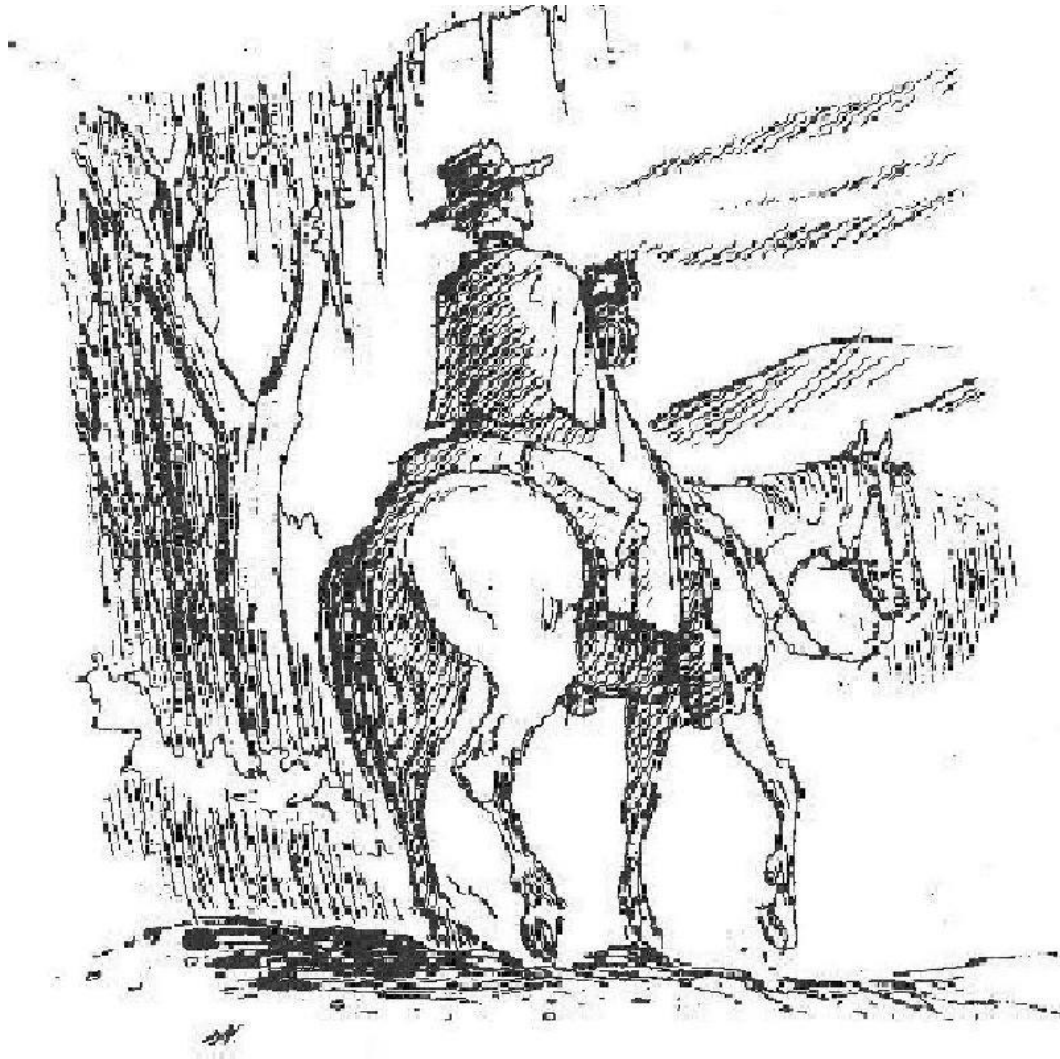


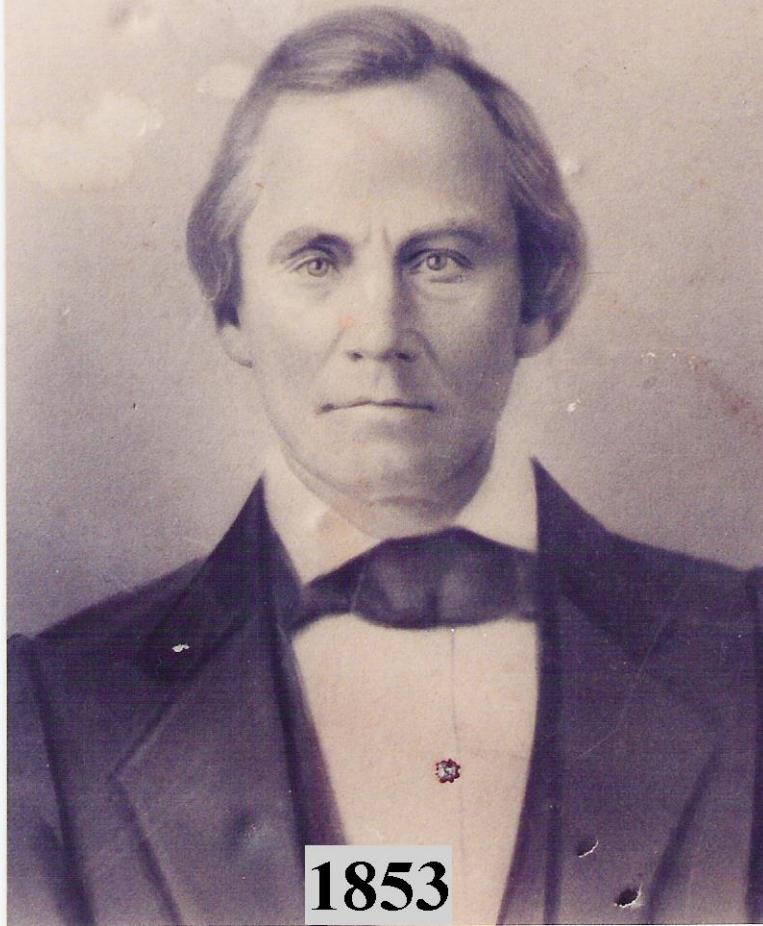
Recollections of a
Frontier Circuit Rider

The Life and Times of Lorenzo Dow Langford, 1805-1892



Edited by David Langford

Lorenzo Dow Langford



1853

Introduction

At the age of 84, Lorenzo Dow Langford was leading his mare through the barnyard with a sack of corn on his shoulder when the horse snatched her head back and gave him a bad fall. Stove up for months and unable to be of much help in the field anymore "it was three or four months before I could crawl from the bed to the fireplace" - Langford sat down to finish writing about his life as a Methodist circuit rider, a preacher on horseback working the settlements on the Mississippi frontier.

That was in the year 1888, years after Langford had settled in Yazoo County, MS, near Fletchers Chapel Methodist Church about 8 miles southeast of Yazoo City.

More than a century later, Langford's crumbling notebook surfaced in February 1991 in the archives of the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Church at Millsaps College in Jackson, MS. . Its existence had been unknown to his modern-day descendants

Thanks for that discovery goes to Mrs. Gerry Reiff, the archivist, who found the manuscript in response to a routine query. She did not know how it came to be in the possession of the archives. Later it was discovered that it had been donated by a cousin, Clarence Davis. The notebook was too faded and fragile to be photocopied, she said, so in March 1991 I went to Jackson and copied it by hand.

Lorenzo Dow Langford was my great-great-grandfather.

In a tortured scrawl on a ruled notebook, he writes the story of a man who was there during the making of American history, from the settlement of the Southeastern frontier to the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Grandpa tells of his pioneer family's restless migrations in the years just following the Louisiana Purchase of 1804 that lured settlers westward. Cross-country travel in those days meant an ox cart on a rugged Indian trail, swollen streams to be forded where there were no bridges.

With Lorenzo and their other small children in tow, Grandpa's parents in 1807 trekked from the back country of northwestern South Carolina to southern Illinois, where five years earlier one of his uncles [obviously a shrewd businessman) had started operating a ferry across the Mississippi River to the vast lands that had just opened up for the taking.

But they soon moved on, to various places in Tennessee and Alabama and eventually to Mississippi.

Grandpa's journal is also the story of an introspective youth who would go off into the wilderness alone to pray in secret and sing hymns at the top of his lungs, have visions of seeing the Savior above the treetops, then have self-doubts about his own conviction and deny to his father that he had "got religion."

He tells how as a young man he and his family, with the help of a neighbor's family, went out into "government land" in the wilderness of northern Alabama and felled trees to build themselves a church. He tells how as an old man his house burned and he and his wife had to move into a corncrib until the neighbors turned out and built them a new home within a week.

But mainly it's about his 60 years as a preacher obsessed with "saving souls" among the settlers. He worked circuits up and down the notorious Natchez Trace; the old trail linking I Natchez, Miss., and Nashville, Tenn. Historian Lucie R. Bridforth of Memphis State University had this to say about the denizens of the Natchez Trace:

Aside from rogues and plunderers, a motley array of other adventurers traversed the road: traders, medicine peddlers, pioneer mothers with their families, frontier tarts headed for Natchez-under-the-hill, gentlemen and ladies from the East Coast, trains of slaves, circuit-riding evangelists and fortune hunters, a diverse company of proud, predatory, courageous, land-hungry Americans."

Grandpa's journal is as remarkable for what he didn't say as what he did say. He carefully sidestepped the slavery issue in the pulpit, but was ministering exclusively to plantation slaves, when his three sons went off to fight the Yankees in the Civil War.

In 1840 the debate over slavery was heating up, a debate that would lead the Southern Methodists to split off and form the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Grandpa was on the, Coffeerville circuit that year. In Coffeerville, he says, "I found animosity in the church infecting between the aristocracy and the poorer class."

It was a year of great political excitement [that] ran very high so that I had to be on my watch all the time and not suffer myself to drop any expressions that would lead other parties to become prejudice [sic] against me," he wrote.

He never mentions the Indians, the Cherokees and Choctaws through whose lands his family migrated and whose lands the government eventually took.

Perhaps he had reason to be cautious, because of the company he kept. When he worked the Carrollton Circuit, one of his neighbors was a man one church historian called, "The most unique personality ever connected with Mississippi Methodism." He was Greenwood LeFlore, the man for whom the present city of Greenwood and the county of Leflore is named, the son of a French-Canadian trader and his half-French, half-Indian wife.

In 1830 Greenwood Leflore was elected chief of the Choctaw, Nation and from 1835-1844 served in the state legislature, all the while acquiring 15,000 acres of land in Mississippi, part interest in 50,000 acres in Texas, and becoming owner of 400 slaves. It was Greenwood Leflore, as chief of the Choctaws in 1830, who negotiated the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit that led to the resettlement of most of the tribe out West.

One of Grandpa's sponsors when he first joined the itinerant ministry was Judge David O. Shattuck, a lawyer-clergyman-educator who was one of the most influential Methodists in Mississippi at the time. That was until they discovered gold in California in 1849. Shattuck, like many other Mississippians, headed west, a Forty-niner in the Gold Rush. He became a prominent judge and lawyer in San Francisco before moving on again in 1865, this time to Mexico.

Like many other boys born during the Great Revival that swept across the Southeastern states between 1800 and 1805, Lorenzo Dow Langford was named for the famous but eccentric Connecticut-born evangelist who worked the frontier. He recalls how his parents, Matthew and Peggy Nelson Langford, always held family prayer and hymn singing twice a day at home. His maternal grandfather, Dr. Robert Nelson, who served in the Revolutionary War as a corporal in the 9th Virginia Regiment and later moved to Greenville County, S.C., was a preacher.

This early religious training took. Grandpa tells how in his late teens he was finally converted, how he would ride for 20 or 30 miles by himself to attend a Methodist camp meeting, how he could think of little else than "the salvation of sinners," all the while fretting over his own lack of a formal education.

On returning from one camp meeting, he remembers, "for about 10 miles there was no person living and the road ran through a large canebreak for near a mile and I heard a large hog squealing for nearly a mile. I suppose a bear was eating it alive."

On Dec. 27, 1827, while still living in Alabama, Lorenzo Dow Langford took himself a bride, Catharine Malloy, whom he describes as an "archangel." She would bear him nine children, including two boys who would die in infancy and a daughter who would die as a young girl.

Grandpa never mentions his own children by name. But according to research done by the late Ethel Langford, a longtime government worker in Washington, D.C., his great-granddaughter and my father's first-cousin, they were:

Sarah "M" Langford, born c. 1827, died 18 Nov. 1862, married Richard Blackman; Margaret Langford, born 0.1829, died young; Charles Malloy Langford, born 29 Jan. 1831, died 18 Dec. 1910, married Sarah Margaret Long; Rebecca Langford, born 15 Nov. 1832, died c. 1872, married Isaac Foster; Matthew Neal Langford, born c. 1835, died [?], married Mary Gardner; Daniel Clark Langford, born 13 Feb. 1837, died March 1912, married Martha Foster; Mary Catherine Langford, born c. 1841, died February 1870, married John McMaster Sr. and an eighth child named Dow who died young.

According to Lorenzo's journal, there were two boys who died at about 9 months or age, one in 1839 and one in 1849.

While still grubbing out a living as a hardscrabble farmer,

Grandpa on Oct. 20, 1831, was licensed as a local preacher in Tuscaloosa County, Ala. There were two kinds of preachers in those days – itinerant and local. The locals were those who had no pastoral duties, had other means or supporting themselves, and preached when and where they chose.

Grandpa agonized over what he perceived to be his duty to preach and his obligation to provide for his wife and children. But in 1837, after he had moved to Choctaw County, Miss., he was admitted on trial as an itinerant minister and in 1838 he became a circuit rider on the Louisville circuit, the first full-time, pastor the Louisville Methodists ever had.

"Now came the hardest thing I had ever met," Grandpa wrote. He then had six children, the youngest 10 months, and the oldest two girls about 8. His oldest son, my great-grandfather Charles Malloy Langford, was only 7, but "he could use an ax well for his age."

The circuit would require Grandpa to be gone four weeks at a time, riding horseback for hundreds of miles, preaching 20 or so sermons a month.

If Grandpa had some misgivings about taking on the duties of a circuit rider, the Methodists in Louisville had misgivings about taking him on as their first pastor, because he was a "plain, uneducated man" with a large family. But they did take him on and took care of him.

According to "Our Story," a history of the First United Methodist Church in Louisville, "When Lorenzo Langford visited Louisville he seldom had to pay for meals, lodging and horse feed. His clothing and some for his children were often made by the good women of the societies. The men sometimes presented him with gifts in the form of hats, shoes, or small amounts of money. When the Rev. Langford lost a horse by death, the men of the church collected enough money to buy him another one"

That was Lorenzo Dow Langford's life for the next six years.

Every year he was moved to a new circuit: Greensboro, 1839; Coffeeville, 1840; Carrollton, 1841; Attala, 1842; French Camp, 1843.

But by the end of that year in French Camp, Grandpa was desperate, heavily in debt. That year he had been paid just \$180 in cash, plus 400 pounds of pork for his family. "I saw I would be obliged to sell my little home to get out of debt and depend on renting land to support my weakly, sickly wife and 7 children." On top of that, one of his daughters died and the neighbors had to bury her since he was sick in bed himself.

"I was homeless," he wrote. "I had 2 mares, 7 head of cattle and a few hogs, -a few farming tools and still a little in debt."

Grandpa decided it was time to resign from the Methodist saddle corps. He requested to "locate," to revert to part-time preaching.

For the next few years he settled in northern Holmes County, where he continued to preach. In 1849 he was elected county tax assessor, taking advantage of the opportunity to get in a little politicking while traveling the county spreading the gospel.

Two years later his wife died, and 14 months after that he married the widow Sarah C. Pope.

In 1853 he moved once more, to a place 8 miles southeast of Yazoo City, just a stone's throw from Fletchers Chapel Methodist Church, strangely one of the few churches in the region that he never mentions in his narrative, the place where he and many of his descendants are buried.

The church had been built with slave labor three years earlier. According to one history, the old wood-frame church building, before it was razed in 1964 and replaced with a brick structure, "...had stood through the Civil War with several bullet holes as reminders of the skirmishes that swirled around it in 1863 and 1864."

Grandpa never mentions any fighting going on in his back yard either.

For the first six years after he settled in Yazoo Grandpa was employed by the presiding elder as a missionary to slaves. That ministry came to an end, he says, when the Yankees seized control of the nearby Yazoo River and the port of Satartia during the Civil War.

During the war, Grandpa says, he was able to survive better than many because he knew how to tan leather and make shoes, make equipment for spinning and weaving cloth, and process tobacco, "which art I communicated to several of my friends."

Grandpa says his three sons and a son-in-law all served in the Confederate cavalry.

But military records from the National Archives show that Charles Malloy Langford joined Wood's Regiment, Wirt Adams Brigade of Cavalry, in Yazoo City

on Aug. 1, 1863, a month after the fall of Vicksburg some 40 miles away, and served for the duration. His younger brothers, Matthew Neal Langford and Daniel Clark Langford, joined the Sartatia Rifles, 12th Regiment Mississippi Volunteers, in May 1861 and were sent to Corinth, Miss., where both were discharged before the year was out, Daniel because of diarrhea. All three could have served other enlistments but there are no records.

The accident involving the mare occurred July 9, 1888. His last entry in his journal says, "I do this writing one year and four months since the accident happened and now I can get around and attend to a great many things and walk to church and about my farm on my crutches. "

Lorenzo Dow Langford died at his home in Yazoo County on June 16, 1892, in his 88th year.

Grandpa did his writing in a notebook measuring about 7 inches by 11 inches, about one-quarter inch thick. The first 44 pages are the story of his life and about an equal number of pages are about Biblical subjects, perhaps outlines for sermons, but almost impossible to read.

Unfortunately, much of the book is indecipherable, particularly the parts dealing with proper names and places, but the worst is at the beginning where he is telling of his family's "migrations". Thus in the transcribing I had to make generous use of ellipses to indicate a missing word or words.

When I was not sure of words I put them in brackets with a question mark. I have also inserted long passages in brackets with historical material or information from my own records. On the cover of the notebook is the title, "Book of Rev. L.D. Langford." On the inside of the cover is the name Mr. John Whitaker, Worcester [Mass.?]." This could be the name of an editor who at one point copied the material from some other source.

Lorenzo Dow Langford begins his narrative under the heading, "Notes of Life."

David L. Langford
Norwalk, Connecticut
August 1991

Book of Rev. L.D. Langford

Notes of Life

Sketch down from memory ...after I had reached my 78 years for the ...of my children's children and friends.

L.D. Langford, the subject of this sketch was born in ... district ...parents in ...district of South Carolina...was dedicated ...Holy Baptism in ...year my parents ...and in 1807 ...Illinois ...and then moved to Tennessee in the fall of 1814. ...Where one year 1815 ...moved from Overton to [Buncombe?] County...distance of 200 miles ...then moved ...a distance or about ...miles in the fall of 1818 when we ...in the fall of 1822 we moved about 50 miles north of Tuscaloosa [Alabama] Matthew [Lorenzo 's father], eldest son of Eli and Sarah Langford. Was born in S.C. Sept. 22. 1775 and died June 21, 1861 aged 86 years. 3 months and 1 day. Peggy, youngest daughter of Dr. Robert and Rebecca Nelson ...was born Oct. 22. 1779 and died Jan. 25. 1863.

In the History of St. Clair County, Illinois, by Brink, I McDonough & Co., Philadelphia; 1881. a list or "First Land Entries shows that a Mathew Langford bought 160 acres or land in the county on Sept. 16, 1814. Matthew does not appear on the 1820 Federal Census in Tennessee but there is no complete census of Tennessee extant before 1830. He is shown as a head of household in the 1830 census in Marion County, AL, along with two of his sons, Elijah and Elisha, who had started their own families. Lorenzo and his oldest brother, Eli Nelson are listed as heads of households in Tuscaloosa County Ala. in 1830.

Now I'm going to go back and talk about my religious training...raised me in the... family prayer for my parents always sang ...and held their prayers before we children went to bed. And in the morning as soon as we were up and dressed ...my father and mother would sing and pray in the family. This is the first thing I can...family prayer.

I thought that father was the best in the world but I cannot recollect having any positive conviction for ...until I was 8 or 9 years old. After that age I began to have very serious thoughts and tried to pray by then. I was 11 years old and my sins began to be...and I would go regular morning and night where no person

could hear and...with God in prayer. I was exceeding ...and I would give it up. I went on sometimes singing and then praying until I was about 15 years old when to be like a man I belched out a very profane and wicked and vulgar oath. It was the first profane oath I ever swore and when alone it haunted. If I awoke up in the night it was on my mind. And when alone in the day seemed to hear it for months.

The close of my 18th year I dreamed that the end of the world had come and that there were some cattle up on a hill...and that we lived a certain distance...and if we gained that point we were saved. I thought I had made 2/3 of the distance when I felt the horn of the cattle at my back. I thought I cried to the Savior and he reached out his hand and saved me and awoke myself praising God.

I still layed[sic] and reflect on my dream a short time and came to the conclusion that it was from the Lord to arouse me to a sense of my danger. I then arose, dressed myself, and went out to "Secret Prayer, J.B. [Simber?]" area which would stir me up to God. When I would give way to my ill temper the wicked one would persuade me that it was not worth my while. I had made so many failures ...I had entered my 19th year when there was an appointment for a camp meeting at our schoolhouse which was but one mile from ...I thought that would be a good opportunity for me. Up to this time I had been Perfect Secret in all my efforts. I would try to get a secret religion. I was 18 years old the 26th of April. The meeting was the 12th of August ...I had rested comparatively easy sitting waiting .for camp meeting and when camp meeting ...

After ...in his first sermon... called for ...I immediately made for the aisle and felt my high.

I was not converted until Monday night. My father knowing I was secluded in my nature proposed that I take my horse and look up the cows and calves that had been put out to pasture. That suited me well for I wanted to be by myself. I would dismount my horse and seat myself in almost every thicket to pray, but when my horse would move the devil would tell me someone is coming. I would move my horse ...until evening when I drove up the stock still unresolved. I turned my horse into the stall and went about 1/2 mile ...deep valley where I had frequently retired to give vent to my feelings and sang at the top of my voice in the deep anguish of my soul. The sun was just about setting when I kneeled down at the root of a tree ...and put my face on my arms. I was almost in despair and commenced prayers. How long I had been on my knees I know not. I know the sun wasn't shining on the tops of the trees. When I kneeled down it appeared to me that I heard a voice say, "Hark!" I sprang up, my hands on the log, which placed my body in...position and I thought it was the brightest day I ever saw and saw no trees but I thought I saw my Savior in the air about as high as the top of the trees ought to be and I thought I saw the blood streaming from his side and I thought that I...crucified the Savior and I thought that he looked at me and that smile was like electricity. It was all through me and allover me and burden was gone and right was...from the very depth or my soul said glory to God...I thought I heard that voice...but when I opened my eyes it was dark as midnight and...I had been asleep...that my conviction was gone...and God had given me up...had taken his spirit from me and now I was lost.

I made my way home as best I could in the dark and when I got home they just through family prayer and as I entered the door my father said, "Lorenzo's got religion." But I answered, "I have not" and that I never should for I had been asleep at prayer...and my conviction was gone and I was lost. This was on the 16th of August 1824. I was then 18 years 3 months and 20 days old. On the next

Sunday at prayer meeting I melted into...and came very near shouting, but Satan suggested to me that I was...that I must have conviction before I could be saved. All the good feelings left me. I still prayed all the time for conviction.

The next Friday, Bro. [Lee?] the pastor, preached and I joined the church and rode 20 miles that, evening on my way to another camp meeting and stayed with a family by the name of Brown, who...set out with me early for the camp meeting, about 15 miles.

He [Mr. Brown] took saddlebags and carried them...with my horse while we stabled and fed them 3 or 4 hundred yards of the campground. There was a corn feeder and oats at hand and he told me to tend my horse myself, which I did, and having a pocket Testament with me when there were meetings going on...I was being very secluded...and there being but 3 persons I had ever known - 2 preachers and one other older man - consequently I said but little to anybody. There was considerable revival of religion going on. Some were being converted at every exercise. At the stand [outdoor tabernacle] I was very anxious to obtain a blessing but too modest to press into the warm influence. After supper I went and tended to my horse and the horn sounded for services. I hurried back and they was singing as I was going out to the stand. I met a group of ladies coming from the woods. Two or them had obtained the blessing and were praising God and some chided them that they would disturb the exercise at the stand. Their reply was that it we were to hold our peace the trees would praise God. I said that everybody could praise God but me. I went right out to the woods and kneeled down and blurted out from the very depth of my soul, "Oh Lord, bless me. Own me also, so that I can praise thee to." About that time I felt a man's hand on my shoulder who said come go to the stand. He caught my arm and I rose up and went with him and took my seat...near the stand. I felt like my poor heart would burst and as soon as there was an invitation for...I went to the...and while the first prayer was going on the cloud gave way and my soul was filled unutterably full of glory and of God. I was so happy and saw such a fullness in the atonement that I found myself standing on a...exhorting sinners to come to atonement. I laughed and shouted and praised God all night. My soul was unutterably full of glory all the time. I then knew that I was really converted on Monday night the 16th of August and that Satan had cheated me out of two weeks of the finest happiness that a man can enjoy in this world. Sunday was the most blessed day that I had ever seen. I could realize the sacrament of...my Savior...I was perfectly blessed as it filled with the fullness of God. On Monday morning I set out for home with glad heart and a cheerful spirit. I had company the first 15 miles.

I then had 20 miles home. About 10 miles there was no person living and the road ran through a large canebrake for near a mile and I heard a large hog squealing for nearly a mile. I suppose a bear was eating it alive. I was happy and singing in a low-toned voice that old hymn, "Come and...Along With Me."

I got in about a half mile of home and the Devil suggests to me now you never can doubt the reality of your conviction and you have already round the church and the least you say about it the easier you will get along with your wicked associates...Now I foolishly was good advised. Among my wicked neighbors I began to brace myself up expecting to pursue that course. I rode on into the yard, finding the doors where my dear, anxious mother stood. She said, "Well, Lorenzo, what sort of meeting did you have?" I said, "The best in the world." She said, "Did you get any good out of it?" I commenced shouting, leaping off my horse and threw my dear mother ...and we both shouted together and I wanted to tell everybody and persuade them to seek...the blessing...

Dear father laid the cross of family prayer and after the cross would slake every nerve in me. I never refused to try and have always found it a blessing to

me. I had all the time day and night an ardent desire for the salvation of sinners. In fact, I talked about little else for I knew little else to talk about.

I had almost no education at all, only what I got at home on nights and Sundays. I could read the New Testament understandably for I had a few [recollections?]. I still had that seclusive[sic] nature and I had very little to say on any subject, only religion. I love to talk about Jesus and the love of God for I was happy all the time day and night for some months and felt a great desire for the salvation of my neighbors. I thought all Christians felt that desire...I would dream of holding meetings and would wake myself praising God. For a while I thought nothing of it, but it soon became a...through the day.

I had always felt my own want or good sense, but my ignorance became a burden. I read the Testament every leisure moment I had, but my want of some education I concluded that it was a trick of Satan to ruin my soul and I would despair of these impositions and gradually lost my enjoyment. I however did attend to all my religious duties, but I was not happy. I was now in my 21st year and whenever I would feel happy then I would feel that woe in me if I preach not the gospel but still thought it a trick of the devil. So I determined to seek me a wife and then I would have something else to think. I had now gone to school 24 months and was a good accountant and had read through my Testament two or three times and had read all [Bensonts?] Sermons. I regularly prayed in secret twice a day and begged the good Lord to direct my choice so that my wife should not be a hindrance to me in discharge of duty. And on the 27th of December 1827 I was married to an archangel named Catharine Malloy which proved to be an angel...She bore me nine children, 6 of which are now with Him in the glory land while I am still in the wilderness in my 85 years.

About the time I was married the larger part of the membership of our very small society moved out of the neighborhood, leaving us but 7 members, which caused the appointment to be dropped out of the circuit for two years. With an appointment our...being a very modest man...no members, only in his family...as us living 5 miles from each other...I attended church occasionally, 7 miles from home in the...circuit north of me and the...attended church on the New River Circuit 7 miles south of him. So the two families that was left of the...society were willy nilly severed from each other. I and my brother, after we had been left in that situation for two years, both backsliders in heart, though I attended ...family and private prayer night and morning and went to a camp meeting and we were both...and my...impression about preaching returned with redoubled force and I ///! that if a door opened up I would do what I could. And when I got home I went to see Brother Gilpin.

...proposed that we four members set rite in and built us a church on the halfway ground betwixt the two families, it being government land. It was...cordially ...and [we] set a day to commence.

There was brother Gilpin and wife, myself and wife, my mother and two younger brothers that were now about grown. We four met on the day...The first day we got out logs ribs and ...to build a house 20 feet ...and cut our board tree the next day. Two held up the logs and two sawed the board timber. We...laid out foundation and three...and got strait chestnut logs, split them open ...and aged them and laid down our ...the full length of the house, which made a very firm and steady floor. We got about 6 more [hands?] raised and covered our church. I hued it down inside and out, cut out our door and...made a pulpit.

So we had a snug church in that wilderness country. We agreed to meet every other Sunday. One or us would read a chapter in the Testament, sing and pray, after which ...call on one another.

We would have about three prayers, some conversation...and all go home.

Sometime we would have 15 or 20 out after the preachers returned from conference. Brother Gilpin and myself met the pastor of the New River Circuit and obtained Wednesday preaching toward the close of that year I determined to move, our society now having increased to 15 members. I thought I was among strangers. I could not feel so much interested about those souls, and if I did the cross would not be such a cross.

So I moved into Tuscaloosa County, a move of about 35 miles...This was in the fall of 1828. I then [had] a wife and one daughter. When the pastor came in January 29 we united with the...and I was immediately appointed leader of the class of 17 members, which drew me more immediately into responsibility and ...me a member or Quarterly Meeting. Our preaching and class meeting was in a private home. The class...along in the summer as I returned from the first Quarterly Meeting that I was ever a member of. On my return home on Monday stopped at Brother...Wright's to dinner who proposed that we have meeting at his home once a month so I appointed at his home the next Sunday, being determined now to do my duty. When the time came I would have given everything in my power if the appointment had not been out. I had never had such a trial. I spent all the...with my Bible in the thicket on my knees with my Bible trying to find some suitable...to commence the services, but in vain until I had to go without preparation. .

When I got there I found some 10 or 20 friends of the family, and one a young lady who was very fine drest [sic] and I thought if it was not for [her] I could talk to the rest of them. I finally determined to read where I might open and I happened after song and prayer to open at the 2nd Chapter of James where it speaks of having respect to them...gay clothing. I read the chapter and commenced ...but sat my cross right before me had not talked long before I discovered a tear from the eye ran down the left side of her face. She turned her face direct towards me. Her face was ...with tears. My cross was gone and I talked...for more than 1/2 an hour. We had a ...time and I left another appointment one month after and when I came back this same young lady met me at the door and grasp my hand and said she was converted and claimed me was the honored instrument in her conversion. I continued my appoint[sic] and would read a chapter in the New Testament and would commence such parts as I thought I understood, which was my privalidge[sic]. As class leader the second appointment in 1829 I was licensed to exhort, which made me feel an increased obligation.

To attend Quarterly meetings which brought me more in contact with the official members of the church which presented opinary [sic] for holding religious [services] until I had every Sunday filled up with appointments. Our circuit preaching being on Wednesday, which I never failed to attend in 1831, our pastor neglects more than half his appoints at our church, it being rather an out of the way place. We however kept up the appointments and would hold a prayer or class meeting in the fall of the year. The society recommended to the Quarterly Meeting for licenses to preach and ,, as I was. I was licensed as a local preacher on the 20th of October 1831. In the fall of 1834 I moved back into the house my father lived in when I was converted and where I first held family prayer, having lived about 5 years about 35 miles from the old place. A great many changes had taken place, some for the better. My rather having sold the place and moved to where I live, and the man failing, had to take it back.

So I let my father have my place and moved back to the old place to improve it and sell it, which I did.

I did so and the next fall sold the old place. All three sons being married and settled and them being alone I did so.

But it was not long after I moved back to the old place that ~ the young man that...on me came to see me and invited me to make an appointment to preach at his house, he having married a Methodist girl. So I gave him an appointment and by the time spring opened I each Sunday filled two, of which I had two appointments. I preached regularly 6 times a month through that year in destitute neighborhoods. I had 3 appointments that was[sic] from 8 to 12 miles from home, two of which was entirely destitute of methods or Methodist preaching. At both of those appointments I soon had large attentive congregations and at the one I first spoke of they had quite a revival of religion so that when it was, taken into the plan of the circuit at the end of that year there were 30 members organized into a church. At the close of that year I sold the old place and moved back and lived with my father. That year and in the summer myself and youngest brother

[John E.] came out to Choctaw County, MS., and entered land.

So that fall my father and younger brother [Elisha] moved out to Mississippi. I had still kept up my regular appointments and attended their camp meetings at one of which I was a camper. Having sold my home the year before and entered land in Choctaw County and not being able to move to it, I took a [school?] in the edge of Pickens County 15 miles from Columbus, MS, where I kept four regular appointments, preaching twice on Sunday and very frequently on Saturday. I suppose I preached over 100 times in that region or the country and in October 1836 I moved to Mississippi where I found a great demand for preaching and did all that I could. We...found success, attended two or three camp meetings and assisted my pastor at several two-day meetings.

1837

Brother James Applewhite was pastor and Bro. John Jones the P.E. [presiding elder]. Bro. Applewhite brought me before the Quarterly Conference as a candidate. [They] were unwilling for me .to leave the circuit and after obtaining a promise from the elder that he would use his influence to have me sent to that circuit the Quarterly Conference unanimously recommended [sic] me. I had settled on my land and closed [bought?] some [8?] acres of land and come to supply...mother.

I was recommended to the Annual Conference for Deacons Orders. I met Judge Shaddock [sic] at -Carrollton on his return from Conference who...my appointment and the certificate of my election to Deacons Orders.

[The "Judge Shaddock" referred to here was David O. Shattuck. A native of Virginia, he obtained a law degree, was admitted to the bar and later served as president of Centenary College near Brandon, Miss., which was later moved to Jackson, La. According to J.B. Cain's "Methodism in the Mississippi Conference 1846- 1870," Shattuck served in various capacities on several Mississippi circuits before returning to his law practice. In 1841 he was the Whig nominee for governor of Mississippi. He lost. In 1849, during the California Gold Rush, he moved to San Francisco, along with his three sons and a sizable group of friends from Mississippi and Louisiana. Shattuok was elected Superior Judge of San Francisco County and later practiced law as a member of the firm of Shattuok, Spencer and Reichert. About 1864 or 1865 he went to Mexico and opened a farm on the Mazatlan River, where he remained with his family for many years.]

[Other prominent Methodist presiding elders with whom Langford would become closely associated included John G. Jones, who wrote the definitive history of early Methodism in Mississippi, Levi Pearoe, Peter James, and W.L.C. Bunnicut, the former president of Sharon College who wrote a

lengthy and, glowing obituary about Langford that appeared in the New Orleans Christian Advocate on July 21, 1892.]

Now came the hardest thing I had ever met. My appointment, took in all of Choctaw east of Big Black, all of Winston County, all of Neshoba County west of Pearl River and all of Oktibbeha County, the commencing point being 36 miles from home with 24 appointments enclosing some 50 miles from home, each round to make in 4 weeks, when you examine the plan. I could not do the work and have any time to spend with my family and the thought kept sleep from my eyes that night and the third night. I got home and laid all these things before my precious wife, which seemed to break her heart. I then said, "I can't go." Her reply, "You know I'm willing for you to go. I wouldn't have you backslide for the whole world. I know that God will take care us. He will help me to take care of the children."

Louisville Circuit
1838

We had six children. The youngest was 10 months. The oldest two were girls about 8 years old. I cut and hauled enough wood to do my family until I could make the Alabama Conference at Columbus, MS to meet the bishop to receive Deacons Orders. In going to Columbus I traveled through Oktibbeha County and was gone two weeks. When I got home I made my arrangements to be gone 4 weeks. I found all the preaching places and left them until I caught up with appointments. I reached home about 12 o'clock on Tuesday night and cut and hauled...until 10 o'clock on Saturday. I had my work now all arranged. **My son [Charles] was now seven years old and could use an ax well for his age. (Earl's Grandfather)** I found they had gotten along well and was all cheerful. On Saturday 10 o'clock left on my second round. On this round I had very...congregation and met a great many with whom I was acquainted with in Alabama and who were religious when they left Alabama but they never joined the church. Some had gone to drinking to excess, to Sabbath breaking and some to swearing. I encouraged them to come back into the church. As much as I could I visited them...so as to pray in 4 or 5 families a day.

The next round I joined into the church some 20 members, the most of them backsliders. We still continued our course of visiting, preaching and holding class meetings every day for that was the regular practice in those days. The work gradually increased until the 14th of June when we commenced a meeting on Friday night and in the neighborhood of ...which we continued until...day which resulted in 16 conversions and as many ascensions to the church. The good still increased and sped until more than one half of the appointments on that large circuit shared in the benefits of revival. It was not an uncommon thing for souls to be converted in night meetings in private homes. At my second Quarterly Meeting Bro. Jones brought a young man Bro. Robert [Gill?] and put him in my charge as a junior preacher ...one of the best men I most ever knew and altogether the most modest I ever knew. I kept him with me for two rounds and a half, then sent him back to follow the two weeks after me. The good work went on to the end of the ...and we received into the church that year on that circuit 370 members, 275 white and 95 colored. I received that year \$370.

[According to "Our Story," a History of the First United Methodist Church in Louisville published in 1986, "There remained some prejudice against, the married itinerant when Lorenzo Dow Langford was appointed to

the Louisville circuit in 1838. There were complaints from members of our church because, 'Mr. Langford had a family; and as they lived a considerable distance from the circuit, how was he to render the circuit full service?]

['The circuit rider was subjected to the closest scrutiny of character, suffered all sorts of hardships, and in return received little monetary reward. Salaries were very small and there was no assurance that they would be paid in full. The itinerants were able to survive on this because they had few desires for material goods.]

[The Rev. John G. Jones, Langford's presiding elder, also wrote in his two-volume history of the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; that there had been "murmuring" about the appointment of Langford, who had been admitted to the Conference on trial at the Natchez meeting the year before. Langford, Jones wrote, was a plain, uneducated man ; how would he succeed among a people accustomed to hear such preachers as Jacob Mathews, John B. Stone, Benjamin B. Smith, and the old ex-member of the Conference, Elijah Gentry? Mr. Langford, 'being full of faith and the Holy Ghost,' went everywhere preaching the word among the settlers. He seemed to think of nothing in comparison with the salvation of souls. The result was that he had a glorious ingathering into the Church. Everybody began to think he was the very man indeed. ']

Greensboro Circuit

1839

One local preacher

The Annual Conference of December 1838 was held at Grenada, [Grenada], MS, Bishop Morris presiding. I was assigned to what was then called the Greensboro Circuit. There were about 17 appointments; rather a compact circuit rather in an oblong form and my home was near the center so that I could have reached near 1/2 my appointments from home by neglecting my pastoral work. But I knew my success depended on that part of my work so I determined to do my duty on the plan. It was 3 weeks work. I...my work in one week...the first round filling each appointment. I soon found I was gaining on the sympathy or the people. I was impartial in my visits and talked a great deal with the children, telling them Bible stories, which gave greater access to the parents. It was not long before the children would wait for me betwixt the gate and the door...

Received \$25

250 members

The revival...as the weather opened I made my appointments three weeks and one day when I preached this round on Friday. I preached the next round on Saturday and Sunday, giving and holding a two-day meeting every week and giving each appointment the same amount of Sunday preaching. And this plan met the approbation of the whole council so by the third Quarterly over 1/2 the appointments was alive and having some conversions. Our third Quarterly Meeting was in the Duck Hill neighborhood some 15 miles from Grenada and we had a meeting time. Some 6 conversions we had one camp meeting where much good was affected. We received into the church that year 177 members and was paid \$250, Judge Shadock [Sic] being my P.E.

I stayed at home and built me a better home while the other preacher went to Conference. I had lost my baby that year, a little boy 9 mos. old.

I had but one local preacher on the Greensboro Circuit, but we licensed three others and recommended one of them to Annual Conference to join in the Conference.

Coffeeville Circuit
1840
Local preachers 9

The Conference of December 1839 I was placed in charge of the Coffeeville Circuit, the Rev. Peter James, P.E. This circuit embraced all of Yalobusha County. Northwest of the Yalobusha River it ran up into Lafayette County and embraced the...Talahatchie County line SE of the Talahatchie River, through 6 towns, [Andersonville?], Coffeeville, Oakland, Preston and Troy. There was[sic] 9 local preachers in the bounds of my work, the most of them able men. There were 23 appointments on the work. My rides were about 350 miles in four weeks and 4 rest days at home. That was a hard year for me. It was a year of great political excitement [that] ran very high so that I had to be on my watch all the time and not suffer myself to drop any expressions that I would lead other parties to become prejudice against me. And at Coffeeville I found animosity in the church infecting between the aristocracy and the poorer class. I set with steady course to do my duty and by the last of March it seemed to die away. I would preach in Coffeeville Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night and at Oakland and Preston I would do the same, giving each town of note 3 sermons.

We had a gradual increase in the membership very nearly all ...Some joined at each appointment amounting to 150 members in all and I only received \$120 that year and I received \$40 at Conference. I attended Conference that year at Vicksburg and was ordained Elder and was appointed Junior Preacher, Brother William G. Gould being my senior on the Carrollton Circuit.

Carrollton Circuit
1841
Received \$250.

Brother Gould was a strong man, a fine preacher and a single man. It was a 4 week circuit with 21 appointments. I took the first round while Brother Gould went to Tennessee to see his parents. He had traveled that circuit the year before. The church was alive. We had five congregations. I only kept account of those that I joined in myself, turning the names over to Brother Gould at each Quarterly Meeting. I returned him 100 names and I received \$250 for that year. Sold my house in Choctaw County and bought a-small place in the southern part of Carroll County near the Holmes County line and moved to it expecting to return to the Carrollton Circuit, but was disappointed.

Attala Circuit
1842
Increase in members 220.

In 1842 I was placed in charge or the Attala Circuit, P.E. Green M. Rogers, Junior Preacher George W. Goza. We have 22 appointments in 4 weeks. We had two towns on this work - Kosciusko in Attala and Carthage in Leake. We held two camp meetings, one in Leake and one in Attala. We succeeded well that year. We received at the camp meeting in Leake 45 ascensions and in Attala we received 55, making 100, and we received 120 at the appointments; making 220

in all. I received \$240 that year, had some sickness in my family, lost but 5 appointments and them filled by local preachers. I had that year 4 good local preachers. They worked well.

French Camp Circuit

1843

Increase 36

I was appointed this year to French Camp Circuit, 15 appointments, 3 week circuit. Preached faithfully the whole year. I received 400 pounds of pork for my family and \$183 in cash. Increased the membership 36. I was then forced to ask for a location and work out of debt. At my fourth Quarterly this year I was very unwell and was forced to lie down on a bench while Brother Rogers my elder preached. I felt my situation so [desperate?]. I saw I would be obliged to sell my little home to get out of debt and depend on renting land to support my weakly, sickly wife and children, the oldest 2 of which were girls. Everything's so dark before me that I asked Bro. Rogers to have me located for I was not able to go to Conference. I was scarcely able to...I reached home the same day. I had left my second daughter sick, found her worse, and grew worse myself. On the next Saturday myself and daughter were both confined to the bed. Four weeks after [later] my daughter died. My neighbors buried her and it was 10 days later before I could stand alone. And as soon as I could walk, I sold my house and taken up my paper as before as it would...

I was homeless. I had 2 mares, 7 head of cattle and a few hogs, a few farming tools and still a little in debt, with as good a wife as any man ever had. But we with all the gloomy prospects by which we were surrounded were not discouraged. I was now over 19 years old in grace and I had following the opening of Providence as I thought all the time and had been blessed with a peaceful conscience all the while and...I believed that this cloud which looks so dark would break with blessing on my soul. It is true that it was a trial to leave the itinerant ministry which had afforded so many opportunities of ...but I felt that the good Lord would sanctify it to his glory and to my good. And I knew that he would take care of the church and me and mine. So as soon as I recovered enough strength to ride I began to look out for a place to move...

I secured a large place 5 miles from...on the...Creek. I obtained for repairing it and bringing it to cultivation and moved to in February. I pieced out cotton in February to pay for moving me. I took my little jenny and went to work...some away from...for such assays as we were obliged to have. And on the 9th of March I bought in Holmes County, 3 miles west of Emery, on time and rented it out...It was 10 miles from where I was living as I regained my strength. I...out my appointments until I had each Sunday filled. Two Sundays in the month I had two appointments which made 6 appointments to the month and when there was a 5th I would have a two-day meeting in Choctaw County at the church where my father and mother had their membership 35 miles from where I lived. I had a happy year although it was a year of...hard work, but...was converts at each preaching place. I however was attack with the chills in July. I used \$15 worth of...pills in my family that summer and fall made corn enough to do me and [gathered?] 9 good bales or cotton. Cotton however was so low that I had to borrow money to make the first payment on my land. And in January I moved to my new house where convenient...3 miles of Emery, 6 miles of Sweetwater, 8 miles of Blackhawk...

I was now betwixt two circuits that I had traveled and was useful at all these appointments. I had been their pastor at all these appointments and was

loved for there was members at all these appointments that claimed [me] as the instrument or bringing [them] to repentance.

So under these circumstances the church claimed a good deal of my time and of course I gave them all the time that I could spare from the support of my family. The year after I had moved into...Brother Waller was on the circuit. He preached a very popular sermon...

[Next 11 lines indecipherable.]

In October Brother Waller and myself commenced another meeting at Blackhawk. One Friday we held 3 services a day which resulted in 15 ascensions to the church. The same year Brother Stephen [Johnson?], a local preacher, made an appointment to commence three days at Oak Ridge Church on Friday, Christmas Day and called on me to assist him. The first service we had some penitents(sic) come to the altar. The revival increased at each service and we continued until the 1st Sunday in January and resulted in 36 ascensions to the church ...

[Next two lines indecipherable.]

These reverence(sic) meetings of which I have been speaking, [came] in the year 1841, some years after I had located in the community. In the year 1848 and 1849 Brother Humphrey Williamson was on Holmes Circuit. In 1848, I preached monthly at Emery, Blackhawk, Sweetwater and Lexington. In 1849 I was candidate for assessor of taxes in the summer and fall. I was preaching with Bro. Williams at protracted meetings all over the county. I however missed my election but it enabled (me) to preach in almost every populace neighborhood in the county and to form favorable acquaintance all over the county and was only beat about 40 or 50 votes.

That year I lost another baby boy about 9 mos. He died about Christmas having taken a deep cold which ran into consumption. The baby died Christmas 1850 and my wife died the 18th of October 1851.

The ensuing first of November I was elected to the office of Assessor of Taxes by a majority of 21 votes, there being 6 candidates in the field, 3 Democrats and 3 Whigs. I then began to inform myself as regarded the demands or the assessment [business?].

For I was sworn to assess the taxes of Holmes County according to law to the best of my ability and swore in a bond [or] \$50,000 for the faithful performance of my duty.

In examining the law and my oath or office would not admit of my employing a Debuty [sic], as had been the practice of the assessor that preceded me. If I failed then the police court was about to extend the time and allow me assistance. So I arranged my farming interests so that my 3 sons could carry it on without my labor after the first of May, that being the commencement of the tax year.

Home was a lonesome place to me and although two grown daughters as good housekeepers as any women and as pleasant a family as there was anywhere the sunshine of love had always dwelt and still dwelt, I was lonely though not unhappy for my children were all obedient, cheerful and affectionate to me and with each other. I preached a great deal that year, holding two day and protracted meetings. After living a widower more than 14 months on the 3rd of January 1853 I married the widow Sarah C. Pope, the daughter of William B. Smith.

I found that in these two years that I preached to a great many more people

than in any other 2 years of my life, except the 6 years that I was in the itinerant [sic] work. At the close of 1853 I moved into Yazoo County and settled on the dividing ridge between the Yazoo and Big Black Rivers, some 8 miles SE of Yazoo City and 8 miles rather south or west from Benton and 7 miles due north from Dover where I have remained 36 years farming and preaching as a local preacher.

For the first 6 years after I settled in Yazoo I was employed by the P.E as a missionary to the coloured people to whom I preached at...4 Sundays in each month. I had from three to five appointments. I would stay (with) the overseer on Saturday night who would call his people together immediately after breakfast. I generally preached in a...manner reading a whole chapter, commenting on what I had read. I frequently stood by a table in the door of the overseer and the Negroes would sit in the gallery while the white family would sit in the room where I stood. When I was through at one appointment I [would] hasten to the next. I generally found them [affable?] and the overseer ready to collect...with a tap or two on the table. At the second appointment I eat my dinner, my horse was fed and so I went through.

[Here for about 20 lines he lists the names of the plantations he and another preacher visited in their missionary work among the slaves. The names are impossible to make out.]

The balance of the appointments kept up until the [Yankees] got possession of Sartartia. [then a major port on the Yazoo River]. That closed up my Ministry with the coloured people as their pastor. Those six years I preached to them I was liberal[sic] paid.

After they were freed, when Brother [Levi] Pearce was presiding elder, he wanted me to take a mission among the freed people. Then my plan of preaching was much more instructive to the right method of preaching and was more instructive to them and [I] think it is more to white people and even to preachers themselves.

[Langford 's comment that he was "liberal paid" during his work among the slaves apparently was not an aberration. In 1857, church historian Cain writes, the youthful Yazoo City pastor Robert W. Lambuth took up collections for missionary work in China, in which his brother was engaged, and received \$151 from the white congregation and \$21 from the colored congregation, an amazing percentage considering that slaves were not paid by their white masters. "There is something remarkably sublime in the spectacle of a group of slaves in a Southern Methodist church giving out of their meager offerings for the support of the gospel in China!" Cain wrote. At the December 1858 meeting of the Mississippi Conference in Woodville the members voted 78-0 in support of action by the General Conference "expunging from the discipline the rule against buying or selling slaves."]

During the war I possessed some advantages that few others in our section of the state possessed. I understood well the system of trough tanning of leather and making shoes which art I communicated to several of my friends. I also understood how to make stays for...cloth spinning, sising, spooling, warping and putting in a web for weaving and almost all kinds of domestic work making and marketing and manufacturing of tobacco so that I could instruct others. My son-in-law and three sons were in the cavalry. They drew no wages until a few days before the war closed and when they were discharged they had money aplenty but

it was worthless.

I struggled through the war preaching twice or three times every Sunday. After the surrender my sons soon all married. I was able to settle each one of them. My oldest daughter died in time of the war leaving a daughter and a son for me to raise. They are all doing well. My oldest son lives by me. My second son lives in Texas and my youngest son is in the itinerary and my first wife with two younger sons and three daughters are in the better world while I am still in the wilderness in my 85 year...

I have now two months in my 85 year and have never had but two right hard spells of sickness in my life of which I have spoken. That was in September 1848 when I located. The other...was in the latter part of December 1867 and January 1868. That was typhoid fever. The first was in my 35 years and the other was in my 63 year. I have had a great many attacks of chill and fever so in the main I was a healthy boy and a healthy man except as mentioned. .

I have met with crisis in a world point of view. I have never suffered under any of these misfortunes as the world calls them. On the 13th of May 1886 I lost by fire. My house burned and all the...clothing provisions and we saved two good beds with the summer clothing. It affected my wife very much. But I felt in my soul that the Lord had given and now the Lord had taken away. With our two beds we moved into the crib and ...I secretly even enjoyed it. We were only .in the crib one week...The burning took place on Thursday night and the noble people of Benton on Sunday morning sent \$27...

I was surprised for I had not thought that they had ever heard of the burning. My poor old heart was overflowed with gratitude for that noble people and they will always reel dear to us for sympathy at such a time can never be forgotten by us. On Monday morning the 17th several of my good neighbors appeared at my crib which was our dwelling with working tools to get out timber for the...work while others with their wagons went to the city for ...and plank so by dinner on Friday they had my wife and what little we had in a house 16 by 18 feet and sideroom 10 by 18. The money from Benton enabled us to get window sash ...door. So that in one week we were living in a pleasant house. On the next Sunday I went to my appointment at Dover and at the table before the pulpit as noble a people as ever lived placed \$58 in my hand. And my evening appointment was Mount Olivet and Shiloh sent \$32...

I received from different persons at a distance presents differing in amounts from 2 to \$25, until I suppose in all amounting to more than \$200 in cash. I suppose in all, goods provisions and cash, it would come to the amount of \$250 which had helped us much.

I suppose that it would have taken at least \$1,200 more to have reimbursed all the loss but have always had aplenty to meet all our necessities and feed anyone that will call on us. The only difficulty that I have realized is that we have no room to accommodate our friends as we use to do. So that I think that the good Lord suffered these things to come upon me for my good for I think that I have felt more grateful to the Good Lord since than I did before. -

It seems that the Good Lord has placed me in the crucible for on the 13th of December, just 6 months after the burning, I got a fall that threw my right wrist partially out of joint, which disabled me from...through the entire winter...suffered a great deal. And the...of May 1887 while riding without a saddle, both feet on one side, my mare made a little dodge and threw me off backwards, which gave me a good deal of pain and disabled me from work for 2 months and my wrist is still so very weak that I can use an ax but very little. But I could do good work with a...hoe or plow for 2/5 of the day so I was a good hand in the field. And a little over one year after, on the 9th of July 1888, while leading my mare out of

my lot gate with a sack of corn on my left shoulder and the bridle on my left arm she...and snatched back and jerked me down on my left side which stove up my thigh joints until in standing erect the left leg is at least 2 or 2 1/2 inches shorter than the other. At first for some 3 or 4 hours or perhaps the first half of the day the pain was very severe, but it was not long before the Good Lord filled my soul up so full of his love that I have suffered but very little.

[At the top of the page where he is telling of his injuries is the notation, "I do this writing Nov. 3, 1889."]

...it was 3 or 4 months before I could crawl from the bed to the fireplace and rest myself by sitting on a chair, and fully 6 months before I could venture to walk on crutches.

But in all this confinement I have not suffered but very little but have been willing I think at all times ready to say it is the Lord and he will not affect unnecessarily and I can but feel grateful to Him for good love to me and mine and I think that when the cross of...is purged from my soul so that He can see his perfect immigrant, my soul, that he will say it is enough, come up home.

I do this writing one year and four months 6 days...since the accident happened and now I can get around and attend to a great many things and walk to church and about my farm on my crutches.

[Lorenzo Dow Langford died at his home in Yazoo County on June 16, 1892 in his 88th year.]