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COMMENTS: The Church in New Haven was originally called
John Wesley Church. It was established/organized by
James Vanick, who was founder and first Bishop of the
A.M.E.Zion Church in 1818. It is the mother church of
the New England Annual Conference. One of its outstanding
members was Mrs. Eliza Ann Holpin, her father worked
for Theodore Dwight Woolsey, a charter member of the African
Improvement Society of New Haven, who later became President
of Yale University.

* Information found in The A.M.E.Zion Church Reality of the
Black Church by Bishop William Jacob Hall 1974 Certs.

FACSIMILE COVER SHEET

New York City services, William Hamilton composed the hymns for the day, and Peter Williams, Jr. gave the oration in the morning. (42) This became an annual celebration for a period among the people of African descent, with Abraham Thompson having the honor in 1809, and William Miller in 1810. (43)

A little later this same year, a movement led by William Hamilton, the New York African Society for Mutual Relief, was begun and received a state charter two years later, March 23, 1810, with Hamilton as its first president. Its object was "to raise a fund to be appropriated toward the relief of the widows and orphans of the deceased members." (44) Its members were composed chiefly of businessmen, many of them members of the A.M.E. Zion Church, and several preachers (practically all the black preachers of the city of that day). James Varick was elected its first chaplain and functioned at the various services, especially anniversary celebrations, usually held in Zion Church. (45) This organization was still in existence in 1969, when a historic marker was placed on the site at 42 Orange (now Baxter) Street, the first building of this society.

In 1812, while Varick and the other preachers were increasing their church work and holding occasional conferences in and around the City of New York, (46) he continued active in organizations established in New York City to serve the race, locally and nationally. The black people organized numerous societies and associations during these early days, before the coming of the active abolition movements in the 1830's, in efforts to be free and recognized as citizens.

The first Lodge of Freemasonry was established in New York State in 1812, when Peter Lew, Grand Master of Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Boston, granted a warrant to nine Master Masons to open and work a Lodge of Master Masons in New York City under the title of Boyer Lodge No. 1 F. & A.M. (47) It was named in honor of General Jean Boyer, the Haitian general. Sandy Lattin, Worshipful Master, had created deep concern among the white lodges when he announced his meetings in the city newspapers. So far as is definitely known, he was the first Master (48) Sandy Lattin was a member of the A.M.E. Zion Church, both Zion and later Asbury, where he was an original trustee. (49) None of the other eight members of the original charter have been discovered, but it is believed that Varick and Miller were associated with Lattin in this first Masonic organization of New York State, for they worked closely together in the church and other African organizations. Boyer Lodge was also known as the African Lodge, and today represents the oldest black lodge of New York State.

On January 17, 1817, The New York African Bible Society was established in William Miller's schoolroom in his home at 36 Mulberry Street, where he also operated his cabinet-maker's shop. The group met and drew up its constitution and chose the following gentlemen as managers: William Miller, president; James Varick, Jacob Matthews, and Thomas Miller, vice-presidents; George Collins, secretary; Lewis Carter, treasurer; George DeGrass, Sandy Lattin, Robert F.

42. Peter Williams, Jr. *Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, 1808, speech.

43. *Ibid.*; Orations and Sermons on the Abolition of the African Slave Trade (Schomburg Collection, New York City).

44. John J. Zulle, *Historical Sketch of the NY Society for Mutual Relief*, pp. 1-26; Annual Programs and Orations, NY Society for Mutual Relief.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 25; Programs, 1809.

46. Hood, *One Hundred Years*, p. 213.

47. William H. Grimshaw *Official History of Freemasonry*, p. 124.

48. Ms., *Harry Albo Williamson papers*, Schomburg Collection, Sequit-Centennial Program

JAMES VARICK—Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Freedom

Williams, Andrew Smith, and William Lambert. (50) It had 42 members in its beginning, and became an auxiliary society to the American Bible Society founded in 1816. By the end of the year of the American Bible Society's report for 1820, it had made donations and paid for Bibles to be distributed among its race people. The Society continued to grow, along with a sister group "The New York Female Bible Society of People of Colour," which raised la sums for the distribution of the Bibles and reported to the American Bible Society. Its object was "to encourage as wide a circulation as possible of the Holy Scriptures amongst the people of colour in this City without note accompanied with any comment. . . ." (51)

James Varick worked hard, also, to establish the church in New Haven Conn., as early as 1818, with 35 members. This church later became a part Zion connection in 1820. It was formerly the John Wesley Church on Webs Street, now the Varick Memorial Church, mother church of the New England Conference, at Dixwell Avenue and Charles Street. (52)

Varick was enthusiastically versatile in his endeavors for church and race and "plain but orthodox in his preaching." (53) Much of his writing is lost, decay or design, though some of it may yet be discovered. But the paucity of need not be too-surprising, for he was a man with a large family, supporting the work of his church venture and the work for his race in general, which absorbed most of his economic strength. A large number of the members of the pioneering movement, we will recall, were slaves, and generally poor. Varic wisdom and pen were dominant and strongly directive in the documents that created the A.M.E. Zion Church and that still constitute its classic preservative. But printing was so expensive in that day, for our people in New York, that some instances, only 100 or 200 copies of items were printed and circulated. good instance of the difficulty of small preservation of published material is the first Discipline of the A.M.E. Zion Church of 1820. Twelve hundred copies were printed, and only three can be found in the leading libraries of the country today, including the Library of Congress. Another instance is the newspaper established by the son of William Hamilton, *The Peoples Press*, which circulated for a brief period, and no copy can be found. (54)

Varick once again came to the front in behalf of his race when a group black ministers and businessmen met in New York City, and appointed Thor Sipkins secretary of the committee to petition the New York State Constitutional Convention regarding their right to vote. The memorial was sent for direct action, and brought to the attention of the convention, meeting in Albany, September 12. There was much opposition on the right of suffrage, and lengthy debates. The Convention finally passed a limited law based upon age, amount property owned, amount of taxes paid, etc. (55)

Varick figured prominently, also, in the black man's effort to start newspaper for his race. I. Garland Penn states that: "New York State appears have been the great fighting ground of the Afro-American abolitionists. Not on

50. *Constitution*, New York African Bible Society; American Bible Society Library.

51. Eric M. North, *Ms. History*, American Bible Society Library.

52. Robert Austin Warner, *New Haven Negroes*, p. 85; Hill, *Modern History of New Haven and Eastern New Haven County*, Vol. 1, p. 217; *Freedom's Journal*, May 4, 1827.

53. Moore, *History*, p. 349.

54. This journal mentioned by Penn in *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*; also I James Brown of Fishkill Landing, N. Y., in his diaries. Ms. Division, New York Historical Society.

n the early 1830's. This humble African Methodist group, led valiantly by Rush, obtained an incorporation for the society and laid the foundation (cornerstone) stone, on April 7, 1823, at Academy Street near Plane Street. (9) This church is now known as Clinton Memorial.

New York City began to expand northward, and Harlem developed under a large number of Dutch settlers. Zion kept pace with the growing city, and a third society was founded in Harlem in 1822 by Peter Vanhas, (10) called "Little Zion," and a small brick building was erected there in 1843. (11)

The connection had advanced commensurably in the northeastern section when the Third Annual Conference met at Zion Church, New York City, May 21, 1823. Three disruptions faced Bishop Varick and the preachers at the conference and during the ensuing year. First, during this session, it was learned that William Miller of the Asbury charge had connected with the Bethel connection, and was ordained elder by them and appointed to a charge in Washington, D.C. (12) Shortly after this, the Asbury Church in New York placed themselves under the government of the Bethel connection. This same year, their church in Elizabeth Street was destroyed by fire. They then occupied for some time a room in the basement of the Broadway Tabernacle, entering from Anthony Street. They were also in a hall on the corner of Elizabeth and Grand Streets, and then occupied a hall on Howard Street. After this, they moved to Fourth Street, near the East River, and soon afterward an individual purchased for them a house of worship on Third Street near Avenue D, and in 1835 they removed to this building with a view to permanency. (13) By this time, William Miller had long since returned to Zion Connection, and was pastoring in Philadelphia. The flock had scattered somewhat, its membership had dwindled to 70 by 1846, and the congregation was still giving trouble during this schismatic period of Zion's history. (14)

Second, the Philadelphia preachers did not attend the 1823 Annual Conference, because of dissatisfaction existing from the meeting of the last Annual Conference. (15) However, they maintained cooperation with a steady growth, so much that Philadelphia was set apart as our second conference in 1829.

Third, in a continued effort at dissipation of this young connection, in 1824 a small faction of preachers of the New York group had been influenced by Methodist Episcopal Church leaders to see what their General Conference would determine for the benefit of black preachers. In order to avoid dissidence over this intervention the A.M.E. Zion Annual Conference was changed from its regular date of May 20 to July 15, to await the results of the Methodist Episcopal Conference. This was also the General Conference year of Zion Connection. When A.M.E. Zion leaders were truly convinced that nothing had been done for their advantage, they held their combined General and Annual Conferences on July 15, 1824. (16) During the year Leven Smith had established a society in Providence, R.I., and James Anderson, while pastoring New Haven,

9. Rush, *Rise and Progress*, p. 79; Newark City Directory, 1835-1836; *Seminal of Freedom*, April 18, 1826.

10. Varick letter, Riker Papers, N.Y. Public Library.

11. Greenleaf, *A History of the Churches*, p. 322.

12. Moore, *History*, op. cit., p. 98.

13. Greenleaf, op. cit., p. 323; Charles H. Haswell, *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*, p. 207.

14. Greenleaf, op. cit.

15. Moore *History* op. cit., p. 98.

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had founded a society at Middletown, Conn. William Carman continued his progressive work of establishing societies on Long Island.

At the Conference, James Varick was re-elected bishop. James Smith was sent to Zion Church, New York, Leven Smith to Newark, who established a society also at Elizabethtown. James Anderson to Middletown, and Christopher Rush was appointed a missionary. One of the great privileges of the preachers of that day was to be sent out as a missionary, to do the work of evangelists, and



CHRISTOPHER RUSH

1777 - 1873

Second Bishop

He organized four northern conferences.
Strong abolition leader and profound preacher.

make full proof of their ministry. New preachers were being received into the conference, ordained deacons and elders, and sent out to labor in the vineyard facilitating the growth of a denomination.

* This year, there also arose some difficulty with the New Haven Church over the expulsion of one of its members whom many considered to be most useful to the society. "The society became insubordinate; the conference took jurisdiction of the case and by stringent steps brought them into subjection to our Discipline, and continuance in our connection." Varick nurtured this society as early as 1818 with 35 members. The interesting history behind the stabilization of this society are the efforts of two energetic women, first minister Charles Anderson, and the stamata of William H. Bishop. (17) Bishop joined Zion Church in New York in September, 1825, and joined the annual conference as a traveling preacher in May, 1826. (18) One of these founders, Mrs. Eliza Ann Galpin, the daughter of Jeremiah Paine, was employed with the family of Theodore Dwight Woolsey, a charter member of the African Improvement Society of New Haven, who became one of Yale University's most influential

17. Warner, *New Haven Negroes*, p. 85; Rush, op. cit., p. 82.

presidents. Mrs. Galpin's dedication was a stimulation to other members, and by 1841 they were in possession of their own building. Through all its difficulties, the church had grown to 80 members by 1848. (19) The name was changed from John Wesley to Varick Memorial. (See chapter 8.) This society had been through various vicissitudes, including a fire in 1842, which caused \$500 damage, of which \$350 was covered by insurance. (20) It is the mother church of the New England Conference.

Varick presided over the fifth, sixth and seventh annual conferences, from 1825 through 1827, and before the expiration of his second term "God was pleased to call him from labor to reward." (21) He had ordained a dozen deacons and elders during his seven years as first bishop, and had received twice this many traveling preachers into conference and sent them out to serve the needs of a race in despair. After Varick's death, July 22, 1827, the senior elder, Leven Smith, took on the responsibilities of the office, except ordination, according to the Discipline, until the next General Conference in 1828, when he was regularly elected by the Conference and declined. Christopher Rush was then elected the second bishop, (22) at Zion Church, New York, on May 15, 1828.

"As Joshua followed Moses, so did Rush follow Varick." Christopher Rush founded all our Northeastern conferences except the New York and New Jersey Conferences. He was truly a mighty leader. (23) He made appointments and began to lay the groundwork for expansion. On May 21, 1829, the ninth annual conference, meeting in Zion Church, not only included the preachers from Philadelphia, New England and New York areas but a number of preachers from Philadelphia and other parts of Pennsylvania. At this conference they set off the Philadelphia Annual Conference, to be organized June 14 following, in the city of Philadelphia. After making appointments for the regular work, the conference adjourned.

On June 13, 1829, the First Philadelphia Annual Conference met at Wesley Church, on Lombard Street, Philadelphia, with Bishop Rush presiding. There were 17 ministers in attendance including the bishop and two from New York. After a pleasant session of several days, the Conference completed its business with Rush reading the appointments, and adjourned. (24) Edward Johnson was reappointed to Wesley Church, Philadelphia, Jacob Richardson to the charge of the Western District (of Pennsylvania), and David Smith and Richard Phillips were appointed missionaries. The other preachers in attendance were: Durham Stephens, David Stephens, George Stevenson, David Crosby, Jonathan Gibbs, Arthur Landford, Tower Hill, John Marshall, Samuel Johnson, and Abraham Green. (25)

The roll of the New York Conference at this time, and until 1840, was as follows: (26) Bishop Christopher Rush;

19. Warner, *New Haven Negroes*, p. 85.
 20. *Ibid.*
 21. Hood, *One Hundred Years*, p. 531.
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. Moore, *History*, op. cit., p. 100.
 24. *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.
 25. Rush, *Rise and Progress*, p. 82.
 26. Hood, *One Hundred Years*, pp. 65-66.

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Revs.:	Charles Anderson	Shadrach Golden	Abraham Miller
	Jehiel C. Beman	Francis P. Graham	*William Miller
	Edward Bishop	Samuel T. Gray	Richard Noyce
	*William Bishop	John Jackson	*Peter Ross
	David Blake	Thomas Jackson	Samuel Serrington
	Nathaniel Blunt	Thomas James	William Serrington
	W. L. Brown	Henry Johnson	*James Simmons
	William Carman	J. B. Johnson	Benjamin Simms
	John Chester	William Jones	Leven Smith
	Abraham Cole	Jesse Kemble	*George Spywood
	Leonard Collins	Dempsey Kennedy	*John Tappan
	Henry Drayton	John A. King	John P. Thompson
	John Dugy	John W. Lewis	*Joseph P. Thompson
	Hosea Easton	Peter Lum	William Tillman
	Timothy Eato	John N. Mars	Daniel Vandevier
	Adam Ford	Jacob Matthews	Peter Vanhas
	William Fuller	William McFarlan	George Washington
	George Garnett	Basil McKall	John Wells
			J. H. Williams

* Became bishops of the church.

Several of the others listed became quite distinguished in their day. We will note later that among the most outstanding abolitionists of the race were Jehiel C. Beman, Hosea Easton, Bishops Rush and Thompson. The above mentioned men established our first churches as far west as Jamestown, N.Y., and western points in Pennsylvania, as far north as Boston, and later Portland, Me., and as far south as Washington, D.C.

"From the years 1828 to 1840 Rush had filled the episcopal office alone, and had filled it well, and afterwards served effectively until his retirement in 1852 due to loss of sight. Every year there was an increase of members, ministers, and churches; new territory was occupied, and the connection increased in strength and influence continually." However, the General Conference of 1840 produced a disturbing element which culminated 12 years later in a split in the connection, which lasted for 8 years. (27) While the A.M.E. Zion Church was passing through its second most cataclysmic period, the Lord enabled them to reign over all difficulties, and brought the church through victoriously in 1860.

Our work was extended chiefly over the states of the north, until the emancipation of the race and the close of the Civil War, when it entered the South to organize many churches. (28) Those men who showed exceptional power which aided the development of our church were: Rev. Samuel T. Gray, who was not only a remarkable natural orator, noted for his ability to rouse enthusiasm, but was a very successful medical doctor. "He was a man of unusual acumen, easily triumphed in debate, and as a logician and parliamentarian could vanquish his opponent;" Rev. Henry Johnson who passed among his fellows as "Old Hickory" because of his strong force of character; Rev. John A. Williams was an unusual revivalist; Rev. Leonard Collins was one of the pillars of the church for a number of years, but lost his standing by yielding to the temptation of strong drink. Those who had great preaching ability and moved multitudes to

27. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

28. DuBois, *The Negro Church*, p. 45.