



Sermon in Stone. Rev. George S. Brown: Stone Wall Builder, Missionary to Liberia, and African American Methodist Pastor in Antebellum Vermont

After his death in 1886 Rev. George S. Brown disappeared from the historical record for many years; but with recent interest in the lives and careers of African Americans in U.S. history, Brown once again came to the attention of the communities he served as pastor and stone mason.

By PATRICIA J. THOMPSON

What are the chances that an African American pastor would gather a white congregation in Vermont in the mid-1850s, then appoint a group of white men as trustees of their proposed church building, and finally oversee the construction of that building? Slim to none, you may be thinking. And yet, that was exactly the case in Wolcott, Vermont, in 1855 and 1856. His name was the Rev. George S. Brown, the first African American pastor in the former Troy Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.¹ He was born a free man on July 25, 1801, in Newport, Rhode

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Island, the son of Amos and Hannah [Smith] Brown.

Though George S. Brown was the first Methodist African American pastor to serve in Vermont, he was not the state's first African American pastor. Two predecessors, Lemuel Haynes and Alexander Twilight, both of whom were Congregational ministers, are well-known throughout the state. Unlike Twilight, who spent most of his life in Vermont, and Haynes, who served the Congregational church in West Rutland for 30 years in the early part of the nineteenth century, Brown spent a relatively short period of his life in the Green Mountain State. Yet, he, too, left a lasting legacy.

Brown spent the early years of his ministry and the final years of his life in the Glens Falls, New York, area; articles written about him there, however, make no mention of his ministry in Vermont. His *Journal*, which focused on his life in New York and his six years as a missionary in Liberia, was published in 1849 before he moved to Vermont.²

The official records of the Troy Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which covered northeastern New York and western Vermont at the time, contain no information about Brown's ministry in the town of Wolcott, primarily because prior to the Civil War, African Americans were not permitted to become members of Methodist annual conferences with clergy rights equal to their white brothers. They were able to be ordained but only as *local* pastors. In the Methodist church, as opposed to other Protestant denominations, it is membership in the annual conference that affords a pastor full clergy rights, including a guaranteed annual appointment. The position of local pastor gave men with a family the option of being in the ministry without having to itinerate (move from appointment to appointment throughout the conference every few years). It provided, as well, the option for African American men to serve in the ministry, often as evangelists, without the need to find predominantly white churches that would accept a Black man as their pastor, as there were relatively few African American congregations throughout the Methodist Episcopal denomination—especially in the North. The exception to this practice was in missionary conferences such as the Liberia Conference.

No records were kept on these local pastors, white or Black, at that time. Even if they did serve a church, they were considered only as "supply preachers," and the official appointment lists often simply stated, "To be supplied." If it had not been for the fact that Brown's ministry was well-known and remembered in the area, his history with the Wolcott Methodist church might have been totally lost.

For many years, the only information available regarding Brown's ministry in Vermont was one sentence that appeared in a short history of the Wolcott United Methodist church, *125th Anniversary of the Methodist Church of Wolcott, Vermont 1855-1980*, written by Florence Reed. The concluding sentence of the opening paragraph, which described the organization of the church in 1855, states, "The preacher in charge was the Rev. George S. Brown, whom Hemingway's [Hemenway's] *Gazetteer* says was a Negro."³ Further exploration revealed that the reference to Brown actually appeared in two sentences from Hamilton Child's *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Lamoille and Orleans County, Vt, for 1883-84*: "The M.E. church, located at Wolcott village, was organized at an early date, and supplied for years by circuit preachers, Rev. George Brown, a colored man being the first resident pastor. Through his energy and perseverance money was raised to build the present church building which was erected in 1855 [1856]."⁴

Information regarding Brown's ministry was initially located in the "History of the First Methodist Church of Sanford's Ridge [New York] 1800-1960" written by George and Catherine Webster:

In 1827... a wandering Negro minstrel came into the locality with his Scotch bagpipes, oboe, clarinet and other musical instruments, and stopped in his travels through the States to spend a few weeks working on a farm in Kingsbury. The two weeks that this man had planned for physical recovery from years of drinking and carousal, by working out in the hay and harvest fields, stretched out into two years and the wandering Negro minstrel, through the ministrations of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Cole, a devout Baptist family with whom he lived, and also through Mrs. Rebecca Shay and Miss Ann Guye, other Baptist people in Kingsbury, did forsake his sinful ways and become a fiery Christian zealot.

In a remarkable volume, printed in a limited edition in 1849, a copy of which has but recently been discovered, this legendary character, the great Negro Preacher, George S. Brown, gives a lengthy account of his life, trials and travels hereabouts and during his 6 years as a missionary to Liberia in West Africa.⁵

In his *Journal* Brown stated:

I was trained up after the straitest sect of Calvinism [the theology of the Congregationalists and Baptists], till I was twenty years old. I then took my departure from my father's house, (by his consent,) and went to seek refuge for myself. But soon I became a profligate...

The first effectual seed which was sown in my heart was under the preaching of Rev. L[orenzo] Dow at campmeeting in Mansfield [CT], when I was about fourteen y[ea]rs.⁶

The Rev. Dow was an eccentric Methodist Episcopal minister sometimes referred to as "Crazy Dow." He was among the earliest Method-

ist circuit riders assigned to Vermont, traveling up and down the Champlain Valley and into Canada, as well. Eventually, however, he was refused membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church because he did not conform to Methodist standards.

Anna Mower in *History of Morristown, Vermont*, reported that Lorenzo Dow was one of the earliest preachers in the area, preaching in John Safford's barn in Morrisville (about eight miles west of Wolcott) in 1798. She says of Dow, "his devotion to a cause which led him to persevere in spite of opposition from the religious leaders of his day, attracted and moved his hearers in spite of his eccentricities."⁷ Brown's call and devotion to the ministry would emulate Dow's in many ways.

Brown did not convert, however, until he moved to Kingsbury, New York, in the late 1820s. As noted by the Websters, he converted first to the Baptists. But after he met Methodist circuit rider William Ryder, whom he described as a "holy ghost man," Brown felt called by God to become an "Episcopal Methodist." While he seems to have rejected the doctrines of Calvinism, he was clearly drawn by the preaching of Methodists, first Lorenzo Dow and then, William Ryder.

Brown describes in his *Journal* how he and several others in the area were especially moved by the preaching of William Ryder. When the Baptist elder Rev. Colver realized that some of his members were being drawn to the Methodists:

as he preached on their fundamental doctrines, he gave us such strong Calvinism, banged off the opponent part of the church with such hard names, and then wound off by anathematizing [*sic*] the Methodist [*sic*], that we were not only disgusted at it, but our hearts were broken in pieces. Thus some of us returned home sad enough.

That afternoon, I went out into the grove, and fell on my face, weeping. And here, after I had wrestled about an hour, to get victory over the powers of darkness, which came upon me that afternoon, and had fully obtained it, I then asked the Lord which church I should join. And he said, join the Episcopal Methodist and be faithful in preaching the Gospel. I thanked the Lord for his frank answer, stopped weeping, and put down my foot to be a Methodist.⁸

Brown was particularly drawn by the doctrine of "holiness," the belief in a "second blessing" that resulted in entire sanctification or perfectionism. This he experienced not only with Ryder but also with a few other Methodist preachers in the Glens Falls area at the time, including Moses Brayton and Seymour Coleman. Shortly after he converted, he began to feel the call to "launch out further into the deep," which he initially interpreted as his call to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁹

Brown received a verbal license to exhort from the Rev. T. Fields in

1830, then a formal license to exhort from the Washington Circuit Quarterly Conference in April 1831 and a license to preach on July 27, 1833.¹⁰

The Websters state that, “Word has been handed down to persons now living in the community from people who lived during his preaching that such crowds came to hear him that no building was large enough to hold them and that many hundreds were soundly converted through the exhortations of this inspired Negro.”¹¹

During these years Brown made his living by building stone walls, primarily on farms in the area. He received \$1 and a night’s board and lodging for every rod (16½ feet). He gained quite a reputation as an expert stone wall builder, and many of the walls he built still stand today as a lasting monument to his skill. They were particularly known for being constructed without the use of any mortar to hold the stones in place.

Shortly after Brown received his license to preach, he began to experience a call to “launch out into the deep of some heathen nation, and there preach Jesus and the Resurrection.”¹² At that time, the only foreign mission field for the Methodist Episcopal Church was in the newly forming colony of Liberia, where formerly enslaved people from America were being relocated after they had been freed by their owners in the United States. Brown’s call was not to bring the Gospel to these people, however, but to the native Africans who had no knowledge of God or Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that nowhere in his *Journal* does Brown ever address the issue of slavery in the United States or his feelings about it. He does write about the existence of slavery in Africa, which many of his fellow clergy there did not want him to discuss, but his only allusion to slavery in the United States is the opposition he met from abolitionists when he was home on furlough from Liberia, trying to raise funds for the mission. He was often criticized by them because they believed that he was, by default, a supporter of the colonization movement. From the time of his own conversion, however, Brown’s primary focus in life became the conversion of souls to Jesus Christ, whether white, Black, or African.¹³

The brethren of the Troy Conference required that Brown receive further education before venturing off to another country, which proved somewhat difficult for him. Everywhere he went, Brown met up with people who did not know the Lord, and he could not resist the urge to preach to them—which interfered with his attending school.

His sister, Rhoda, and brother-in-law, Calvin T. Swan, who lived in Northfield, Massachusetts, offered to board him for the winter at no cost so that he could attend high school in Northfield. Though he did make it

to Northfield, he just could not resist preaching along the way, and it took him so long to reach their home that he never did attend school.¹⁴

Following that experience, the Rev. Sherman Minor and the presiding elder, Cyrus Prindle, arranged for Brown to travel to Vermont to study under the Rev. Samuel Tupper, an ordained local preacher living in Monkton.¹⁵ This experience, however, was not a positive one for Brown. He was forbidden to preach more than once a week on Sunday mornings but again was unable to resist the urge. He found a favorable congregation in nearby Ferrisburgh, where he was apparently a better preacher than the appointed pastor. Though Brown chose not to name him, he did report in his *Journal* how negatively he was treated by this preacher, who:

raised a great hue and cry in that place, telling them that I was unlearned, and that my language was not grammatical, and what a reproach it was to the people to hear a colored man preach. But the worst of it all was, he said that I had robbed him of his congregation; when, in fact, he preached six miles north of me in the forenoon, and four miles in the afternoon. . . . On a certain day, I happened to meet this preacher in Ferrisburgh; and another such a harsh scourging as he gave me, I never suffered before or since. He then wrote a line to my teacher to keep off from his circuit. And my teacher, willing to do him a kindness, wrote to my presiding elder to take me away, for I was robbing churches of their congregations, and therefore making disturbance among the preachers. So I soon had a letter from brother Prindle, my P. E., directing me to settle up all my expenses, and if I had not money enough to pay them, bring the bills to him, and come away. At this, knowing I still had friends in Farrisburge [*sic*], to whom I went and preached my farewell sermon. I presented my subscription paper, and they gave me twenty dollars, in cash, to pay my expenses at Monkton, for board and tuition. So I left that place, and arrived at Queensbury July 1. Here I labored with my hands for my good old friend, R. Newman, till the middle of September.¹⁶

It was just about this time that the Rowland T. Robinson family in Ferrisburgh began to provide sanctuary for fugitive slaves, and it would be interesting to know whether Brown had any contact with this family during the summer that he was preaching there. However, Jane Williamson, former director of the Rokeby Museum stated:

I'm sorry to say that the name does not ring a bell. I have read all of the correspondence to Rowland Robinson in the 1830s—much of it again just recently—and didn't see it.

Whether the Robinsons would have attended a Methodist church service is an interesting question. It was not allowed by the Society of Friends and could be grounds for disownment in some meetings. The Robinsons, however, had little patience with these sectarian rules, so maybe they would have. But I've not seen it mentioned. They might well have befriended Brown, especially if he was being treated unfairly. Again, though, just speculation.¹⁷

Nevertheless, in a town the size of Ferrisburgh, the Robinsons would certainly have been aware of Brown's presence there in the summer of 1834.

Finally, Brown was sent to central New York to attend Cazenovia Seminary (the Genesee Conference's high school).¹⁸ He completed his studies there and sailed to Liberia on October 15, 1836. Though he was originally sent as a teacher to the colonists who were resettling there, he could not refrain from preaching as well, and was eventually received on trial (probation) in the Liberia Conference on January 4, 1838, and elected to deacon's and elder's orders.

Brown subsequently sailed back to America, where he was ordained as a deacon on one day and as an elder the next at the annual conference held at the John Street MEC on March 25 and 26, 1838. He returned to Liberia in late 1838, and on February 14, 1839, Brown was received as a full member of the Liberia Annual Conference. This was acceptable for a Black pastor in Liberia as it was a missionary conference.¹⁹

On March 14, 1839, Brown married Nancy Wilson, the daughter of one of the other Black preachers in Liberia. Unfortunately, she died seven months later. In January 1841 Brown married a second time, to Harriet Ann Harper. They had a daughter, Hannah Ann, who died of whooping cough on May 12, 1843.²⁰

From all reports, Brown was an extremely successful missionary during his early years in Liberia, fulfilling his call to minister to the native Africans by establishing a mission school named Heddington. Wade C. Barclay, in *History of Methodist Missions*, describes Brown's service in Africa:

During the early years much of the success of the Liberia Mission was due to the faithful labors of Negro Local Preachers...George S. Brown, a preacher of unusual ability...established a mission school in "the Pessah country" named Heddington in honor of Bishop Hedding. At the meeting of the Board on July 22, 1839, a letter from Brown was read, describing his school, and stating that the kings of several neighboring tribes were "earnestly imploring teachers and missionaries."

From Heddington, the interior station, fifty-nine conversions were reported.²¹

In 1840, however, a dispute arose within the mission between Superintendent John Seys and the Liberian governor, Thomas Buchanan, over taxes that the governor planned to charge on goods being imported from America for the colonists.²² Superintendent Seys demanded all his preachers support him on this issue. After traveling to a hearing in Monrovia from which he came away seeing both sides of the issue, Brown decided he had no desire to become embroiled in a political struggle. "I am sent here to save souls, and I therefore feel it

my duty to keep entirely clear from all such difficulties.”²³ That decision would have long-range consequences for him.

Brown’s focus from the outset had always been on evangelizing the Africans, rather than preaching to the relocated formerly enslaved people who were the primary focus of the mission. In January 1841 Brown withdrew his formal membership with the Liberia Annual Conference and “located,” assuming the status of a local pastor so that he would not be required to itinerate, as was normal for members of an annual conference. Believing that the Missionary Society would support his desire to establish a new mission in the interior whether or not he was a member of the annual conference, Brown sailed back to America on April 29, 1841. John Seys traveled on the same ship, having been recalled to the States due to the tax controversy.²⁴

At the end of January 1842 Brown returned to Africa with authorization and funds from the Mission Board to go deeper into the interior of the country to establish his mission regardless of his reestablishing his membership in the conference. Rev. Squire Chase, who replaced John Seys as superintendent of the Liberia Mission, sailed on the same ship.

When the question of Brown’s readmittance to the conference was raised at the annual conference in April, not unexpectedly, many objections were made. The most adamant, interestingly enough, were concerns regarding the doctrine of holiness that he preached, to which most of the ministers in the Liberia Conference did not subscribe, though no such complaint had been raised previously. As a result, Brown withdrew his request for readmittance to the Conference.²⁵

He spent the next few months preparing for a major foray into the interior to Goloo country—further inland than any other missionary had ever ventured—where he planned to establish another mission station. When he approached Superintendent Chase, however, to settle his account prior to leaving, the superintendent “protested my entire account of all my expenses which I have been at, since I arrived from America.” Moreover, the superintendent also referred to him as a “black scoundrel.”²⁶

At the Quarterly Conference in January 1843 Brown was suspended from all services in the church. Superintendent Chase left suddenly in March for America and subsequently wrote Brown a letter that he did not receive until September, fully discharging him from any further service in Liberia. The superintendent authorized Brown’s salary but nothing for the \$791 of expenses he had incurred.²⁷

Squire Chase died a few weeks after his arrival in America, and John Seys was once again appointed to superintend the mission. Upon Seys’s return to Liberia, Brown was expelled from the Methodist Episcopal

Church due to his unwillingness to take a stand in the Seys-Buchanan controversy, compounded by the fact that he was a strong holiness preacher. It is also highly likely that many, especially the superintendents, were angered by this Black man's attempt to circumvent the conference leadership by returning to America to obtain permission to extend his mission into the interior even if he did not maintain his membership in the annual conference.²⁸

In *White Americans in Black Africa*, in which she analyzed the mission and colonization movement of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Liberia, Eunjin Park concludes that the "Seys-Buchanan controversy eventually laid a fatal blow to the cause of native missions by provoking the withdrawal of the missionary who was more devoted to African evangelization than anyone else: George S. Brown, the champion of the Heddington mission station project."²⁹

On January 28, 1844, Brown sailed for America, leaving his wife behind, hoping that the Missionary Board would settle his disagreements with the Liberia Conference relatively quickly, so that his preaching credentials could be restored and he could return to Africa and his duties there. He arrived in Baltimore on April 4. On April 9 he visited the board of the Missionary Society in New York and shared with them his reason for coming to America. Since not all the members were present, however, the business was postponed, and Brown was advised to submit a new bill since he "did not now belong to the church."

Brown proceeded to submit a bill for \$1,123 with a conditional deduction of \$423 for charges incurred in attempting to settle his claim. He was impeded in his request by the reports that Superintendent Chase had filed with the Missionary Board prior to his death. With the on-going support of Rev. Seymour Coleman, however, the Board of Missions finally agreed to review Brown's papers, and on September 27, 1844, the treasurer issued him a check for \$700.³⁰

Following his settlement with the Missionary Board, Brown attempted to reestablish his membership in the MEC at Glens Falls, New York, on the Fort Ann Circuit. There he was strongly opposed by two brothers, George and James Harvey. James Harvey became a formidable adversary who, in Brown's words, "cannot endure the idea that a colored person should belong to the same church he does." On December 8, 1844, Rev. Seymour Coleman "offered my name to the church [at Glens Falls] as a probationer, and called on them for a vote, for or against my joining the society. With the exception of one man who did not vote at all, I obtained a unanimous vote."³¹

Brown attended a meeting of the Fort Ann Quarterly Conference on July 26, 1845, in which he intended to apply for the restoration of his

preaching credentials since he had been expelled from the Liberia Annual Conference. When he arrived, however, Rev. E. B. Hubbard, the preacher-in-charge (unfortunately, Brown's strong supporter Seymour Coleman had been appointed to another circuit that year), showed Brown a letter from Rev. John Seys, "of the blackest kind—as if he set himself to see and show how mischievously and contemptibly he could set forth my moral character." Although Brown objected, the letter was read before the whole body, having already been circulated among the preachers. The conference then refused Brown the privilege of responding to the accusations in the letter, instead appointing a committee of seven, including the above-mentioned James Harvey, to investigate the charges and report to the next Quarterly Conference. "And thus I am again suspended from preaching for three months. But I, being, or claiming to be a human being, though not white-skinned, have human feelings."³²

Brown met twice with the committee and James Harvey continued to block the proceedings. The committee took no action and without explanation made no report to the next Quarterly Conference of the Fort Ann Circuit, which met on October 11. Moreover, at that meeting the presiding elder informed Brown that the appropriate place to present his request was to the local society at Glens Falls.

Thus, on October 19, 1844, Brown reported that he had written his application to the society for a license to preach and was rejected after James Harvey once again demanded a reading of the Seys letters. "But they were very frank here, just as they were at Fort Ann, last July, to repeat again and again, that there were no objections against me excepting the Seys letters." Finally, E. B. Hubbard, the preacher-in-charge, "decided that, being Br Seys was a white man and wrote so pointedly, and strong, that they were bound to receive his report."³³

Brown was then advised it was *his* responsibility to prove that Seys's accusations were wrong, even though he had been given no opportunity to do so during any of the previous proceedings. Thus, reluctant as he was to do so, he finally determined his only recourse was to bring a civil suit for slander against John Seys. Brown hired the Hon. Henry B. Northup, from Sandy Hill, New York, as his counsel.³⁴ This action caused some of Brown's enemies to bring him to trial for filing a suit against a white minister. Following this trial, held on December 22, 1845, Brown was expelled from the M.E. Church yet again. He had been supported throughout this time by both Seymour Coleman and Moses Brayton, two prominent holiness preachers. Unfortunately, however, because Coleman was appointed to another circuit in 1845, and Brayton died on November 8, 1846, Brown had little remaining support from the conference leadership.³⁵

Nevertheless, Brown continued to pursue his civil suit against John Seys. After numerous delays, Seys's witnesses from Africa finally arrived, and in July 1848, two and a half years after Brown was expelled from the Glens Falls Society, he and his lawyer, Henry Northup, were summoned to New York City to give affidavits. Seys's lawyers shortly thereafter apparently realized how weak their case was, and on August 2 withdrew their suit and agreed to pay Brown \$150.³⁶

The resolution of Brown's suit essentially marks the end of his published *Journal*, the final few pages consisting only of Brown's praise of his God, who had been with him through all these trials and had brought him safely through the many storms he had endured. Brown published his *Journal* in 1849 at the urging of many of his friends, six years prior to beginning his ministry in Wolcott. Despite all the white supremacy and racism that Brown endured both prior to the publication of his *Journal* and in the years following, he made the decision to remain with the Methodist Episcopal Church, as did many of his fellow African Americans.

It is unfortunate that no additional journals of Brown's have yet been discovered. If they do exist, they would probably answer many of the questions we have about Brown's life after 1849, and especially about his ministry in Vermont.

It was not until information about the Rev. Henry Boardman Taylor was discovered in the Troy Annual Conference Archives that additional facts became available regarding Brown's continued attempts to reestablish his former relationship with the Troy Annual Conference, as well as how he came to begin his ministry in Vermont. A family history, published in 1892, included information on Taylor's ministry and his relationship with Brown.

In 1850 Taylor was elected and ordained an elder in the Troy Conference and appointed to the Warren, New York, Circuit, to which he returned the following year. At the first Quarterly Conference of that year (1851), however, Taylor was appointed to the Johnsburg charge.

George S. Brown, a colored man who had been a missionary to Liberia, was received by him into the church, licensed to exhort and preach, and assisted him greatly in revival work. . . . At the [1852] Conference he [Taylor] was arraigned by his Presiding Elder, S. Washburn, for mal-administration of Discipline in receiving a man who had been expelled on another charge. Fortified with a letter from E. Hedding, oldest Bishop of the church, he was, after a trial in open Conference, acquitted by a nearly unanimous vote. He was then sent to Berkshire Circuit, with residence at Montgomery, Vt., and had to preach in Montgomery, Richford, Berkshire and Enosburg.³⁷

It is important to note here that the number of trials related to Brown's case was quite unusual and appears to have been connected to

the actions of James Harvey, who seemed determined to keep Brown out of the Fort Ann Circuit of which he was a member.

Having been acquitted of all charges, Taylor apparently took Brown with him to his circuit in Berkshire, where the following year the Quarterly Conference made a recommendation to the 1853 Troy Annual Conference that Brown's preaching credentials be restored. The conference voted to accept the recommendation.³⁸

The leadership of the Troy Conference at that time seemed to have had no qualms about Taylor bringing Brown with him to Vermont, even though his receiving Brown into membership in his church in New York had resulted in the trial. Perhaps they believed that Brown would be better received in Vermont than in New York, and that seems to have been the case.

The question might be raised, then, as to whether the Troy Conference leadership was aware that another African American pastor, the Rev. Alexander Twilight, was serving in northern Vermont at the time. Twilight had been principal of the Orleans County Grammar School in Brownington from 1829-1847, having successfully overseen the construction of a new building, which has since evolved into the Old Stone House Museum. He also served as the "acting pastor" of the Brownington Congregational Church for a few years. Twilight had left Brownington in 1847, however, to go to Quebec to teach, not returning until 1852—the same year that Brown moved to Vermont.

Although Twilight is currently celebrated as one of Vermont's early African American leaders, there is some question as to how widely known it was at that time that he was of African American heritage. This issue is explored in a recent *USA Today* article, "The complex history of Alexander Twilight, nation's first African American to earn a bachelor's degree." Therefore, it is not likely that his presence in the area influenced the conference's decision to assign Brown to the Berkshire Circuit.³⁹

A recent inquiry to Molly Vesey, director of the Old Stone House Museum, failed to reveal anything in the records of the museum that indicates that Twilight and Brown ever had any contact during the years Brown was in the area.

The conference leadership could also have been aware that the Rev. Lemuel Haynes had successfully served a white congregation in West Rutland, Vermont, for thirty years. However, this was from 1788-1818, followed by an additional three years in Manchester, Vermont, and would probably have been far enough in the past that it would not have been a serious consideration.

Ironically, it seems that the Vermont African American with whom

Brown would have had the most in common was Martin Freeman, who graduated from Middlebury College in 1849 but who left the state to become first a professor and then president at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania. Freeman eventually became involved in the colonization movement that supported emigration of both free and formerly enslaved Black Americans to Africa. He moved his family to Liberia in 1864 and lived out the remainder of his life there. It is doubtful, however, that Brown and Freeman ever met, as Freeman would have been only eight years old when Brown spent time in the Monkton/Ferrisburgh area in 1834, and Freeman had left the state before Brown moved to Vermont in 1852.⁴⁰

It is much more likely that the Troy leadership believed that Brown's holiness preaching would be better received in Vermont than in New York. By the 1850s and 1860s both camp meetings and the revivals that grew out of those meetings had become standard practice in Vermont. T. D. Seymour Bassett states in *The Gods of the Hills: Piety and Society in Nineteenth-Century Vermont*, that:

Camp meetings, feeding the lambs as Francis Asbury fed them a century before, and increasingly sponsored by holiness Methodists, seemed to show that the old-time religion was still ascendant.

Annual camp meetings climaxed the year for the devout. Once started from necessity, because they had no house of worship, the camp meeting had been a major source of conversions. Adopted by Adventists and whatever group had no access to indoor space, it became a fixed feature of Methodist worship.⁴¹

Although Brown's mentor Henry B. Taylor was appointed to the Berkshire Circuit for only one year before being appointed agent for the Troy Conference Academy in Poultney, Vermont, it is probable that Brown himself remained in the area. No specific references to Brown's preaching or evangelistic services have been uncovered for the years between 1853 and 1855 when he went to Wolcott, but there are some indications that he was, quite possibly, preaching in the area.

In October 1853, an article in the *Vermont Christian Messenger* about a camp meeting in East Berkshire reported that, "Interesting revivals are in progress in Enosburg Falls, and in Bakersfield Academy, that had their origin at the Berkshire meeting," signed by Jno. Frazer, the presiding elder who had just a few months earlier recommended that Brown's credentials be restored.⁴² Then, in November, B[ennett] Eaton reported on the continuing revival in Sheldon and Enosburgh, stating that "The Lord is graciously reviving his work on this charge." Thirty conversions were reported in Enosburgh and "a few" in West Enosburgh.⁴³ Though no specific names are mentioned as to who was leading these revivals, this is exactly the kind of work that Brown

would have done since he would not have been the preacher-in-charge at any church during this time.

Bennett Eaton had served the Morristown/Hyde Park circuit in 1850 and 1851 prior to being sent to Sheldon and Enosburg in 1852 and 1853. In addition, F. C. Kimball, who served the Morristown Circuit in 1853, was then appointed to Berkshire in 1854. If, indeed, Brown was still in the area and had been involved in the camp meeting and revivals, both Bennett Eaton and Fernando Kimball would have been familiar with his preaching and one or both might have recommended in late 1854 or early 1855 that he be sent to Wolcott to pastor the small group of Methodists gathering there.

The April 18, 1855, edition of the *Vermont Christian Messenger* reported the following:

REVIVAL

HYDEPARK AND MORRISTOWN CIRCUIT--We have been favored this year with a revival of religion on some parts of the circuit, especially at Wolcott and Elmore. As the result of a series of evening meetings about eighty souls have professed justification. Forty have united with society and some have experienced the blessing of perfect love. The work is still progressing in Wolcott, under the instrumentality of Rev. Geo. S. Brown, a local (colored) preacher, whose labors in that town have been very abundant and successful for some months. At the commencement of the year, the society there was very feeble (scarcely able to support any preaching at all), but they have experienced such a revolution in religious affairs that they propose to support a preacher alone the coming year.

All the glory be to God.

D[avid] W. Gould
W[illiam] O. Tower⁴⁴

At least one other revival was taking place within the area during the same time period. Bassett describes a revival in Burlington:

“The mightiest revival that Burlington ever saw” established a second Methodist church in 1854-1855. . . . As a result of three weeks of protracted meetings, so “many were converted and many believers were sanctified” that the little Methodist meetinghouse on White Street and its lecture rooms could not hold them all. . . . Sanctification or perfectionism, in Wesley’s original doctrine, meant in the exhorters’ simple words that beyond the experience of God’s grace converting the soul of the sinner, a “second blessing” through the spirit of Christ could infuse in believers the ability to overcome sin.⁴⁵

Thus, it is easy to understand why Brown’s holiness preaching was readily accepted in the Troy Conference in Vermont.

A careful perusal of Wolcott’s first Church Record that lists the names of the members, the first few pages of which are in Brown’s

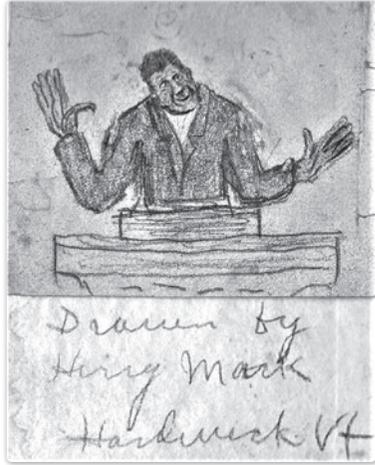
handwriting, indicates that it is likely that Brown was pastoring the church prior to the revival that is reported in the April news article. The first listing of members is recorded before March 4, when a second group is listed.⁴⁶

The appointment list for the St. Albans District of the Troy Conference, which appeared in the *Vermont Christian Messenger* for May 23, 1855, left the Wolcott church “to be supplied.” As noted above, however, at that time local preachers who “supplied” were often not listed as being appointed to churches; and even though Brown was ordained as an elder and had had his orders restored in 1853, as an African American he was still not eligible to become a full member of the Troy Annual Conference in America and be appointed to a church—unlike his African American brothers in the Congregational church, for example.⁴⁷

In June 1855, a notice appeared in several newspapers around the country in “News from Monrovia, Liberia,” that “Mrs. Brown, wife of Rev. George S. Brown, died on the 18th of March. Mr. Brown is now on a visit to the United States.”⁴⁸ Although it seemed to have been Brown’s intent to return to Africa and his missionary work there, it appears that by the time his civil suit against John Seys was resolved in 1848 and his credentials were restored in 1853, he had decided he could never return to Africa. And, most likely, he did not have the funds to bring his wife to the United States, or perhaps she was not well enough to make the move.

The Wolcott congregation continued to grow and prosper, as the April 23, 1856, issue of the *Vermont Christian Messenger* reported in a notice headed “Morristown”: “Here have been some twenty conversions. At Wolcott, an appendage to this circuit, the good work of last year is taking root, and the Church is growing in holiness.”⁴⁹

Evidence that Brown finally succeeded in making a place for himself



Rev. George S. Brown preaching. Drawing by Henry Mack, Hardwick, Vermont (no date [1855-1857?]). Insert from a copy of George S. Brown’s Journal once owned by Rev. Daniel Lewis who served the Wolcott United Methodist Church, 1859-1860. Henry Mack was probably around ten years old when he made this drawing. Wolcott United Methodist Church archives, Morrisville, VT.



Wolcott United Methodist Church, Wolcott, Vermont. Photograph April 2021 by Patricia Thompson.

lies not only in the Wolcott congregation's willingness to support a full-time pastor, but also in its decision at a meeting held on April 29, 1856, with Brown presiding, to build a church building. Further, the minutes also record that Brown appointed the six white men who would serve as trustees for the new building. His leadership, unusual in the years before the Civil War, says a good deal about Brown's character and how much he must have been respected by these men despite the opposition he had met in New York and years earlier in southern Vermont.

Plans for the new church proceeded rapidly. At a meeting held on May 6 the minutes recorded the introduction of "one Bro. Jno. Hawse, an old Carpenter, to aid them in their plans and estimation of Said House. And after some discussion the Estimating Committee retired with their Carpenter, and after due deliberation returned with the following report, namely: That we need a house, 34 x 44 feet, with a basement, Story, & which will cost about \$1200."⁵⁰

Brown kept a day-to-day record of the work accomplished on the church in a Clerk's Book, commencing on June 20 and concluding on September 23, 1856. He recorded the name of everyone who worked on the project along with a description of the work completed.

Issues of the *Vermont Christian Messenger* are unavailable between July

1856 and December 1857 except for the months of February, November, and December 1857. Therefore, further news about Brown and the Wolcott church is limited during that time period.

We do know, however, that in early 1857, Brown was contacted by Abraham Wing III, the great-grandson of the founder of Glens Falls, New York, with a request to build a stone wall around his daughter's farm in Jackson, Michigan. That farm eventually evolved into the Ella Sharp Museum, whose archives include correspondence between Abraham Wing III and Dwight Merriman, his son-in-law, that gives some insight into Brown's movements during the years following his pastorate at Wolcott.

The earliest correspondence, dated April 5, 1857, confirmed that Brown was still in Vermont but reported that he was ill:

You will recollect that the man that built the stone wall we looked at was in Vermont and was expected back before this time. But he has written his friends here that he has been sick all winter and thinks from the account I get that it is doubtful if he is ever better.

This would have been about six months after the completion of the church building. Two weeks later, however, on April 17, 1857, Wing wrote to Merriman:

I have some encouragement since I wrote you last that I can get George Brown, the coulered [*sic*] man to come and build your stone wall he has been here within the last month and says his health has much improved and he has hopes that as soon as the weather is warm and clear he will be able to go to work again.⁵¹

There is no further correspondence between Wing and Merriman until a letter dated July 21, 1858. Although one might infer from Wing's response to Merriman on April 17 that Brown had plans to return to the New York area sometime during the year, he apparently recovered from his illness and continued his work as the pastor of the Wolcott church at least through the end of 1857. This was confirmed, in part, by a letter written by Rev. Brown on October 10 and 15, 1857, a copy of which was recently donated to the church.⁵²

This letter was written to Truman Hall, whose wife, Abigail, became a member of the Village Class in June 1855.⁵³ At the time the letter was written Hall was traveling in the Minnesota Territory. It appears that prior to traveling to Minnesota Hall was not a member of the church, nor a professed Christian. Apparently, however, either on the way to Minnesota or after his arrival there, Hall gave his life to Christ and subsequently wrote back to Rev. Brown to tell him about his conversion and to make a donation to the church.

Brown's response to Hall sheds light on his own activities over the summer of 1857.

Dear Bro, for more than 2 months I have been trying to find time to write you, but the press of business on my hands has forced me off, & it is with violence that I seize the present hour, 10 Oct. P.M., to acknowledge your favor & Donation.

I left Wolcott on the 25th Aug., came to Morristown until 3rd Sept., when I left Morristown for Sandy Hill, NY, to attend a Camp Meeting at that place. I spent one week there & on my return to Wolcott I found among others, a letter from Bro. Hall, inclosing a pair of Twin Eagles. The next Day I had to Superintend the making of a Tent, 30 by 54 feet. The next Day I went to Morristown, & commenced the making of 2 other Tents 30 feet by 40.

Preached 3 times on Sabbath, with other intermediate business, & on Tuesday morning we Started up for Camp Meeting at Stowe, where we remained until the next Wednesday. Since that time, I have been on the wing, holding, & improving on the influence & Effects of that meeting. Bro. [Aaron] Ball is only with us on the Sabbath, which leaves all the running & other business on my hands. I have labored until I am chafed as an Old, Tow Boat Rope. But blessed be God, I am yet alive, & the Church are flourishing gloriously. At Wolcott we are going ahead as usual. It is said by many that Morristown are more devotional & active than they have been for 10 years before this. All goes well with us, first rate.

As for me, I am Still living by faith, Steady, practical, unwavering faith in the Blood of Jesus, & that goes well! This blood of Christ applied through faith, keeps me pure from all Sins within & without, just as the Bible Says: yes, it brings in all the life of Christ into my Soul, & it sanctifies me into Christ & into God. The result, is perfect love, perfect peace, perfect joy & perfect Everything Else that I desire for my own Self, excepting a bigger [sic] heart. Halleluah.

During the second half of the year, Brown was assisting the Rev. Aaron Ball, an ordained pastor who had “located” and was living in Craftsbury while apparently “supplying” the church in Morristown during 1857. This is the only indication we have that Rev. Brown was pastoring in Morristown as well as in Wolcott during this period.

At that time, the church was located at Morristown Corners, not moving into the village of Morrisville until 1874. As Wolcott was a part of the Morristown Circuit, it is likely that when Brown says he preached three times on Sunday, he preached at Morristown once or twice, as well as at Wolcott. And, since Br. Ball was only available on Sundays, apparently, Brown was taking care of most of the other business related to the entire circuit.

A notice appearing in several area newspapers announced a camp meeting that was to be held two miles north of Stowe, commencing on September 16 and running for a week. A notice in the *St. Albans Weekly Messenger* on August 13 announced another camp meeting that would

be held in the Swanton area, published by Presiding Elder C. R. Morris, who noted, "Tent poles in abundance can be procured on the ground."⁵⁴ That is likely the case for the camp meeting at Stowe, as well. Tents, however, had to be provided by those attending. Often in those days, each town provided a tent or two, depending upon how many were attending, and Brown was supervising the construction of tents for the folks from Morrisville and Wolcott.

Brown's statement that, "It is said by many that Morristown are more devotional & active than they have been for 10 years before this" is another affirmation that he was spending a fair amount of time in Morristown, as well as in Wolcott. This is also confirmed by a short notice from the "Morristown Circuit," which appeared in the *Vermont Christian Messenger* on January 2, 1858:

Rev. Geo. S. Brown, writing from Wolcott, under the date of December 28th, says, "In the course of the last three months, twenty six have experienced as we trust, a change of heart. Twenty two have united with our church, which is in a good state of religious devotion. To Jesus be all the glory and praise evermore."⁵⁵

Although there are several additions to the class lists for Wolcott at the end of 1857, they do not add up to twenty-two; therefore, it seems clear that in this notice, Brown was writing on behalf of the circuit for both Wolcott and Morrisville.

Since Brown says nothing in his letter to Truman Hall about being ill, it appears that he recovered from his earlier illness and continued his ministry through the end of 1857. The January 2, 1858, notice is the final one in the *Messenger* with reference to George S. Brown. Those following were under Rev. Ball's name, and the entries in 1858 in the Church Record seem to have been in Ball's handwriting.⁵⁶

It is unclear exactly why Brown left Vermont at the end of 1857. Appointment changes in Methodist churches generally took place following the annual conference and at that time, the annual conference was generally held in late April or early May. Correspondence between Wing and Merriman seems to indicate that Brown became ill once again near the end of 1857 or the beginning of 1858 and decided to return to the Glens Falls area, which he apparently considered his home base. In July 1858 Wing wrote to Merriman:

You ask if George Brown is here. I answer he has been here all the Spring & Summer and left for Vermont about 10 or 15 days ago—if he returns soon I will see him and inform you what he says. I do not believe he will be able to come his health has not been good for some considerable time and he appears to be in A decline.

On October 1, Wing wrote again to Merriman:

You wrote that you would like to have me bring George Brown with us [Wing and his wife were planning a trip to see his daughter and her husband] but he is not able to work has been bleeding at the lungs [most likely TB]. He came back from Vermont last Spring with intention to make some wall for the same man that has the wall you saw (Mr. Newman) and worked about one week and had to give up and has gone back to Vermont to be Doctored and I think it doubtful if he ever gets able to do any more hard work—so you see that you will have to go on with your wall without his assistance.⁵⁷

In the meantime, it might be asked why Brown would even be pursuing the possibility of building a stone wall anywhere rather than serving another church, either in Vermont or in New York. As noted earlier, prior to the Civil War, African Americans were not eligible for the most part to serve a church as the preacher-in-charge. Since his primary role would have been as an evangelist, he would have had to support himself in some other way. For Brown, that was primarily by building stone walls. It would also have been highly unlikely at that time for an African American to have been appointed to serve another white church—even in a denomination that was strongly anti-slavery—despite the fact that he had successfully organized the church in Wolcott and had overseen the construction of the church building. This would have been especially so in the New York area Brown called home, where he had had such negative experiences prior to traveling to Vermont.

Brown's three full years of service at the Wolcott church were also somewhat unusual at the time—most Methodist pastors stayed no more than two years in an appointment— and apparently were the result of his having successfully grown the church following the revival in 1855. The Troy Conference leadership seemingly chose to leave him in that position as long as things were going well, and he was healthy enough to continue serving—even though he was never formally appointed to serve the church.

In fact, the Wolcott UMC, as far as has been determined to date, is also the *only white* United Methodist church in the United States that was organized by an African American who then served as preacher-in-charge, and it was also the only church where Brown served in that position.

Brown's tenure at the Wolcott Methodist Episcopal church does, however, seem to have laid the groundwork for other holiness preachers to be appointed there. In the ensuing years, several of its pastors have been identified as being involved in the holiness movement, as reflected in their participation in area camp meetings, which had an emphasis on holiness.⁵⁸

Correspondence between Abraham Wing and Dwight Merriman reveals that Merriman finally made the decision in 1863 to hire Brown, who had recovered from his illness sufficiently to be able to work again, to construct the stone wall he desired on his property.⁵⁹ An August 13, 1972, article in the Jackson, Michigan, *Citizen Patriot* states that:

Brown's decision to come west was contingent on an agreement that one-way transportation to Michigan must be provided, wages would be a "whopping" \$1.50 a day, his board was free and there would be no work on rainy days.

With him came a Mr. Bacon, a Mr. Dickenson, Herman Peary, Isaac Mosher, and some of their families who traveled in an emigrant train from Fort Edward [New York] to Schenectady to Toledo to Jackson at a total cost of \$27 each. Their wages were \$18 a month and living quarters.⁶⁰

The stone wall took about two years to finish and was about a half mile long. In 1869 the Michigan State Agricultural Society recognized the wall for its artistic and engineering design. In 1967, a little more than 100 years after the wall was completed, it was designated a historic site and the Ella Sharp Museum placed a plaque on the wall.

Neither of these recognitions, however, acknowledged George S. Brown for his work; all the credit went to the Merrimans. Had it not been for the fact that the farm evolved into a museum and the archives maintained all the correspondence between Merriman and Wing, it is likely little, or nothing, would be known today about Brown's involvement in constructing the wall.⁶¹



Stone wall built by Rev. George S. Brown and four assistants for Dwight and Mary (Wing) Merriman, 1863-1865. The Merriman estate is now the Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, Michigan. Photograph 2008 by Patricia Thompson.

Brown also preached in the area during the years that he was in Jackson, and he is included as a local elder with a mailing address in Jackson in the 1864 listing of local preachers for the Michigan Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁶²

In 1866, after completing the wall, Brown returned to the Glens Falls area and became involved once again in the Sanford's Ridge MEC, where he is listed until 1869 as a local preacher for the church.⁶³ Beginning in 1867 he is also listed for several years in the annual *Minutes of the Troy Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* as a local preacher.⁶⁴

In 1869 Brown appeared once again in the class lists for Wolcott, with the notation, "received by letter; removed by letter." This was apparently the time when he formally transferred his membership back to the Sanford's Ridge MEC. Local pastors were then and continue today to be considered members of the local church where they are serving at the time or where they are attending if they are not serving in any official capacity.

One of the last times Brown was mentioned in Vermont newspapers also appeared at this time. The December 21, 1869, *Lamoille Newsdealer* reported that, "Rev. George S. Brown, the colored missionary who has been twice to Africa and who is well-known in the county, proposes to hold a series of meetings at this place [North Wolcott] during the winter, for the purpose of making a revival interest."⁶⁵ No subsequent reports were made in any area newspapers about these meetings, so it is unclear whether he ever held the proposed revival.

Brown lived the remainder of his life in the Glens Falls area. An article appearing in the February 8, 1886, Glens Falls *Morning Star* reported that:

Some days ago THE STAR chronicled the fact that George S. Brown, the venerable colored preacher, had broken his thigh by slipping and falling upon the ice. Yesterday a reporter called at the residence of George Selleck, 12 Big Cross Street, where the reverend gentleman is stopping and was informed that the sufferer is in critical condition, being at times delirious and enduring great pain. Owing to his advanced age his recovery is considered doubtful . . .

But few of the present generation are aware of the fact the Rev. Mr. Brown is a man with a history, a life record of good works prepared in the Master's service. He is not, as has been stated by several newspapers, in the neighborhood of 100 years old. He was born at Newport, Rhode Island, 24 July 1801 and is consequently in his 85th year.⁶⁶

Brown lingered for two months at the home of George Selleck, before dying on April 10, 1886 (though his tombstone mistakenly reports

the date as April 23). Although his obituary and the previously referenced article describe Brown's life as an itinerant preacher and missionary to Africa, as well as his work as a stone wall builder, as noted earlier, no mention is made of his ministry in Vermont or of the wall he constructed in Michigan.

The final notice regarding George S. Brown's life and ministry in Vermont was an announcement of his death that appeared in the Montpelier *Argus and Patriot* for April 21, 1886, (as well as in two Rutland papers):

Rev. George S. Brown, the almost centenarian colored Methodist preacher, well known in Vermont, died April 10. He was a remarkable man. Born near Fort Ann, N.Y., a slave, he educated himself. When he was emancipated by the act of the Legislature of New York, he entered the Methodist itineracy, and afterwards for several years was a missionary in Liberia. By his request he is buried in the Quaker cemetery at Glens Falls, N.Y.⁶⁷

The sources for the information in this notice are unknown, but clearly the information regarding his birthplace, his status as a slave, and his emancipation by an act of the New York Legislature are incorrect. It is also interesting that three Vermont newspapers carried this notice, since the last reference to Brown prior to 1886 was published in 1869. There may have been someone at those newspapers who remembered Brown and his ministry in Vermont nearly thirty years earlier.

After his death Brown disappeared from the historical record for many years; but with recent interest in the lives and careers of African Americans in U.S. history, Brown once again came to the attention of the communities he served as pastor and stone mason. It is highly questionable, had the reference to Brown as a "colored man" not appeared in Hamilton Child's *Gazetteer*, whether the history of his ministry in Vermont would have ever been uncovered. Those two sentences, however, led to the recovery of the unusual story of a Methodist African American preacher in the state in pre-Civil War days.

On September 22, 2007, the Troy Conference Historical Society placed a clergy marker on Brown's grave in New York, the only African American pastor in the conference to have received such a marker. In 2008 the Troy Annual Conference approved a resolution to designate the Wolcott UMC as an official Historic Site of the United Methodist Church, since it was built under Brown's supervision and has the original record books kept by Brown. The church is registered as United Methodist Historic Site #439 and was the third officially registered site in Vermont.⁶⁸ In 2011 the church was approved for a Vermont Historic Roadside Marker



Grave and grave monument for Rev. George S. Brown, Quaker Cemetery, Glens Falls, NY. Photograph 2007 by Patricia Thompson.

headed, “Reverend George S. Brown,” and in 2015, because of this marker, it was listed as a site on the Vermont African American Heritage Trail. In 2018 the church was listed in the Vermont State Register of Historic Places.

The story of the Rev. George S. Brown—expert stonemason, missionary to Liberia, and inspired preacher—is, indeed, a sermon in stone: the story of a man of unusual abilities and faith on many levels. There are many lasting memorials to this man, who lived out his belief in his God as courageously and faithfully as possible, sometimes against the almost impossible odds of white supremacy and racism. Besides the many stone walls that still stand nearly 200 hundred years later, there is his published *Journal*, a hymn he wrote that was published in the mid-1800s, the Historic Roadside Marker next to the Wolcott United Methodist Church, and the church building itself, constructed under his supervision by a congregation that he had gathered and grown. There remains, as well, the small but faithful congregation, not an African American congregation, but a white congregation, remarkable in itself in 1855/56, which is committed to preserving and telling his story.

NOTES

¹ The Troy Annual Conference (which consisted of churches in northeastern New York and Vermont) existed from 1832 until 2010, when the New York churches united with most of the remainder of New York state to form the Upper New York Annual Conference, and the Vermont churches joined with the New England Conference.

² George S. Brown, *Brown's Abridged Journal, Containing a Brief Account of the Life, Trials and Travels of Geo. S. Brown, Six Years a Missionary in Liberia, West Africa: A Miracle of God's Grace* (Troy, NY: Press of Prescott & Wilson, 1849), 5. Brown kept an extensive record detailing some of his early life and especially his work in Liberia and his difficulties there and subsequently in the United States. The *Journal* concludes after he won his civil suit against John Seys in 1848.

³ *125th Anniversary of the Methodist Church of Wolcott, Vermont 1855-1980* (Morrisville, VT: News and Citizen, 1980), 1.

⁴ Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Lamoille and Orleans Counties, Vt, for 1883-84* (Syracuse, NY: Journal Office, 1883), 162.

⁵ George and Catherine Webster, "History of the First Methodist Church of Sanford's Ridge 1800-1960" (Webster Mimeo Service, August 1960) unnumbered manuscript.

⁶ Brown, *Journal*, 5. Lorenzo Dow became well-known not only for his eccentric behavior but also for his evangelistic zeal; but he was never ordained elder because he did not follow the prescribed rules.

⁷ Anna L. Mower, *History of Morristown, Vermont in Morristown Two Times* (Morrisville, VT: Morristown Historical Society, 1982), 39-40.

⁸ Brown, *Journal*, 19-20. Please note that in quoting George S. Brown's *Journal*, I have copied the manuscript as it is printed. Grammar is presented just as it appears in the published version.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-26.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹ Webster, "History."

¹² Brown, *Journal*, 28.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 63, 179, 181, 239.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, *Journal*, 29-31.

¹⁵ "Samuel Hunt Tupper." *University of Vermont Obituary Record Compiled by a Committee of the Associate Alumni No. 1* (Burlington, 1895).

¹⁶ Brown, *Journal*, 32-33.

¹⁷ Email from Jane Williamson to author, March 9, 2017.

¹⁸ Brown, *Journal*, 41-43.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 51, 60-61, 74.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 79, 101-2, 170, 194, 221.

²¹ Wade C. Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions, Part One: Early American Methodism, 1769-1844*, Vol. 1 (New York: Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1949), 337-39.

²² At this point, Liberia was primarily a colony for formerly enslaved people from the United States who were being freed but sent to Africa to live. Brown, however, was more interested in ministering to the native Africans.

²³ Brown, *Journal*, 155.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 165, 175-76. Since the primary mission in Liberia was to the colonists and Brown's primary interest was to minister to the Africans, he thought the board might not be concerned whether he was a member of the conference or not.

²⁵ Brown, *Journal*, 197-98.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 218, 227, 242-44, 327, 334.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 220-22, 225.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 222, 226, 228.

²⁹ Eunjin Park, *White Americans in Black Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 142.

³⁰ Brown, *Journal*, 232-37.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 241.

³² *Ibid.*, 248.

³³ *Ibid.*, 252.

³⁴ Henry B. Northup has become well-known as the lawyer who went to Louisiana to free Solomon Northup, who was kidnapped from the streets of Boston and taken to Louisiana. His story was popularized in the movie, *Twelve Years a Slave*.

³⁵ Brown, *Journal*, 255-59, 266, 275, 281.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 282. “SUPREME COURT – George S. Brown vs. John Seys. The publications complained of in the declaration in this case, are, by the undersigned defendant’s attorney, hereby withdrawn, and plaintiff is paid one hundred and fifty dollars in full, and amicable settlement of this suit. HENRY B. NORTHUP, Plaintiff’s Attorney; ASA CHILDS, Attorney for the defendant; New York August 2d, 1848.”

³⁷ Henry Boardman Taylor, *Some Accounts of the Ancestors, Relatives and Family of Henry Boardman Taylor with a Memoir Written by Himself and a Supplement by Rev. B. S. Taylor* (n. p., 1892), 25-26.

³⁸ *Handwritten Minutes of the 1853 Troy Annual Conference*, 96, located in the United Methodist Upper New York Conference Archives, Liverpool, NY.

³⁹ Marina Affo, “The complex history of Alexander Twilight, nation’s first African American to earn a bachelor’s degree,” *Delaware News Journal*, 18 February, 2021, accessed at: <https://www.usa-today.com/in-depth/news/2021/02/18/complex-history-alexander-twilight-middleburs-first-black-graduate/4094045001>; biography of Alexander Twilight found on the Old Stone House Museum website: <https://oldstonehousemuseum.org/alexander-twilight-biography/>; “Revisiting Middlebury’s Racial History,” at <https://middleburycampus.com/25163/local/revisiting-middleburys-racial-history>.

⁴⁰ Martin Henry Freeman biography, midthistory.middlebury.edu/martin-henry-freeman.

⁴¹ T. D. Seymour Bassett, *The Gods of the Hills: Piety and Society in Nineteenth-Century Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 2000), 232-33.

⁴² This newspaper can be found on the website Genealogybank.com

⁴³ *Vermont Christian Messenger* (Montpelier), 19 October 1853, 2; 9 November 1853, 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 April 1855, 3-4.

⁴⁵ Bassett, *Gods of the Hills*, 162.

⁴⁶ A comparison of the handwriting in the first few pages of the Church Record (the first membership book for the church), and the Clerk’s Book (record of the day-to-day progress on the church building), with the letters sent by Brown to the Blandings in Philadelphia (currently housed at the United Methodist Archives located at Drew University in Madison, NJ), revealed that the first few pages of the Church Record and the Clerk’s Book are in Brown’s handwriting; both books are filed in the Wolcott United Methodist Church Record Box #1 at the church office at 169 Paine Avenue, Morrisville, VT.

⁴⁷ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, 23 May 1855, 2.

⁴⁸ *Thibodeaux Minerva* (Thibodeaux, Louisiana), 23 June 1855, 2; *Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) 11 June 1855, 4; *Daily Union* (Washington, DC), 12 June 1855, 3.

⁴⁹ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, 23 April 1856, 2.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Smith, Recording Secretary, “Minutes of the Methodist Society,” Wolcott, VT, April 29, 1856; Sam’l Pennock, Sec., “Minutes of the Trustees, Wolcott M. E. Church,” May 6, 1856, 1. These minutes are handwritten individual sheets of paper, not part of a record book. They are filed in the Wolcott United Methodist Church Record Box #1 at the church office at 169 Paine Avenue, Morrisville, VT.

⁵¹ Abraham Wing, 5 April 1857, 17 April 1857, “Letters to Dwight Merriman,” Merriman Sharp Family Papers, 1965.19, Series I, box 5, folder 3. Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, Michigan.

⁵² On September 1, 2019, a copy of a letter dated 10 and 15 October 1857 written by Brown to Truman Hall, who was a resident of Wolcott, but who was at that time traveling in the Minnesota Territory, was given to the church by Mr. Hall’s great-great grandson, William Lizotte, a member of the United Community Church of Morrisville and a resident of Cambridge, VT.

⁵³ Wolcott Methodist Episcopal Church, Church Record Book, 1855-1873. In the early days of Methodism, members were organized into geographically located classes for the purpose of meeting between Sunday worship services for fellowship and study. In the Wolcott church, there were originally three classes: The Village Class, the Town Hill Class, and the East Hill Class.

⁵⁴ C. R. Morris, *St. Albans Weekly Messenger* (St. Albans, Vermont), 13 August 1857, 2.

⁵⁵ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, 2 January 1858, 2.

⁵⁶ Aaron Ball, Class Lists for 1858, Church Record.

⁵⁷ Abraham Wing, 21 July 1858, “Letter to Dwight Merriman,” Merriman Sharp Family Papers 1965.19, Series I, box 6, folder 1; Abraham Wing, 1 October 1858, “Letter to Dwight Merriman,” Merriman Sharp Family Papers 1965.19, Series I, box 6, folder 2. Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, Michigan.

⁵⁸ “St. Albans Camp Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness,” *St. Albans Daily Messenger* (St. Albans, Vermont), 24 August 1871, 3; “The Morristown Camp-Meeting,” *Vermont Christian Messenger*, 14 September 1873, 3; “Sheldon Camp Meeting,” *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, 28 August 1894, 4.

⁵⁹ Abraham Wing, 18 March 1863; 13 April 1863; 19 April 1863; 11 August 1863, "Letters to Dwight Merriman," Merriman Sharp Family Papers 1965.19, Series 1, box 10, folder 1. Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, Michigan.

⁶⁰ A copy of this article was originally provided by Lynn Loftis, director of the Ella Sharp Museum in 2008; it contained the date of the article but not the page. The *Jackson Citizen Patriot* for 1972 is not currently available online.

⁶¹ Recently, however, the museum has changed its focus, and for some time there has not been anything on the website about the history of the Merrimans or George S. Brown and the stone wall. The museum is, however, currently in the process of including information about the stone wall.

⁶² *Minutes of the Twenty-Ninth Session of the Michigan Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Niles, MI: Freeman Book and Job Rooms, 1864), 39.

⁶³ Webster, "History." Though Brown is listed as a local preacher from 1866 to 1869, this does not mean that he served the church as their pastor. Many churches had local preachers connected with them who were simply members of the church.

⁶⁴ *Minutes of the Troy Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, "Post-Office Address of Local Preachers," 1869, 27; 1871, 33; 1872, 33; 1873, 32; 1874, 32; "Local Preachers Directory," 1878, 12; 1879, 13; 1881, 13; 1885, 14. (These are the annual minutes to which I have access).

⁶⁵ *Lamoille Newsdealer* (Hyde Park, Vermont), 21 December 1869, 2.

⁶⁶ This information, along with information referenced from his obituary that also appeared in the *Glens Falls Morning Star*, is taken from an undated manuscript written by John Austin, currently historian emeritus, when he was the historian for Warren County, NY, simply entitled, "The Rev. George S. Brown." Austin referenced the newspaper articles but does not include page numbers. *Morning Star* is currently not available online.

⁶⁷ *Argus and Patriot* (Montpelier, Vermont), 21 April 1886, 2; *Rutland Daily Herald*, 24 April 1886, 3; *Rutland Weekly Herald*, 29 April 1886, 7.

⁶⁸ The Winooski United Methodist Church in Winooski, Vermont, was designated as a fourth official United Methodist Historic Site during the 2021 New England Annual Conference.