you have records such as these, we'd love to take them off your hands!

Please contact the Christman Archives and let us help you arrange for permanent archival storage for these records.

*"We both enjoyed the archival workshop at the center so much that I am starting archival work at my church, using the standards you printed, and excited by the thought that order can reign, if only briefly."
— Participant at the spring Church Archives and Records Management Workshop*

Fall Archives Workshops Forming

Come and learn more about the mission and ministry of the Commission on Archives and History by participating in a workshop! Our first two workshops held this spring were very well-attended and we would like to offer the same program to participants who could not join us. This fall, we offer the same workshops so that more folks might have the opportunity to learn about records management issues and genealogy. So that everyone might participate fully, we must limit each workshop to 25 participants. A light lunch will be provided for participants, and a \$10 donation will cover costs for meeting materials, lunch and tote bag.

Saturday, October 16, 2010, 12 – 4 pm. The Commission on Archives and History will hold a **church records and archives management workshop**. This workshop is intended to support and assist pastors, administrative assistants, trustees and local church historians, introducing participants to basic archival concepts. Hands-on activities will be included. Lunch will be provided at noon, with the workshop beginning at 1 pm.

Saturday, November 6, 2010, 12 – 4 pm. The Commission on Archives and History is planning to hold a **genealogy workshop**, including discussions with Saugerties historian, author and genealogist Audrey Klinkenberg. Audrey has been president of the Ulster County Genealogical Society, registrar of a local DAR chapter and serves as the historian for the town of Saugerties, NY. Audrey writes, "At this workshop, we will be focusing on genealogy at the beginning. Come prepared to ask questions and be ready to find new avenues for research."

Both workshops will be held at the United Methodist Center of the New York Annual Conference, 20 Soundview Avenue in White Plains, NY. Please contact archivist Mary Robison at archives@nyac.com or telephone 914.997.1570 (toll free 888.696.6922), ext. 128, in order to register for these events.



got records?
We can help!
Commission on Archives and History
and
The C. Wesley Christman Archives
www.nyac.com/archives
ChicoBag

Do your part for the environment and support the Christman Archives!
Purchase a stylish and reusable shopping bag from the Commission on Archives and History, offered for the low, low price of \$6 each or 2/\$10.
Find us at Annual Conference,
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Mission History at New York

...continued from page one

upon her the *Moo-Gong Wha* award, the highest tribute that can be granted to a civilian. Yet, intriguingly, the New England woman who brought so much light to the Asian peninsula has remained enveloped in the shadow of the unknown back home.

Mary Fletcher Benton was the daughter of a Tolland, Connecticut, native and Methodist-Episcopal circuit preacher, attending school in Norwich, Connecticut. Later, she became Mrs. William T. Scranton and a Civil-War wife who worshipped with her family and in-laws at the First Methodist-Episcopal Church on the corner of College and Elm, long before that establishment became today's First and Summerfield United Methodist Church.

When Mrs. Scranton died in Seoul, on October 8, 1909, Korean people of all ages, genders, and stations in life walked for miles beside her casket to that final resting place known as Yongwhajin, a cemetery located high over the banks of the Han River. A hundred years later, on October 8, 2009, three thousand people of mixed ages and genders also gathered in Seoul to celebrate Mary Scranton's life on the century anniversary of her death.

However, today outside of certain ecumenical circles, Mary Scranton remains virtually unknown. Chances are I would have never heard of her either, had I not once resided in Korea myself. Nor would her surname have held much significance if my part of Connecticut were not sated with Scranton genealogy and lore. It took ten years after finding Mary Scranton in a Korean history

book for me to begin putting the pieces together, and were it not for the Internet and the popularity of genealogical websites, tracing Mary's heritage and locating her long-lost descendants may not have been possible.

While retracing Mary's married years has been relatively easy - due in large part to the willingness of Reverend Sara Lamar-Sterling to allow me to poke around in the New Haven church's archives closet - trying to identify her formative years has been thwarted with obstacles. Why? Those earlier church records have become lost or hopefully, only misplaced. There are no records of Mary within those standard volumes of her paternal or maternal lineages, nor are her birth records in Belchertown, Massachusetts, where she claims she was born in 1832. While some historians remain skeptical that a woman could be revered within a very male-oriented country, others wonder if Mary F. Benton ever existed at all!

Fortunately, Mary's father's Methodist-Episcopal obituary and his church records mention her; ditto for the Scranton genealogies. Fortunately again, her own obituary or her son's obituary also mention those maternal and paternal lineages as well as their respective hometowns. Still, there are those who doubt her legacy as well as her formative-year identity.

My goal is to change that - to ensure that this Methodist heroine and pioneer achieves the respect and recognition she deserves in the New England lands of her ancestors and formative years - the places she once called home. — *Ellen Svea Swanson*

Editor's note: The Christman Archives welcomes visitors conducting research into Methodist history. Ellen Svea Swanson joined us recently in the Archives to work on her project describing the life and ministry of Mary Scranton, a 19th-century Connecticut Methodist missionary to Korea, and we are grateful to her for sharing some of her findings with us in this article.



Ewha Haktang, 1886,
Original site of Ewha Womans
University, from the university
website.

“While retracing Mary’s married years has been relatively easy ... trying to identify her formative years has been thwarted with obstacles. Why? Those earlier church records have become lost...”

— *Ellen Svea Swanson, on the frustrations of searching for missing church records*

Some Recent Acquisitions

The Christman Archives gratefully acknowledges receipt of the following collections and items ...

First United Methodist Church, South Norwalk, CT, *historical, corporate records, artifacts.*

Chelsea United Methodist Church, Chelsea, NY, *artifacts from closed church.*

Lexington United Methodist Church, New York, NY, *historical, corporate records, artifacts.*

Alice Lum, Richmond Hill United Methodist Church, Queens, NY, *workshop photographs for use in Archives publications.*

Michael Denny via United Methodist Center, White Plains, *blueprints, planning documents.*

Springfield Gardens United Methodist Church, Queens, NY, *church history DVD*

Emily Hill, Oxford, NY, *1899 New York Conference Journal.*

A Note from the Chair, Commission on Archives and History

On behalf of the members of the Commission on Archives and History and myself, we extend our gratitude for your continued generous support of the C. Wesley Christman Archives.

Your paid shared ministry (local church) apportionments, in addition to many individual donations ensure that our ministry can continue.

Your donations help the past live! Thank you for supporting our ministry to preserve the history of the New York Annual Conference.

... *Leslie Reyman*

Collecting Your Church's History at the Christman Archives

Is your church celebrating a milestone in its history or having a significant anniversary? Often churches will create pamphlets and booklets with historical material for such occasions. You might not think so, but these items often contain information that may be lost in later years. The Christman Archives is collecting historical information about all churches within the New York Annual Conference, and we hope that you will forward booklets, pamphlets, CDs and other



**REV. E.L. JONES,
FLUSHING METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
DIRECTORY, 1865**

historical materials to us for our files. We would be grateful for any materials you have relating to the history of your church or of Methodism in your area. Please send these to the Christman Archives in White Plains, and we will hold this material and use it for historical research for many years to come.



Keep up with what we're doing -
check out
"What's New at the Archives" at
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