

## **The Archives of the Episcopal Church**

### **Research Report: Election of the Historiographer of the Episcopal Church**

**June 22, 2023**

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The office of the Historiographer has existed since 1838, when General Convention appointed the Rev. Samuel Farmar Jarvis to the post. At the time, the future of the Episcopal Church was uncertain, and Jarvis was tasked with preparing "from the most original sources now extant, a faithful Ecclesiastical History, reaching from the Apostles' times, to the formation of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States."<sup>1</sup>

During the early years of The Episcopal Church, the role of the Historiographer was not mandated by canon, therefore there were no provisions or procedures in place for the nomination and election of Historiographers when the role was vacated. After the death of Rev. Jarvis in 1853, the responsibilities of the office fell to Rev. Francis Lister Hawks. Hawks had been named by the 1835 General Convention as the Conservator of the Church's books, manuscripts, and pamphlets,<sup>2</sup> and by the 1847 General Convention as a "Historiographer of the Church" to serve alongside Jarvis.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to the establishment of Canon 48.III.iv in 1913, the canons provided for the Presiding Bishop to appoint individuals to the offices of Registrar and Custodian of the Prayer Book between Conventions, but not to the office of the Historiographer. During the General Convention of 1913, Canon 48.III.iv established that, "The Registrar shall also be Historiographer, unless in any case the House of Bishops shall make a separate nomination; and in this event the House of Deputies shall confirm the nomination."<sup>4</sup> The current canon mandating the role of the Historiographer, Canon I.1.5.d, retains this original language.<sup>5</sup>

In 1931, during the long tenure of the Rev. Edward Clowes Chorley as Historiographer, the Parliamentary [Procedural] Manual published that year notes that "under established practice all these officials (Historiographer, Custodian, Recorder and Registrar) are to be elected at each General Convention."<sup>6</sup>

Upon resigning his office 1949, Chorely donated his records as Historiographer and related records of The Episcopal Church to Yale University. With the exception of Wright, Hawks, and a small collection from Samuel Hart, the Archives of the Episcopal Church does not hold records of this important office, as it is not canonically required that the Historiographer transfer their records to the Archives.

In 1967, the Rev. Canon Charles M. Guilbert was elected as the Registrar during the 62<sup>nd</sup> General Convention. In his 1970 report to Convention, Guilbert noted that, "The House of Bishops having made no separate nomination of an Historiographer, the office also devolved upon the incumbent pursuant to

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the General Convention*, 1838, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of the General Convention*, 1835, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of the General Convention*, 1847, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal of the General Convention*, 1913, p. 154; *Constitution and Canons*, 1913, p. 122.

<sup>5</sup> *Constitution and Canons*, 2022, p. 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> "Parliamentary Manual of J. Randolph Anderson, Deputy from the Diocese of Georgia," *Journal of General Convention*, 1931, p. 629.

clause (d) of...Section 5 of Canon 1.”<sup>7</sup> With no further nominations from the House of Bishops, Guilbert continued as the Historiographer until 1976.

In 1976, an organization rather than a person was appointed Historiographer. At the recommendation of Rev. Canon Guilbert, The Historical Society of the Episcopal Church (also known as the Church Historical Society) was named as Historiographer.<sup>8</sup> This recommendation stemmed from a wider discussion of a proposed canonical change wherein The Historical Society of the Episcopal Church would continue in the role of the Historiographer without subsequent reelections (resolution 1970-B3), however the resolution was tabled.<sup>9</sup>

Guilbert’s suggestion that HSEC would “seem to be the proper agency for this [Historiographer] position,”<sup>10</sup> was rooted in the fact that their Board also served as the Board of the Archives of the Episcopal Church during this period. However, HSEC was and remains an independently incorporated body, rather than an agency of The Episcopal Church.

The debate surrounding the appointment of The Historical Society of the Episcopal Church as Historiographer led to a period of confusion during the late 1970s that continued well into the 1980s. As there was no nomination or confirmation for the Historiographer reported in the Journal of General Convention in 1979, and therefore, per Canon I.1.5.d, the duties of the office would fall on the Registrar, the Rev. Canon James Gundrum.<sup>11</sup> However, Gundrum was not listed as Historiographer in 1979, but was listed as such in 1982,<sup>12</sup> and then listed only as the Executive Officer, Secretary, and Registrar in 1985.<sup>13</sup>

In 1988, the Blue Book Report of the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church noted that the "Board of the Historical Society at the request of the General Convention serves as Historiographer,"<sup>14</sup> despite not having been nominated or confirmed to that role beyond the 1976 General Convention. As such, the incumbent Registrar, the Rev. Donald Nickerson, served as the Historiographer from 1988-1989.

The Rev. John Booty was appointed to the role of Historiographer on March 22, 1989 by appointment of the Presiding Bishop which was confirmed during the 1991 General Convention.<sup>15</sup> Booty continued to act in the role of the Historiographer, and was listed and introduced as such at the 1997 General Convention, however there was no nomination or confirmation of his election to this role during the 1994 and 1997 General Conventions.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, pursuant to Canon I.1.5.d, the duties of the office during these two triennia, officially fell to the Registrar, Rev. Donald Nickerson.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Journal of the General Convention*, 1970, p. 652; *Constitution and Canons*, 1970, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1976, p. D-104.

<sup>9</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1976, p. B-273.

<sup>10</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1976, p. B-273.

<sup>11</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1979, p. A-5.

<sup>12</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1982, p. A-7.

<sup>13</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1985, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Reports to the General Convention (Blue Book)*, 1988, p. 133.

<sup>15</sup> *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 1999, p. 245; *Reports to the General Convention (Blue Book)*, 1991, p. 192; *Journal of General Convention*, 1991, p. 647.

<sup>16</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1997, p. 338, 377.

<sup>17</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1997, p. 1.

A similar situation presented itself during the 2022 General Convention, when Mr. Lee Little was appointed as Historiographer by the Presiding Bishop and confirmed by the House of Bishops. While a voice motion carried, a resolution was not sent to the House of Deputies. Without separate nomination and confirmation of a Historiographer, the duties of the office devolved to the incumbent Registrar, the Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe. Following General Convention, Mr. Little was appointed as Assistant Historiographer by the Registrar.<sup>18</sup>

### **Timeline of the Historiographers of The Episcopal Church**

**1835-1868 - Rev. Francis Lister Hawks** - elected as Conservator of the Church's Books in 1835 and appointed as "a Historiographer of the Church" in 1847.<sup>19</sup> It is assumed that Hawks continued to serve as Historiographer after Jarvis' death, however there were no additional resolutions passed regarding his continued appointment after 1847.

**1838-1853 - Rev. Samuel Farmar Jarvis** - elected as Historiographer in 1838.<sup>20</sup>

**1868-1898 - Rt. Rev. William Stevens Perry** - elected as Historiographer in 1868.<sup>21</sup>

**1898-1919 - Rev. Samuel Hart** - elected as Historiographer in 1898. Listed as Historiographer in 1916, however no separate nomination and confirmation took place.<sup>22</sup>

**1919-1946 - Rev. Edward Clowes Chorley** - elected as Historiographer in 1919.<sup>23</sup> Nominated and confirmed as Historiographer at every General Convention from 1919-1946, except 1931 when the Journal did not report the election of the Historiographer.

**1949-1952 - Rev. Edgar L. Pennington** - elected as Historiographer in 1949.<sup>24</sup>

**1952-1967 - Rev. Walter H. Stowe** - elected as Historiographer in 1952.<sup>25</sup>

**1967-1976 - Rev. Canon Charles M. Guilbert** - listed as Historiographer (also as Custodian of the Book of Common Prayer and Registrar) in 1967 and 1970, however there was no nomination or confirmation reported in the Journal in 1967.<sup>26</sup> With no further nominations from the House of Bishops for the role of Historiographer, Guilbert continued as the Historiographer until 1976.

**1976-1979 - The Historical Society of the Episcopal Church (Church Historical Society)** - elected as Historiographer in 1976.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 2022, p. 647.

<sup>19</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1835, p. 65; *Journal of General Convention*, 1847, p. 83.

<sup>20</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1838, p. 118.

<sup>21</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1868, p. 239.

<sup>22</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1898, p. 298; *Journal of General Convention*, 1916, p. VII.

<sup>23</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1919, p. 92.

<sup>24</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1949, p. 260.

<sup>25</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1952, p. 232.

<sup>26</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1967, p. ix; *Journal of General Convention*, 1970, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1976, p. D-104.

**1979-1989 - Rev. Canon James R. Gundrum** - There was no nomination or confirmation for the Historiographer reported in the Journal of General Convention in 1979-1989, therefore, per Canon I.1.5.d, the duties of the office would fall on the Registrar. Gundrum was not listed as Historiographer in 1979, but was in 1982.<sup>28</sup> Gundrum was only listed as Executive Officer, Secretary, and Registrar in 1985.<sup>29</sup>

**1988-1989 - Rev. Donald Nickerson** - As the Registrar, Rev. Nickerson would fill the role of Historiographer, as there was no separate nomination or confirmation for the office during the 1988 General Convention.

**1989-1991 - Rev. John Booty** - Booty was appointed to the role of Historiographer on March 22, 1989 by appointment of the Presiding Bishop. Booty was nominated and confirmed during the 1991 General Convention.<sup>30</sup>

**1994-1997 - Rev. John Booty / Rev. Donald Nickerson** - While Booty was acting in the role of the Historiographer, and listed and introduced as such at the 1997 General Convention,<sup>31</sup> there was no nomination or confirmation of election to this role. Pursuant to Canon I.1.5.d, the duties of the office would fall on the Registrar, Rev. Donald Nickerson.<sup>32</sup>

**2000-2009 - Rev. J. Robert Wright** - elected as Historiographer in 2000.<sup>33</sup> Wright was nominated and confirmed each convention through 2009.

**2012-2018 - Rev. Robert Bruce Mullin** - elected as Historiographer in 2012.<sup>34</sup> He was nominated and confirmed each convention through 2018.

**2022-Present - Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe** - without separate nomination and confirmation, the duties of Historiographer devolve to the incumbent Registrar.

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<sup>28</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1979, p. A-5; *Journal of General Convention*, 1982, p. A-7.

<sup>29</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1985, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1991, p. 647.

<sup>31</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1997, p. 338, 377.

<sup>32</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 2000, p. 94.

<sup>34</sup> *Journal of General Convention*, 2012, p. 94.