

Chapter 13 (11-01-11)

**Floyd was “an eternal
psalm singing Methodist.”**

Alexander Hamilton, Jr. 1796-?

Alice of Old Vincennes

Alice of Old Vincennes written in 1900 about events which occurred in 1778 and 1779 gives an excellent description of Christianity in Vincennes in those and other years. The following words may be condemned in our secular society today but they would not have been in the times about which this biography was written:

The church, no matter by what name it goes, Catholic or Protestant, has a saving hold on the deepest inner being of its adherents. No grip is so hard to shake off as that of early religious convictions. The still, small voice coming down from the times “When shepherds watched their flocks by night,” in old Judea, passes through the priest, the minister, the preacher; it echoes in cathedral, church, open-air meeting; it gently and mysteriously impart to human life the distinctive quality which is the exponent of Christian civilization. Upon the receptive nature of children it makes an impress that forever afterward exhales a fragrance and irradiates a glory for the saving of nations.

Father Beret [or Father Blackrobe as the Indians called him] was the humble, self-effacing, never-tiring agent of good in his community. He preached in a tender sing-song voice the sweet monotonies of his creed and the sublime truths of Christ’s code. He was indeed the spiritual father of his people.

Thompson, Maurice, *Alice of Old Vincennes*, The Bowen-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1900, p. 107.

While some of Floyd’s relatives were Catholic he was not. A Freemason in the Indiana Territory would not have been a Catholic. Incidentally, Father Beret was a Jesuit priest like the John Floyd in Chapter 1 of this biography.

Methodist Church in the Indiana and Florida Territories

According to the Record Book beginning with the quarterly conference of the Silver Creek Circuit of the Methodist Church in the Indiana Territory held August 5-8, 1808 Davis Floyd was present for the conference as a class leader in the Circuit. He would have lived in Jeffersonville at the time. The Silver Creek Circuit had been formed by the Kentucky District in 1807 and was located entirely within the bounds of the Territory, and probably within the bounds of Clark County at that time since Silver Creek empties into the Ohio River within eyesight of the lower side of the Falls of the Ohio at Clarksville. While there was not much cooperation between Kentucky and the Indiana Territory on the building of canals, there was a lot of cooperation between the Freemasons and the Methodists in the state and the territory. The former was guided by politics and greed while the latter were guided by compassion and charity.

It is likely that the first Methodist "meeting house" was the New Chapel Church which survives today at its original site on the north side of Jeffersonville. The Church's history says that a log building was erected there in 1804. Another history says that it was built in 1807. A second log building was erected in 1811. A stone plaque embedded in the tower says 1806-1884. In all likelihood this was the place that the quarterly conference was held which Floyd attended. Another source confirms that the first pastoral charge in the Indiana Territory was the Silver Creek Circuit in Clark's Grant but then states that the first meeting house was erected in the Robertson neighborhood near Charlestown.

There is no record of Floyd being involved in any religious activities prior to 1808. However, he did not become a class leader in the Methodist church in the Indiana Territory in 1808 without considerable religious training before that time. Floyd came to Kentucky at the age of five years in 1779. One of his uncles conducted church in his double wide cabin in or near Louisville. It is probable

that Floyd first gained interest in the Methodist church while he was growing up in Louisville. He may have met his first wife in a church there. Churches were popular social centers on the frontier since other forms of social distractions were rare.

Floyd and his family moved to Corydon in 1813 and it is reported that he was a Methodist lay preacher in that community. And then ten years later Floyd and his family moved to the Florida Territory. He was a land commissioner in St. Augustine where he and two other Land Commission judges decided land disputes in the Territory ceded by Spain to the United States two years before. One of the commissioners was Alexander Hamilton, Jr., the son of the Federalist leader who was shot and killed in a duel with Aaron Burr. Floyd was intimately associated with Burr, first in 1805 in the canal project on the Indiana side of the Falls of the Ohio, and second, he was Burr's quartermaster in what later became known as the Burr Conspiracy. Floyd was the only man convicted of a crime in that conspiracy. Perhaps the mix of land commissioners in the East Florida Territory was not good and a quarrel over the handling of cases by the land commissioners developed between Hamilton on one side and Floyd and the other commissioner, William W. Blair, on the other side. Floyd was the president commissioner for the life of the Land Commission and Hamilton was never given a permanent appointment on the Commission. Hamilton in a letter dated January 6th, 1824 to the President of the United States, James Monroe, called Floyd "an eternal psalm singing Methodist" and Blair "a violent presbyterian puritan."

Other than Hamilton calling Blair "a violent presbyterian puritan," nothing is known about Blair's religious life. In fact, there is not much known about his life in general except he was born in Kentucky and was a lawyer and a judge in one of its courts before moving to the Florida Territory in 1823. Blair did write an opinion in the Montgomery Circuit Court in 1822 on a motion to quash a replevy

bond. Such a bond secured the return of personal property which a plaintiff was trying to recover from a defendant. The opinion is on file at the University of Kentucky Libraries in Lexington, Kentucky.

More is known about Floyd's religious life. Judge Floyd as judge of the Floyd Circuit Court in New Albany, Indiana in May 1821 suggested to John Dahmen, after the jury announced its guilty verdict for murder that he needed to make peace with his maker and prepare for the awful destiny which was shortly awaiting him. When Floyd sentenced Dahmen to "be hanged by the neck until [he was] dead, dead, dead!" Dahmen shouted out to the Judge "Go to hell and be damned at last," to which the judge said "God have mercy on your life," to which Dahmen retorted "and the Devil too."

Methodist Class Leaders

In a book about the life of John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of the Methodist Church, the concept of class meetings and their leaders is described:

At another level for the Methodists was the maintenance of local societies like those at London and Bristol that were growing into hundreds of followers. Here the Methodists had added a level called a class meeting. This was a group of twelve. The group discussed and resolved money requirements of the whole society, but its main function was accountability in the pursuit of holiness. This added facet of the Methodists was really based on the concept of the Holy Club and Wesleys' [John and Charles] first small societies. John realized this close-knit feeling of the small group must never be lost as the local societies grew larger and larger.

The class of twelve met once a week in the society building and sat around a table. On the table was a Bible, God's Word and their source of wisdom. Whoever the group had chosen as a leader would blow on a pitchpipe and they would sing a hymn. They would pray for the Holy Spirit to expose their thoughts and inspire them to holiness. After a Bible reading, the revelation began.

The leader would say, “Sister Smith, how has this past week been for your soul?”

Sister Smith would flush. “Praise the Lord, well, sir.”

“Any temptations?” he would prod.

“Yes, God forgive me.”

“Any more incidents of temper?”

“Yes. But fewer than before! And the week has brought many blessings to me.”

“Go on to victory, Sister Smith. One day the crown incorruptible will be yours. Hallelujah. Brother Jones, how was the past week for your soul?”

And so they would proceed around the table. These public confessions in the class meeting made each member seek holiness with ardor. While each one answered the leader, the others were chanting concern or praise.

Wellman, Sam, *John Wesley--Founder of the Methodist Church*, Barbour & Company, Inc., Uhrichsville, Ohio, 1997, pp. 144-145.

Floyd probably conducted meetings like this one. The concept of Christian holiness is sometimes referred to as the “second grace.” In the Christian experience the “first grace” is salvation. Salvation is the conscious and heartfelt act of accepting Jesus, the son of God and God on earth, as the believer’s personal Savior, confessing one’s past sins, and being truly repentant of or sorry for them. The second grace looks to the future. It inspires the believer to lead a more spiritual life, recognizing and avoiding sin before it happens. There are denominational distinctions on both salvation and holiness but those do not need to be discussed here.

In a book on the life of Fanny Crosby (1820-1915), a blind Christian hymn writer, the following appears about class meetings:

Fanny [Crosby] attended a series of revivals that fall at the Methodist Broadway Tabernacle on 30th Street [in New York City]. Fanny, reared in a cold and colorless Calvinistic Presbyterian church, was drawn to the Methodists’ warm and lively services and their fervent and comparatively cheerful hymn singing. As early as 1839, she

attended Methodist “class meetings” at the Eighteenth Street Church, where the pious gathered to sing, pray, “testify,” and read Scripture in free-flowing, informal meetings that appealed to many young persons. Often the leader without warning would talk about all God had done for him or her.

Ruffin, Bernard, *Fanny Crosby--the Hymn Writer*, Barbour Publishing, Inc., , Uhrichsville, Ohio, 1995, p. 56.

It was not until 1850 that Fanny Crosby, who was probably saved (received salvation) in her youth, entered into the “second grace,” of holy living and turning her life over fully to God. Author Ruffin said “it marked the beginning of a deepening Christian experience and the beginning of total dedication to her life in God.” (See p. 59.)

Fanny’s experience in the Methodist denomination probably paralleled the experience of Floyd. The description of Floyd as “an eternal psalm-singing Methodist” would probably apply equally to Crosby’s life-changing experience. And the description of Blair as “a violent presbyterian puritan” denominated him as a devotee to predestination and salvation based solely on God’s grace as advocated by John Calvin. Such a devotee’s belief and practice were based upon a stern moral code and was extremely or excessively strict in matters of morals and religion. That is the reason Blair was “violent” and a “puritan.” The two men’s belief systems were different but they were lawyers, judges, and inhabitants of frontier communities, and that erased a lot of their religious differences.

Deacons in the New Testament Church

Floyd was probably a reader of the Bible including both the Old and the New Testaments. The term “deacon” probably best describes the kind of Methodist church member Floyd was. In 1 Timothy 3 KJV beginning with verse 8 a deacon is described:

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

In modern language a deacon should be a new believer, not swollen with pride and subject to backsliding, well spoken of, and a person of high integrity. He should also not be a heavy drinker or fraudulent with money. He should not gamble or bet. He should be a committed believer and live with a clear conscience. Likewise, his only wife must be respected, not a gossip, she must exercise self control and be faithful in everything she does. In all likelihood Floyd was probably this kind of person in his church life and in his private and public life as well. And hopefully, his two wives exhibited the traits for wives of deacons.

Growth of Methodist Church in Ohio River Valley

The Methodist Church grew nationwide from 8,500 members in 1780 to 260,000 members in 1820 and most of this growth consisted of young adults. The greatest expansion was seen in the Upper South and the Ohio River Valley. In an article entitled "The Confused, the Curious, and the Reborn" published in the *Ohio Valley History* in the spring of 2010 author John Ellis said "Unmarried young men and women flocked to the [Methodist] denomination. Other upstart evangelical sects, like the Baptist, also attracted young people in these regions, but the Methodists' growth outmatched all competitors." (p.3). Author Ellis tries to answer two questions in his article, those being why did Methodism attract young converts and why did Methodism evolve into a culturally radical, youth-driven movement in the early republic? The answers to these first questions are

in the title to the article--the converts were confused or they were curious, or they were reborn, or a combination of these factors.

Author Ellis defined the "confused" as young people who grew up after the Revolutionary War and whose families had moved to the South and West. They were either uprooted or born in a frontier cabin or lived in a frontier community. Their families may have settled in a cabin miles away from any other family or, like the Floyds, they may have lived in family groups that included a host of siblings and cousins. Death was a constant companion from a variety of causes and longevity was much shorter than it is today. Infancy death was rampant. They did not know what to expect from the harsh realities of frontier life. They needed something to reduce the disorders in their lives. The church and especially the Methodist church supplied that needed order.

In defining the "curious" author Ellis said:

In a society roiled by rival worldviews and theologies, shifting of understandings of status and adulthood, and the breakdown of community and communal identity, Methodism offered an appealing resolution to youths caught in the cultural uncertainty. However, most young people were not initially drawn to Methodism because of its ideological message. Rather, youths and adults both flocked to the circuit riding Methodist evangelists' revivals because of their novelty in the border region's rural areas. Other than occasional itinerant entertainers or politicians canvassing for votes, prominent strangers seldom appeared in the region's backwater towns. When outsiders did come, they drew large crowds of locals hoping for a public spectacle to enliven the otherwise mundane routines of life in their communities....

As a result, many rural residents went to Methodist revivals expecting to socialize, but they also came because circuit riders were oddities. Prior to 1790 in the East and 1800 in the West, few had witnessed a Methodist revival or heard a circuit rider preacher. Because Presbyterians, Anglicans, and most Baptist embraced Calvinism, listeners found the Methodists' free-will theology startling.

Calvinists believed that converts were chosen by God and that "once you were saved, you were always saved" regardless of your conduct thereafter. John Wesley and his Methodist preachers believed that if you backslid you could lose your salvation and go to hell. Or you could get your salvation back by repenting again and accepting Jesus Christ again as your Lord and Savior and choosing to live a more holy life. The choice depended on you and not on God to choose you. The individual liberties that the American Constitution gave its citizens energized the free-will, non-compulsory, voluntary theology which the Methodist doctrine advocated. In addition, it gave young people who sinned daily in thought, word, and deed a mechanism to ask for forgiveness and be forgiven. Many of them thought they were too sinful to be chosen by God under the Calvin doctrine, but for them to choose God was a practical way for them to gain eternal life.

The "reborn" were great groups of youth who under the "fire and brimstone" preaching of itinerant Methodist preachers repented of their sins, accepted Christ, and became involved in a myriad of church activities. There is a good chance that they would meet their future spouse there. This is probably what happened to Davis Floyd. Author Ellis said:

In a culture where religious values were contested and the afterlife uncertain, youths found comfort in a sect that assured salvation to its converts. But to experience this supernatural rebirth, young people's psyches first needed cracked to flush their latent anxieties to the surface of their consciousness. To do so, preachers stripped their listeners of all confidence by guaranteeing their damnation without conversion--or stated differently, by scaring the hell out of them....

The preachers argued that salvation required only that an individual to have faith that he or she was saved.

First Methodist Church in New Albany

In the July 22nd, 1881 issue of New Albany newspaper, *Daily Ledger Standard*, the following article spoke of the establishment of the first Methodist in New Albany:

A Venerable Woman

The first Methodist preacher's wife to visit New Albany was Mrs. Shrader, wife of Rev. John Shrader, who organized the first Methodist society in this city and built the first Methodist "meeting house" here, in 1817. This church was of logs and was located on the lot on Lafayette street upon which Wesley Chapel parsonage now stands. Father Shrader dedicated this church Nov. 20, 1817. His wife was present with him at the first Methodist communion held in this city, in February, 1817—the service being held in Hannah Rough's tavern, which stood on the lot now occupied by J. J. Terstegge's shore store, on State street. Father Shrader died at Poseyville, Posey county, in early 1879. Word now comes that his venerable wife, now over ninety years of age is lying hopelessly ill at her home.

Daily Ledger Standard, July 22, 1881, p. 4, col. 2.

It is likely that Floyd knew Rev. Shrader and his wife and may have served as a class leader in his church and preached in his absence.

Methodist Church Services in the Early 1800's

There are several paragraphs in Edward Eggleston's book, *The Circuit Rider*, which describe a typical Methodist service in Floyd's time, and the conversion of Morton Goodwin, the hero of the story:

Methodism was new, and, like everything new, lacked traditions, picturesqueness, mustiness, and all the other essentials of gentility in religious matters. The converts were rude, vulgar, and poor; the preachers were illiterate, and often rough in voice and speech; they made war on dancing and jewelry, and dancing and jewelry appertained to good-breeding. (See p. 174.)

But now the room is full. People are crowding the doorways. The good old-class leader has shut his eyes and turned his face heavenward. Presently he strikes up lustily, leading the congregation in singing:

“How tedious and tasteless the hours
When Jesus no longer I see!”

When he reached the stanza that declares:

“While blest with a sense of his love
A palace a joy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there.”

there were shouts of “Halleluiah!” “Praise the Lord!” and so forth. At the last quatrain, which runs,

“O! drive these dark clouds from my sky!
Thy soul-cheering presence restore;
Or take me to thee up on high,
Where winter and clouds are no more!”

there were the heartiest “Amens,” though they must have spoken in a poetic sense. I cannot believe that any of the excellent brethren, even in that moment of exaltation, would really have desired translation to the world beyond the clouds.

The preacher, in his meditations, had forgotten his congregation...; and so, when this hymn was finished, a sister, with a rich but uncultivated soprano, started, to the tune called “Indian Philosopher,” that inspiring song which begins:

“Come on, my partners in distress,
My comrades in this wilderness,
Who still your bodies feel;
Awhile forget your griefs and tears
To that celestial hill.”

The hymn was long, and by the time it was completed the preacher, having suddenly come to himself, entered hurriedly, and pushed forward to the place arranged for him. The festoons of dried pumpkin hanging from the joists reached nearly to his head; a tallow dip [candle], sitting in the window, shed a feeble light upon his face as he stood there, tall, gaunt, awkward, weather-beaten, with deep-

sunken, weird, hazel eyes, a low forehead, a prominent nose, coarse black hair resisting yet the approach of age, and a *tout ensemble* unpromising, but peculiar. He began immediately to repeat his hymn:

“I saw one hanging on a tree
In agony and blood;
He fixed his languid eye on me,
As near the cross I stood.”

His tone was monotonous, his eyes seemed to have a fascination, and the pathos of his voice, quivering with suppressed emotion, was indescribable. Before his prayer was concluded the enthusiastic Morton [the hero of Eggleston’s novel] felt that he could follow such a leader to the world’s end.

He repeated his text: “*Behold the day cometh,*” and launched at once into a strongly impressive introduction about the all-pervading presence of God, until the whole house seemed full of God, and Morton found himself breathing fearfully, with a sense of God’s presence and ineffable holiness. Then he took up that never-failing theme of the pioneer preacher--the sinfulness of sin--and there were suppressed cries of anguish over the whole house. Morton could hardly feel more contempt for himself than he had felt for two days past: but when the preacher advanced to his climax of the Atonement and the Forgiveness of Sins, [Morton] Goodwin felt himself carried away as with a flood. In that hour, with God around, above, beneath, without and within--with a feeling that since his escape he held his life by a sort of reprieve--with the inspiring and persuasive accents of this weird prophet ringing in his ears, he cast behind him all human loves, all ambitious purposes, all recollections of theological puzzles, and set himself to a self-denying life [Christian holiness].

Eggleston, Edward, *The Circuit Rider*, pp. 161-164.

Floyd and his family probably participated in many services like this one.

In another passage in Eggleston’s book, he describes the difference between the Wesleyan-Armenian doctrine and the Calvinistic doctrine, the former advocated by the Methodists and the latter by the Presbyterians, Baptists, etc. The former doctrine believed that “a man could be a Christian or not as he pleased,” and the latter, “he must be saved anyhow if he were elected.” The first, salvation and

holiness were the Christian's option or choice and the second, salvation and holiness, were exclusively endowed on persons at the election or choice of God.

18th Century Enlightenment

What happened in the Ohio River Valley to make Blair and Floyd the religious men as described by Hamilton in Florida in 1824. In his book entitled, *Head and Heart--American Christianities*, author Garry Wills said in the book's introduction:

Without the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason, benevolence, tolerance, and secular progress, there would have been no Disestablishment of religion in America. Without it, there would have no escape from the theological monopoly that governments had always imposed, no rapid proliferation of the sects that multiplied as soon as Disestablishment occurred. Without the Enlightenment, Franklin's humanitarian efforts and Jefferson's intellectual projects would have had no purchase on the citizenry. Without it, Pennsylvania's Quakers could not have challenged the Bible's sanctioning of slavery. It was a great stroke of fortune that the American republic was shaped at the moment when the Enlightenment was having its full effect on the men who did the shaping. Political freedom and religious freedom arrived together, nudging each other forward. Before then, it had been assumed that a national throne and a national altar must be in alliance, to command the necessary acquiescence of the ruled. The United States rid itself of both throne and altar in one inclusive gesture.

Though there was no official religion in the nation, the framers had an Enlightened religion. Those who have a different kind of religion said in the past and say now that this is no religion at all, simply a cult of reason. It is true that some leaders of the Enlightenment in France were hostile to religion, but that was not true of the main and most numerous followers of Enlightenment in America. They were friendly to religion and were religious themselves. Even the most secular of them, Tom Paine, believed in a personal God, in divine providence, and in the afterlife.

Enlightened religion was such a strong force in all the founding period that it might almost be considered the typical American religion. It is true that this form of belief has assumed the moral leadership of the nation at certain crucial times, and one of its forms--- Transcendentalism---set much of the intellectual tone of the

nineteenth century. But it has rarely been the religion of the mass of Americans. One reason Enlightened religion has such unchallenged sway in the late eighteenth century was that the other characteristic form of American religion---Evangelicalism---was at its lowest ebb in just that period. Yet it came roaring back in the early nineteenth century, and has been adhered to by most Americans in succeeding ages.

Wills, Garry, *Head and Heart--American Christianities*, The Penguin Press, New York, New York, 2007, pp. 1-3.

These are powerful paragraphs! What was the Enlightenment? What was the Disestablishment? What was Transcendentalism? And what was Evangelicalism? While these paragraphs make it obvious, perhaps more information is needed. In its simplest form the Enlightenment enabled the Disestablishment, and the Disestablishment enabled Transcendentalism, and Evangelicalism. Political and religious freedoms were the results of the Enlightenment and the Disestablishment. Floyd was caught up in the fervor of the exercise of these freedoms. First, was his involvement in the anti-slavery movement beginning in 1802 in the brand new Indiana Territory; second, was his involvement in representative government in the new Territory in 1805; third, was his involvement in the proposed canal on the Indiana side of the Falls of the Ohio in 1805; fourth, was his involvement in Freemasonry; fifth, was his involvement in the Burr expedition in 1806-07; sixth, was his involvement in the Methodist Church beginning whenever; and seventh was his involvement in the establishment of the Indiana Constitution at the time of statehood in 1816. Without the Enlightenment and the Disestablishment none of these avenues of activity would have been available to Floyd in any meaningful way. Floyd was truly an active participant at the "Cross Roads of America."

Author Wills uses the phrases "Enlightened Religion" and "Evangelical Religion." He explains them as follows:

Enlightened religion professes a belief in "the laws of nature and of nature's God." It holds that reason is the tool for understanding

those laws, and that human conduct is what those laws teach. Evangelicals, by contrast, emphasize an experiential relationship with Jesus as their savior, along with biblical inerrancy and a mission to save others. Theirs is the religion of that characteristic American institution, the revival. The emphasis of Enlightened religion is on the head. The emphasis of Evangelicals is on the heart. These form the two poles of American religion in the dominant (Protestant) culture. The intellectual and the experimental forms of religion tug against each other, though they are not mutually exclusive....

It is true, of course, that America is a land of many religious traditions, not just two. But the two emphases I single out have had the greatest impact on the general religious ethos. They are not separate churches, but strong tendencies in many churches. The two poles are not formal bodies of doctrine. They are two force fields, each with its own tendency and emphases. This is empirically observable in studies of different epochs in our history. Over and over we find historians identifying a conflict between these two strands, the Enlightened and the Evangelical. At different times they are identified by different terms---liturgical vs. pietist, ecclesial vs. revivalist, high church vs. low church, elite vs. populist, rational vs. emotional, studied vs. spontaneous, Modernist vs. Fundamentalist, immanent vs. apocalyptic, and so on. It is tempting but risky to think of the two strands politically---as liberal vs. conservative.

Will, Head and Heart--American Christianities, p. 3.

The difference in Floyd's Methodism and Blair's Presbyterianism is probably representative of the two poles described by author Wills in the foregoing paragraphs. Floyd's "eternal psalm singing" was a thorn in Hamilton's religious values if he had any. They would have probably been more akin to the religious values of Blair, "a violent presbyterian puritan." The Methodist Church went through a rapid growth period between 1800 and 1860 while the Presbyterian Church advanced at or slightly above the growth rate of the general population. It is possible that Floyd during the time he lived on Bear Grass Creek in Jefferson County, Kentucky from 1779 until 1800, attended revivals and heard itinerate preachers speak. A family biography records that "Charles Floyd [the uncle of Davis Floyd and his younger brother, Sgt. Charles Floyd of the Lewis and Clark Expedition] made his double log-cabin, with double shed rooms, an open home for missionaries and itinerant preachers, and the only 'Church' known for a

number of years was his 'Big-room' which served also as the family parlor and dining room." It is certainly possible that this is where Davis and Charles were introduced to Methodism.

Evangelicalism

Karen Armstrong wrote a book published in 2009 entitled *The Case for God*. Several paragraphs in her book are relevant to what was going on in the Indiana Territory and how those events affected Floyd:

In 1790, the Reverend Jedidiah Morse descended on Boston from the rural outreaches of Massachusetts and launched a crusade against Deism, which had just attained the peak of its development in the United States. Hundreds of preachers joined this assault, and by the 1830s, Deism had been marginalized and a new version of Christianity had become central to the faith of America. Known as "Evangelicalism," its objective was to convert the new nation to the "good news" of the Gospel. Evangelicals had no time for the remote God of the Deists; instead of relying on natural law, they wanted a return to biblical authority, to personal commitment to Jesus, and to a religion of the heart rather than the head. Faith did not require learned philosophers and scientific experts; it was a simple matter of felt conviction and virtuous living.

On the frontiers, nearly 40 percent of Americans felt slighted by their aristocratic republican government, which did not share their hardships but taxed them as heavily as the British and bought land for investment without any intention of leaving the comforts of the eastern seaboard. Frontiersmen and frontierswomen were ready to listen to a new kind of preacher who stirred up a wave of revivals known as the Second Great Awakening (1800-35). This Awakening was more politically radical than the first. The ideals of its prophets seemed very different from those of the founding fathers. They were not educated men, and their rough, populist Christianity seemed light-years away from the Deism of [John] Adams, [Benjamin] Franklin, and [Thomas] Jefferson. Yet they too belonged to the modern world and were able to convey the ideals of the republic to the people in a way that their political leaders could not.

With his wild flowing hair, Lorenzo Dow looked like a latter-day John the Baptist; he still saw a storm as a direct act of God, and yet he would often begin a sermon with a quotation from Jefferson or

[Thomas] Paine and consistently urged his congregations to cast superstition aside and think for themselves. When Barton Warren Stone left the Presbyterians to found a more democratic church, he called his secession a “declaration of independence.” James O’Kelly who had fought in the Revolution and been thoroughly politicized, left mainstream Christianity to found his own church of “Republican Methodists.” These men have been called “folk geniuses.” They were able to translate modern ideals such as freedom of speech, democracy, and equality into an idiom that the less privileged could understand and make their own. Drawing on the radical strain in the gospels, they insisted that the first should be last and the last first, that God favored the poor and unlettered. Jesus and his disciples had not had a college education, so people should not be in thrall to a learned clergy; they had the common sense to figure out the plain meaning of the scriptures for themselves....

Rooted in eighteenth-century Pietism, Evangelical Christianity led many American away from the cool ethos of the Age of Reason to the kind of populist democracy, anti-intellectualism, and rugged individualism that still characterizes American culture. Preacher held torchlight processions and mass rallies, and the new genre of the gospel song transported the audience to ecstasy, so that they wept and shouted for joy. Like some of the fundamentalist movements today, these congregations gave people who felt disenfranchised and exploited a means of making their voices heard by the establishment....

If their democratic society was to avoid the dangers of mob rule, the people must become more Godly. “If you wish to be free indeed, you must be virtuous, temperate, well-instructed,” insisted Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), a leading evangelistic pastor of Cincinnati. America was the new Israel, insisted Timothy Dwight, president of Yale; its expanding frontier was a sign of the coming Kingdom, so to be worthy of their calling, Americans must be more religious. Deism was now regarded as a satanic foe, responsible for the inevitable failures of the infant nation: giving to nature the honor due to Jesus Christ, Deism would promote atheism and materialism.

Armstrong, Karen, *The Case for God*, Anchor Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., New York, New York, 2009, pp.235-237.

These paragraphs from Author Armstrong’s book parallel the events in Floyd life. He was an integral part of this history in the Indiana Territory, the State of

Indiana, and then the Florida Territory. It is demonstrated again and again by his actions.

Sgt. Floyd's Observations of the Catholic Church in St. Charles in the Louisiana Purchase

Sgt. Charles Floyd, Davis Floyd's younger brother, had to be aware of the Catholic Church in both Louisville and Vincennes. He had carried the U. S. mail between the two settlements beginning in 1802, the year before the Lewis and Clark Expedition set off down river from Clarksville on October 26, 1803. One of Sgt. Floyd's earliest journal entries read "Friday may 18th 1804 we Lay at St. Charles [near the mouth of the Missouri River] Saturday may 19th 1804 a Rainey day Capt Lewis Joined us--Sunday may 20th 1804 and a number of the party went to the mass and Saw them perform and &c." At some time he drew a line through the words "and a number of the party went to the mass and Saw them performed and &c" and replaced it with "nothing worth Relating to day". Sgt. Floyd may have asked Capt. Clark to look at his journal entries early in the trip and Clark may have suggested that part of his entry was inappropriate for a military mission. He may have been so stung by the suggestion that he not only struck the offending language but also made it plain that "nothing worth relating" occurred that day thereby giving deference to his commanding officer's opinion.

Gambling, Betting, and Ardent Spirits

As a Methodist Floyd should have been opposed to gambling, betting, and the consumption of ardent sprits, but is there any proof this? We know that Author William Floyd Tuley reported that Judge Floyd liked his "red liquor."

At the meeting of the Grand Lodge in Indiana in September 1818 Floyd was present and acted as the Junior Grand Warden. He introduced the following

resolution which was adopted by the Lodge and has remained one of its rules ever since:

Resolved, That any kind of gambling or betting is considered un-Masonic, and that the Grand Lecturer be requested to give the same in charge to the subordinate lodges, that such as are guilty of it be subject to admonition, suspension, and, if no marks of reformation, expulsion.

McDonald, *A History of Freemasonry in Indiana from 1806 to 1898*, p. 66.

It appears that whiskey was drunk in connection with Masonic meetings in early days, although discouraged in later days, and Floyd may have been a partaker.

Floyd, a Slave Owner

There is ample evidence that Floyd was a Methodist and an evangelical Methodist. His Methodism would have made him anti-slavery. However, there is evidence that Floyd owned a slave in Louisville and owned one or more slaves when he died in Florida. The Jefferson County, Kentucky tax list for 1796 showed that he owned one slave, one horse, and three cattle. Legal notices reporting the probate of his estate in 1832 indicated that he owned at least one slave. This one slave could also be the servant that is described as saving Judge Floyd from drowning in a swollen Indiana creek or river during his circuit riding days as the president judge of the Second Judicial Circuit between 1817 and 1823. Floyd would have been part and parcel of the Second Religious Awakening which religious historians date from 1780 until about 1830. The extent of his religious zeal was probably best described by Hamilton--"an eternal psalm singing Methodist." Does this mean that Floyd was a singer too? It could very well and Hamilton did not like his booming voice.

The Circuit Rider

There is no evidence that Davis Floyd was ever a circuit rider in the Methodist sense. He was a circuit rider in the sense of being a circuit judge who rode by

horse back from county seat to county seat conducting court in any county seat having legal business. However, it is possible that he did preach in the different communities in the Territorial days and later during statehood. Edward Eggleston's historical novel, *The Circuit Rider*, is a story about Methodist circuit riders in the early days of Southern Indiana. As mentioned in the preface of this biography, the story is based on the lives of real people in real places. It is a love story of Morton and Patty. He becomes a Methodist circuit riding preacher and she eventually becomes his wife. His real history is documented but hers is not. The book makes up her life.

The story describes a certain Methodist circuit riding preacher, not Morton as follows: "His speech was full of dialectic forms and ungrammatical phrases. His illustrations were exceedingly uncouth. It by no means followed that he was not an effective preacher. All these defects were rather to his advantage,--the backwoods rhetoric was suited to move the backwoods audience." (See p. 72.) Morton was not this kind of preacher and Davis Floyd was probably not. Another passage from this book gives substantiation to the route that Floyd followed:

Many a young man crossed in love or incited to revenge had already taken to the wilderness, becoming either a morose hermit or a desperado among the savages. At the period of life when the animal fights hard for supremacy in the soul of man, destiny often hangs very perilously balanced. It was at that day a question in many cases whether a young man of force would become a rowdy or a class-leader.

Eggleston, Edward, *The Circuit Ride*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, New York, 1878, p.79.

Floyd was a young man of force; he probably never sought permanent refuge in the wilderness. Being a rowdy was not part of his makeup. His route ended in an early marriage and several children. He may have gotten his Methodist religion from his young wife but that will never be known. Her brother, General

Washington Johnson, first married a Catholic woman in Vincennes, and then married a woman in Vincennes who was probably a Presbyterian. His obituary reported in the November 9th, 1833 issue of the Vincennes *Gazette* that he was a "Christian citizen."

The Circuit Rider reports on another kind of Methodist phenomena, the camp meeting:

It is hard to understand the elements that produced such incredible excitement as resulted from the early Methodist preaching. How at a camp-meeting, for instance, five hundred people, indifferent enough to everything of the sort one hour before, should be seized during the sermon with terror--should cry aloud to God for mercy, some of them falling in trances and cataleptic unconsciousness; and how, out of all this excitement, there should come forth, in very many cases, the fruit of transformed lives seems to us a puzzle beyond solution. But the early Westerners [of the Ohio River valley] were as inflammable as tow; they did not deliberate, they were swept into most of their decision by contagious excitement. And never did any class of men understand the art of exciting by oratory more perfectly than the old Western preachers. The simple hunters to whom they preached had the most absolute faith in the invisible. The Day of Judgment, the doom of the wicked, and the blessedness of the righteous were as real and substantial in their conception as any facts of life. They could abide no refinements. The terribleness of Indian warfare, the relentlessness of their own revengefulness, the sudden lynchings, the abandoned wickedness of the lawless, and the ruthlessness of mobs of "regulators" were a background upon which they founded the most materialistic conception of hell and the most literal understanding of the Day of Judgment.

Eggleston, Edward, *The Circuit Rider*, p. 104.

Patty was enraged when she learned that Morton had become a Methodist. Her response was "Morton, if you are a Methodist, I never want to see you again...." (See p. 180.) The story continues as follows:

He has been a preacher almost ever since he became a Methodist. How did he get his theological education? It used to be that Methodist preachers were educated by the old ones telling the young ones all

they knew; but besides this oral instructions Morton carried in his saddle-bags John Wesley's simple, solid sermons, Charles Wesley's hymns, and a Bible. Having little of the theory and system of theology, he was free to take lessons in the larger school of life and practical observations.

Eggleston, Edward, *The Circuit Rider*, pp. 185-186.

Although there is no evidence that Floyd was a circuit rider in the Methodist church this is the way that he would have learned his theology. Why did Patty change her mind about Morton and the Methodist Church?

When she entered the church Morton was preaching. Her long sun-bonnet was a sufficient disguise, and she sat upon the back seat listening to the voice whose music was once her own. Morton was preaching on self-denial, and he made some allusions to his own trials when he became a Christian which deeply touched the audience, but which moved none so much as Patty.

The congregation was dismissed but the members remained to "class," which was always led by the preacher when he was present. Most of the members sat near the pulpit, but when the "outsiders" had gone Patty sat lonesomely on the back seat, with a large space between her and the rest. Morton asked each one to speak, exhorting each in turn. At last, when all the rest had spoken, he walked back to where Patty sat, with her face hidden in her sun-bonnet, and thus addressed her:

"My strange sister, will you tell us how it is with you to-day? Do you feel you have an interest in the Savior?"

Very earnestly, simple, and with a tinge of melancholy Patty spoke. There was that in her superior diction and in her delicacy of expression that won upon the listeners, so that as she ceased, the brethren and sisters uttered cordial ejaculations of "The Lord bless this strange sister," and so on. But Morton? From the first word he was thrilled with the familiar sound of the voice. It could not be Patty, for why should Patty be in Jenkinsville? And above all, why should she be in class-meeting? Of her conversation he had not heard. But though it seemed to him impossible that it could be Patty, there was yet a something in the voice and manner and choice of words that had almost overcome him; and though he was noted for the freshness of the counsels that he gave in class-meetings, he was so embarrassed by the sense of having known the speaker, that he could not think of anything to say. He fell hopelessly into that trite

exhortation with which the old leaders were wont to cover their insanity.

“Sister,” he said, “you know the way--walk in it.”

Then the brethren and sisters sang:

“O brethren will you meet me

And the meeting was dismissed.

..., Morton was glad to see the strange sister lingering at the door. He offered his hand and said

“A stranger here, I suppose?”

Not quite a stranger, Morton.”

“Patty, is that you”? Morton exclaimed

Patty for her part was pleased and silent.

“Are you a Methodist then?”

“I am.”

Eggleston, Edward, *The Circuit Rider*, pp. 286-288.

Patty's declaration that she was a Methodist was her way of saying to Morton, "I am sorry for the way that I have treated you since our youth. And I love you fervently and want to be your wife."

The circumstances of the events leading to the marriage of Floyd and a fourteen year old, pregnant widow in 1794 in Louisville are unknown. Did they fall in love or was it a marriage of convenience? His young wife's son, Gabriel Jones Floyd, was treated like Floyd's own son by him. That indicates that if love dominated his relationship with an adopted son, that he probably loved the mother of that child even more.

Camp Meetings or Revivals Elsewhere

When Floyd moved to the Florida Territory in 1823 he would befriend a man by the name of Achille Murat. More will be learned about Achille Murat in the last chapter of this book. Suffice it to say at this juncture Murat was probably an atheist or an agnostic. In describing a Methodist camp meeting in North Carolina to a friend, Achille reported:

A suitable place is selected in the woods, generally near a brook or a spring. A large circular space is there cleared out under the old shade of the giant trees of the forest; split logs serve for seats; a sort of rostrum or pulpit is erected, capable of containing a dozen preachers together. The most remarkable place, however, is the “pen,” the *sanctum sanctorum*. It is a place of about twelve yards square, enclosed like a sheep pen, and filled, to the height of about a foot, with clean straw. All the religious families of the neighborhood come beforehand to build themselves a tent outside the cleared place, so that towards the appointed time of meeting the forest assumes the appearance of a little village of rural huts and greatly resembles the cantonment of a regiment of cavalry except that it is not so regular.

On the day appointed, generally a Sunday, families arrive in crowds, on horseback, in coaches, and in carts, bringing with them beds, furniture, and kitchen utensils. Each family installs itself in its hut as if for a stay of some months.

A camp meeting is an excellent place for all sorts of business. It is the point of union for all the loungers and young people; for those who have bargains to make or to conclude, and for the candidates who mean to “electioneer.”... Everyone minds his business, sleeps, eats, makes love, trades a horse, depreciates or exalts a candidate.

The holy place is deserted. Silence for the first time reigns around the pulpit...and everything seems to invite repose and a suspension of the labours of the day when a preacher who has remained alone kneeling within the pulpit rises up slowly. Inspiration begins to visit him. He begins a hymn, at first with a very feeble voice, but which, *crescendo* by degrees, soon attains the melody of Stentor.

Some pious souls retake their places upon the seats, other preachers join him, and curiosity soon reproduces a congregation. An enthusiastic and pathetic prayer follows. He implores the saints to pray for the conversion of the poor sinners who are in the midst of

them. He represents to them the greatness of God's mercy, and the pains of hell. He exhorts them to lay aside false shame, and make a clear breast before their brethren. Five or six persons rise up and advance slowly towards the *sanctum sanctorum*.

At the sight of so many converts the possessed saint becomes doubly heated. He deposes two saints to pray with each of them. The new convert, kneeling upon the straw, sighs, accuses himself, sobs and cries, whilst on each side a saint, kneeling beside him, vociferates in his ear a description, after his manner, of the glory of God, and the wickedness of Satan. These eighteen or twenty persons, men and women, in the pen, make a clutter that may be heard for some miles; everybody bawls, sings, prays, cries, preaches, together. The owls, attracted by the odour of the kitchens, answer them from the tops of trees and fly away from this noise, which they cannot emulate.

A young girl in the meantime has wandered farther in the woods with her lover than she supposed. Time passes swiftly in the company of a beloved object, perhaps for the first time and in the spring of life, dreaming of ages of happiness in a cherished union, tasting, perhaps, its reality in passionate declarations. Suddenly she is recalled to her senses by this clutter, her spirits still agitated, her soul in a strange state of emotion, her nerves stunned and shaken. She approaches, is troubled, fright seizes her. At first she believes herself damned, then converted. She enters the sacred inclosure. There she is soon stunned and seized with hysterical convulsions. She cries out, weeps, sobs, rolls herself on the straw in a frightful delirium. The assistants, the preachers and the saints redouble their vociferations. The people cry "Amen!" The confusion and tumult increase. A conversion so sincere, so exemplary, must not be hidden by the shades of night! Torches of pitchpine, gathered from the neighbourhood, are soon brought and cast a vivid light upon this scene of horror. The mother, the sisters of the young girl run thither on hearing the noise but instead of helping her, admire the mercy of God who is pleased to call her among his saints. They join their voices to those of the people and do not convey her into their cabin until she has become quite insensible.

The following day she believes herself to be a saint and no more subject to sin whatever she may do. Further, she will give her experience, as it is called, for the edification of the community and relates in public by what winding paths the Lord has been pleased to conduct her to himself and exhorts others to follow her example.

Hanna, A. J., *A Prince in Their Midst—The Adventurous Life of Achille Murat on the American Frontier*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1946 ,pp. 135-138.

This description of a Methodist camp meeting in North Carolina in the 1820's would be identical to a Methodist camp meeting in Kentucky, Indiana, or the East Florida Territory during the same period. Murat, not liking preachers, said that while the more energetic young men became lawyers, physicians, or school masters, the "more idle become preachers.... If the young preacher possesses talent, he enters into disputes with the elders upon some obscure point of doctrine; he is excommunicated, raises a cry of persecution of the saints, founds a new sect, and his fortune is made." (See Hanna, p. 133). Floyd no doubt loved the camp meeting and was aware of the multitude of reasons that someone would enter the enclosure and spill out their heart—he believed in the acceptance of Jesus Christ as one's personal savior and the forgiveness of sin by the God.

Books and references relied upon other than those cited in this chapter

(1) Holliday, Rev. F. C., D.D., *Indiana Methodism: Being an Account of the Introduction, Progress, and Present Position of Methodism in the State; and also a History of the Literary Institutions under the Care of the Church with Sketches of the Principal Methodist Educators in the State down to 1872*, Hitchcock and Walden, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1873.

(2) Heller, Herbert L., *Indiana Conference of the Methodist Church, 1832-1956*, Under the Auspices of the Historical Society of the Indiana Conference, DePauw University, 1957.

(3) Holmberg, James J., *Exploring with Lewis and Clark: The 1804 Journal of Charles Floyd*, Published in association with the Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 2004.

(4) Blair, William W., *Opinion of Judge William Blair, delivered at the June term of the Montgomery Circuit Court, A. D. 1822, on a motion made the preceding fall term, to quash a replevy bond, Kentucky?* s.n., 1822.

Images:

(1) Illustrations (line drawings) of the characters from *The Circuit Rider*.