EXHORTATION!
NEWS BULLETIN OF THE STRAWBRIDGE SHRINE
The Strawbridge Shrine | New Windsor, Maryland
The First Home of American Methodism

May 1, 2022 2650 Strawbridge Lane, New Windsor, Maryland 21776 Vol. XXVIII, No. 1

THE EXCEPTIONAL MR. STRAWBRIDGE
By Rev. Bob Kells

*The United States will observe its 250th anniversary in 2026. In conjunction with this observance, the Strawbridge Shrine Association begins a series of articles that look back 250 years to the life and times of Robert Strawbridge.*

The year 1773 was a notable one for the Methodist movement in America and for its first itinerant preacher in the British North American colonies, Robert Strawbridge. In July of that year, Methodist preachers met at St. George's Church in Philadelphia. The purpose of the meeting was to adopt a set of standards for the preachers in line with the teaching and practices established by the movement's founder, John Wesley. Of the six proposals put forth, one of them directly concerned Robert Strawbridge. Francis Asbury, then a leading preacher among the Methodists, recorded the proposal in his journal: "3. No preacher in our connexion shall be permitted to administer the ordinances at this time; except Mr. Strawbridge, and he under the particular direction of the assistant." The ordinances referred to were the sacraments - baptism and Holy Communion.

Why was Robert Strawbridge the subject of this exception? To understand this, we return to the origins of the Methodist movement in England and its transplantation to North America.

Methodism arose in the early 18th century primarily through the work of John Wesley and his younger brother, Charles. The purpose of the movement, as described by John Wesley, was to "reform the nation, particularly the church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land." Throughout his very active life, John Wesley insisted

SPRING FINANCIAL CAMPAIGN
Charitable organizations may look to many sources to support their non-profit work; corporate sponsorship, government grants, foundations, fundraising events, endowments and facilities rentals. The newly established Development Committee of the Strawbridge Shrine Association will be looking at the many ways in which we, as a non-profit entity, can be the best stewards possible of the unique property and artifacts entrusted to us. [see article, page 4]

But for now, the Shrine relies almost exclusively on the one financial resource that has proven to be the most reliable; You.

Through your membership, your contributions, your memorial and honorary gifts, and your support of our preservation & restoration funds, you provide the means for the Association to preserve and protect these historic treasures, to offer witness to the story of bravery and dedication that they tell, and to bring them to life for members and visitors of this generation and the next.

Included in this news bulletin is your spring contribution form. Whether you are a long-time member, a new member, or a contributor, please take a moment to fill it out and return it along with your gift. This is the only way to ensure that our heritage not only lives on, but thrives.

PLEASE NOTE:
A New Phone Number for the Shrine

Late last year, our phone carrier discontinued the kind of service which the Shrine Association had subscribed to for many years. Our new carrier was not able to preserve our phone number. Please update your records and directories with our new number: 443-289-0191

(Continued on Page 3)
CURATOR’S CORNER
By Helen Kemp, Curator

It’s Spring at the historic Strawbridge Shrine!
The flowers and trees are blooming and folks are planning now to visit our beautiful campus, which is located in New Windsor, Maryland. It was to this place that Robert Strawbridge came from Ireland and, as a circuit rider, from which he introduced and established the Methodist movement in 1760 America. His legacy still remains through the witness that he left in people’s lives. So come and walk with us into the living history of his times! Tours are free and may be scheduled by contacting the curator at 443-289-0191.

Or visit www.StrawbridgeShrine.org

UPDATE
Photographs By Helen Kemp, Curator

Phase One of the stabilization and restoration work is complete on the historic nineteenth century bank barn!
The roof has been replaced, meaning the structure is more protected from water intrusion. Some rotted wooden members have been repaired, and the majority of damaged siding has been replaced. Over fifty thousand dollars was raised towards this effort, and we are within six thousand dollars of meeting the cost of Phase One.

ANNUAL MEETING MOVES TO JANUARY
Change to By-Laws Voted

At a called meeting of the Board of Directors on April 15, 2023, it was unanimously approved to remove the words “in October” from our By-Laws in the paragraph mandating an annual meeting. It was agreed that our next regularly scheduled annual meeting will take place in January 2024.

While seemingly a minor change, the removal of these two words will allow the directors, and the Finance and Development Committees in particular, to present a more complete picture of our annual financial picture for the previous year. At the same time, it allows us to present a budget based on the realities of the year which will have just concluded.

The new date gets away from those busy pre-holiday months to a time when people, and venues, are generally more available. It also alleviates some pressure at a time when there are a number of other meetings typically scheduled, including the Annual Meeting of the BWC Historical Society.

There will be no annual meeting in calendar year 2023. Instead, plan to attend the Annual Meeting for this year in January of 2024.

COLONIAL DAY 2023
By Ronda Robinson, Program Committee Chair

Colonial Day at the Strawbridge Shrine will be Saturday, June 17, 2023 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Several historic crafts demonstrations will be coming for the first time - including rug making, weaving, and spinning - while some of last year’s "first-timers" will be returning; flax work, Cherokee beadwork & furs, and the Northern Maryland Dirt Diggers (archaeology). They will join our faithfuls of many years; caning, calligraphy and blacksmithing. Donna Nomick also returns with her hammered dulcimer.

Docents will be available in the Strawbridge House, the Evans House and the Log Meeting House. You will also see the progress on the restoration of the historic civil-war era barn. And plan to visit the Poulson Family cemetery exhibit, with original stones dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

A new vendor last year, Uncle B's returns selling shaved ice treats. And, as always, Strawbridge United Methodist Church will be selling the very popular fried fish and chicken lunches. Admission is FREE.
Methodism remain a renewal movement within the Anglican Church. That meant Methodists continued to rely on Anglican priests to receive the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. This was not a problem in England where every village had its parish priest. But the British Colonies in North America were a different story.²

Sometime around 1760, Robert Strawbridge and his wife Elizabeth settled in Maryland on a small tenant farm near Sam's Creek in what was then Frederick County. Already a local Methodist preacher in his native Ireland, Strawbridge began preaching the gospel and traveling almost immediately. As he saw it, one of the duties of the traveling preacher was to administer the sacraments. As early as 1762 or 1763, Strawbridge baptized a neighbor Henry Maynard. By 1770, and probably much earlier, he was also administering Holy Communion in the places where he stopped to preach. For Strawbridge, the reason for doing so was simple: he saw a need and he met it. Besides, Anglican priests were few and far between in the British colonies, where they were confined mostly to the coastal cities and were unwilling to travel to the hinterlands. Who better, then, to conduct the sacraments for the people of God than the preachers who led the preaching services?³

But Robert Strawbridge's reasoning did not sit well with the preachers John Wesley sent to America. In 1769 and again in 1771, Wesley sent lay preachers to organize the Methodist societies in the colonies. Of these, Francis Asbury was the greatest advocate for instilling the same discipline Wesley had forged in England in the fledgling American Methodist societies. In December 1772, Asbury convened a quarterly meeting at the home of Joseph Presbury near Abingdon, Maryland. When the topic of administering the sacraments came up, Asbury pressed the six preachers serving the Maryland circuits to relent in giving the ordinances to the people. However, Strawbridge was adamant in continuing the practice. The other preachers either supported him or were non-committal.⁴

The matter came to a culminating point in 1773 when newly arrived lay preacher, Thomas Rankin, called an annual meeting of all the Methodist preachers in the colonies. Rankin was a Scot who had lived in the American colonies. With a decade of experience in England as a circuit rider and superintendent, Rankin was trusted by Wesley to get the American Methodists in line.⁵

Shortly after his arrival in Philadelphia, Rankin called a Conference for Methodist preachers—the first annual conference in America. Ten itinerants responded to the call, including Francis Asbury. Robert Strawbridge was conspicuous by his absence. But his supporters let Rankin and Asbury know they would not end the practice of administering the ordinances. Numbers largely explain Strawbridge's influence. Of the 1,160 Methodists counted in all the societies from New York to Virginia in that year, fully 500 were in Maryland. These had been converted to Methodism by Robert Strawbridge or the itinerant preachers he brought into service.⁶ All of them believed lay preachers should not be barred from offering the sacraments to their widely scattered flocks.

Robert Strawbridge continued to defy Wesleyan discipline and administer the ordinances to his congregants. In doing so, he contributed to a near-split in the movement in the late 1770s when some of the southern preachers began to ordain each other as a way to legitimize their practice of serving the sacraments. The issue was finally resolved in 1784 when John Wesley ordained two preachers, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, to serve in America. Along with them went Thomas Coke, an Anglican priest, whom Wesley designated to be Superintendent for the American Methodists. At the Christmas Conference of 1784, the preachers present elected Francis Asbury as General Superintendent with the authority to ordain deacons and elders for the newly founded Methodist Episcopal Church.

Robert Strawbridge did not live to see the day when itinerating Methodist preachers were enabled to administer the sacraments. He died in 1781. But Strawbridge's independent spirit, which came to characterize much of Methodism, plus his early advocacy for preachers to conduct the sacraments, served as a check on the centralization of power in American Methodism. Questions surrounding the balance between episcopal authority and lay participation would become a recurring issue for American Methodism.⁷
The Strawbridge Shrine Association is planning for the future. At the request of President Rev. Mary Buzby, the Development Committee began work on a new mission statement for the Shrine and a strategic plan. The mission statement provides the organization a clear sense of purpose and (to be somewhat redundant) mission in the world. The previous mission statement served us well for many years. But upon closer examination, it was clear that some important functions of the Shrine did not receive the emphasis they deserved. After reviewing the primary functions for Shrine Association, we drafted a new mission statement that was approved at the January 2023 meeting of the Board of Directors. The new statement reads:

*The mission of the Strawbridge Shrine Association is to preserve, interpret, and share the founding story of American Methodism through the life and legacy of Robert Strawbridge.*

Let’s look briefly at each of the three core functions set out in this statement:

- **Preserving** the site covers the buildings, grounds, artifacts, and reproductions that help tell our story. This includes both maintaining our physical assets in good repair and restoring selected assets to their original 1760s appearance.

- **Interpreting** the Shrine site means to analyze and assess both the physical artifacts associated with Robert Strawbridge and the stories about him that have been passed down to us over the years. From these we draw out the meaning of God’s work through Robert Strawbridge for the Church today, and for anyone who has an interest in early American history.

- **Sharing** concerns the various means available to tell the story of Robert Strawbridge. The most prominent ways we tell the story are through in-person tours, publications, social media, online presence, and special events. We want to ensure our story is accessible to a variety of audiences including United Methodists, members of the Wesleyan family of denominations, history aficionados, and the general public.

Our new mission statement makes clear the purpose for the Shrine in the world. It is what we exist to do. It also provides the starting point for the future direction of the Shrine Association as we begin work on a strategic plan. A strategic plan focuses the work of the organization to help it fulfill its mission. The plan sets goals, establishes priorities, and provides a roadmap for the organization to move from its current state to a desired future.

The Shrine’s strategic plan is still being formulated but it’s basic framework will address the three major tasks identified in our mission statement: *preserve, interpret, and share*. A fourth task that is internal to the organization but no less important is *sustaining*—how do we ensure we will have the human, physical, and financial resources needed to carry out our mission? Some of the functions included in the sustaining task include:

- fundraising (for current operations and capital improvements),
- recruiting (for board officers, interpreters, and other helpers),
- membership (maintaining current base and expanding),
- communications (actively engaging people interested in the work of the Shrine),
- technology (upgrading current technology, identifying and adopting new technology),
- training (equipping volunteers and leaders to carry out the work of the Shrine), and
- outreach (to organizations similar to the Shrine to learn from their experiences, share what we have learned, and to promote the Strawbridge story).

The Development Committee will continue its work on the strategic plan over the next year. By the end of the process, we hope to have a roadmap to a viable and vital future for the Shrine Association. As in the past, the Shrine Association will continue to tell the old, old story of how God works through God’s people to share the good news of Jesus Christ in every age.

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## The Exceptional Mr. Strawbridge

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In Memory of Jane Spencer
By United Methodist Women,
Deer Park UMC
The Strawbridge Shrine Association
The First Home of American Methodism

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM
PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR DONATION

Type of Membership:  
☐ Individual Membership........$40.00  ☐ Sustaining........$100.00  
☐ Couple’s Membership..........$60.00  ☐ Sponsor...............$250.00  
☐ Church / Church Group......$100.00  ☐ Patron...............$500.00  
☐ Youth (under 20 yrs. of age)….$5.00  ☐ Benefactor........$1,000.00

Date of birth: ___________

Additional Contribution:  
☐ In addition to membership I / We are adding a donation of $ ____________________
☐ I would like to support the Preservation Fund with a donation of $ ________________
☐ I would like to support the Barn Restoration Fund with a donation of $ ________________
☐ I / We do not wish to become a member, but please accept a donation of $ ____________

Special Gift:  
☐ A donation of $ __________ In Memory of ______________________________________________
☐ A donation of $ __________ In Honor of __________________________________________________

Member Information:  
(please print)

NAME(S) ____________________________________________________________

ADDRESS

CITY __________________________________ STATE ________ ZIP CODE ______

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Please make your check or money order to:

Strawbridge Shrine Association, Inc.
2200 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

The Strawbridge Shrine Association, Inc., is a non-profit 501(c)(3) entity. Your contribution is tax-deductible.
Stay Up-to-Date

For the latest on news and events, visit us at:

www.StrawbridgeShrine.org
www.Facebook.com/StrawbridgeShrine
Twitter: @StrawbridgeShrine
www.YouTube.com/StrawbridgeShrine

VOLUNTEERS VALUED

The Strawbridge Shrine needs volunteers to act as tour guides for Colonial Day June 17, 2023. If you would be willing to serve in a historic building for a couple of hours, we would provide you with a script for you to read.

Please contact Curator Helen Kemp at curator@strawbridgeshrine.org

THE ROAD AHEAD!

Saturday, June 17TH
Colonial Day at the Shrine
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Saturday, September 30TH
Pilgrimage Day, Baltimore-Washington
Bus trip departs from the BWC Conference Center

The Strawbridge Shrine is open April - October:

Fridays 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Saturdays 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Sundays 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

And most other days by appointment