



The Journeys of Robert Williams

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Robert Williams Irish Street Preacher and Methodist Circuit Rider Lay Preacher in Ireland and Circuit Rider in America First Methodist to preach in Virginia and North Carolina First Methodist Printer and Publisher in America Founder of the Norfolk and Petersburg Societies 1772 Founder of the Brunswick Circuit 1773-1774 Founder of Jerusalem United Methodist Church 1773 In 1772 news spread along the south side of the Roanoke River that a Methodist circuit rider was going to preach under the big willow oak on Ebenezer Coleman's plantation. Robert Williams preached with power. The oak tree became a regular preaching place on his Brunswick Circuit and the place where Jerusalem United Methodist Church was born. Robert William's birth, baptism, and conversion are not documented. Neither is his call to preach. His travel journals, if there were any kept, have never been found. Dr. Bergland, researching his life and legends, employs church records, colonial history and imagination to tell the story (history) and stories (historical fiction) of an indefatigable (stubborn) Irish lay preacher. Dr. John K Bergland is a retired United Methodist Minister who was the professor of preaching and associate dean at Duke Divinity School. His interest in Methodist history (he authored "Strangely Warm") and convictional preaching are reflected in this book. When he came to Jerusalem UMC as an interim pastor in 2005 he learned about Robert Williams great awakening ministry in the Roanoke Valley. He bought a home on the shores of Lake Gaston (formerly the Roanoke River) and, by the pretty ways of providence, found himself living on the old ferry road used by the circuit rider on his way to the Jerusalem Methodist class in 1773. The Stories of Robert Williams are now heard wherever Dr. Bergland happens to be.

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