



Telling Our Stories

250 Years of United Methodism
in the New York Area

1766-2016

www.nyac.com/250years



Founders of John Street Church

1766-1768



Barbara Heck, Philip Embury, and Captain Thomas Webb

Several heartbreaking years in New York City left an Irish immigrant named Barbara Heck frustrated and concerned about the path she and her friends were travelling. These concerns boiled over when Barbara (1734-1804) discovered a group of her friends gambling. After throwing the playing cards into the fireplace, Barbara rushed to her cousin Philip Embury's house and urged him to begin an unprecedented ministry.

Before coming to New York, Philip (1728-1773) was a Methodist preacher in Ireland. At Barbara's insistence, Philip picked up his old trade and, on October 12, 1766, preached in his home to a small group she assembled there. Church historians trace the beginning of John Street Church in New York City and the oldest Methodist church in the United States to this event.

Captain Thomas Webb (1724-1796) offered his services to Barbara and Philip's group in February 1767.

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(Heck, Embury, and Webb, cont.)

A British army officer, an associate of John Wesley, and a Methodist preacher, Webb quickly assumed a leadership role in the growing congregation. His passionate service and financial generosity ultimately allowed the group to build their own chapel on John Street in 1768.

For Discussion

- Neither Heck nor Embury nor Webb could have established John Street Church alone. How do those with different gifts and talents work together in your church?
- Barbara Heck fought against activities that were taking her friends away from the church. What conditions or activities work against participation in church today? What might you do to change this?
- New York City had several established churches when Embury began preaching. What was different about what the Methodists taught? Do those beliefs differ from what is being taught today?



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