

Blanche Kingery Carroll

Blanche Elsie Kingery was born in Polo IL on September 16, 1873, the youngest of six children of Mary Ann and George Washington Kingery. Her mother Mary Ann O’Kane (1838-1910) was born in Indiana and raised in a staunch Methodist family – with a younger brother named John Wesley O’Kane.¹ Her father George Washington Gingerich² (1827-1913) was born in Juniata County PA, was a farmer, and changed his surname to Kingery sometime after moving west about 1850.

As was her mother before her, Blanche was raised in the Methodist Episcopal church³ and served as secretary of the Freeport District Epworth League.⁴ She was also musically talented, and played the organ in church and at camp meetings.⁵ A few years after graduating from high school, she became a home missionary, with the responsibility of organizing Sunday Schools under the American Sunday School Union – travelling from place to place in the rural communities in her horse-drawn buggy.

In 1904, when the Union was faced with the challenging task of providing Sunday Schools in the neglected mining communities of Central Illinois, Miss Kingery volunteered for the assignment – a particularly dangerous one for a woman in those days. In many of the mining towns no Christian activities of any kind were to be found – although there were plenty of saloons. In one town it was reported there had been no religious services for thirteen years – and there were only two Bibles in the entire community.

For three years this young missionary labored in Central Illinois, travelling in her buggy, with stunning statistics⁶:

- 25 new Sunday Schools organized
- 9 Sunday Schools re-organized
- 227 other Sunday Schools visited and assisted

¹ Mary’s family, the Daniel O’Kane family, owned a farm 2 miles south of the Elkhorn (Brick) Methodist Episcopal Church that they attended.

² George W. Gingerich is a brother to United Brethren preacher John S. Gingerich (1819-1900), whose story is told in the 2010 issue of *The Chronicle*, pages 16-30. *The Chronicle* wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Barbara L. Gingerich Rivas of Norman OK and her multi-volume history of the Gingerich-Gingrich families in the preparation of this article on Blanche Kingery.

³ Her older sister Lulu Martha Kingery (1872-1952) married Methodist Episcopal preacher Albert S. Buell (1875-1951), whose obituary appears in the 1951 *Journal of the California-Nevada Conference of the Methodist Church*, page 205.

⁴ 1906 *Journal of the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, page 100.

⁵ *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, August 26, 1903, page 25.

⁶ These statistics and other information are taken from her obituary in the 1952 *Journal of the Wyoming Conference of the Methodist Church*, pages 1162-1164.

1335 new members added to the rolls
 160 formal addresses
 thousands of homes visited
 hundreds of Bibles distributed

In one particular two-month period she traveled over 780 miles in her horse and buggy.

In 1906 Miss Blanche Kingery gave up this career for another – that of wife and mother – by marrying Rev. Charles Eden Carroll⁷, an ordained minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church. She now concentrated on passing on the torch of faith within the congregations served by her husband and within her own family – which she did with a passion, as indicated by the lives of her two⁸ children Dorothy and Donald.⁹

Dorothy Helen Carroll (1907-1944) was born in Nebraska and graduated from high school in Massachusetts, while her father was on the faculty at Boston University. At an early age she expressed a desire to devote herself to Christian service and was granted a local preacher's license in 1925. She graduated from Boston University in 1929 with a Bachelor of Religious Education degree, during which time she headed the religious work among students at Trinity Episcopal Church. Following graduation she was appointed to assist the assigned pastor and lead religious education programs – first for two years at large churches in Boston MA then for four years at rural churches in Mount Desert ME, where she also taught religious education in the public schools.

In early 1934 Miss Carroll moved to St. Petersburg FL and became active where her father was now pastor at Grace Methodist Episcopal Church. She married James R. Thurmond¹⁰ in May 1935, and in July 1935 she was appointed to

⁷ Charles Eden Carroll (1877-1946) was born in Vermont, ordained by the North Nebraska Conference, and served in several different capacities in several different conferences before passing away while serving at Parrish Street in Wilkes-Barre. His obituary is given in the 1947 *Journal of the Wyoming Conference of the Methodist Church*, page 716.

⁸ A third child Rita J. apparently died as a youth. Listed as 7 years old in the 1920 census and not in the 1930 census, she is not mentioned in either parent's obituary.

⁹ Donald Kingery Carroll (1909-1976) was born in Nebraska and died in Florida. In keeping with the female emphasis of this section of *The Chronicle*, details about men have been intentionally sparse and relegated to footnotes. The inscription on Donald's tombstone says it well: "Truly one of God's own" – citizen, soldier lawyer and judge. Furthermore, as reported in Wisconsin's 4/11/1955 *Janesville Daily Gazette*, he was responsible for the 1956 law that mandated "In God We Trust" be printed on all U.S. currency: *At the suggestion of Donald K. Carroll of Jacksonville, president-elect of the Florida Bar Association, a bill to require that the motto be imprinted on all our currency was recently introduced by Representative Charles E. Bennett (D., Fla.).*

¹⁰ James Russell Thurmond was born in West Virginia in 1904, and his family moved to St. Petersburg about 1920. The 1940 census lists him as divorced and living in St. Petersburg with his Mother Nettie Elizabeth (Woodell) Thurmond (1869-1961). His father Hawes Coleman

that city's Lealman Avenue Church. The 1936 birth of her daughter and only child was reported in the St. Petersburg paper as follows.¹¹

WOMAN RETURNS TO HER PULPIT

Annual Rally Day exercises at the Lealman Avenue Methodist Church, postponed during the absence of the pastor, Rev. Dorothy Carroll Thurmond, will be held tomorrow morning at the usual worship hour. Rev. Thurmond will return to her pulpit tomorrow, and her daughter, Donna Carol Thurmond, born September 30, will be made a member of the cradle roll department of the church school.

In 1937 Dorothy was ordained by the Methodist Episcopal Church. After four years at Lealman Avenue, she accepted a non-Methodist assignment. It was also about this time that she and Mr. Thurmond divorced. Her new assignment was reported in the St. Petersburg press as follows.¹²

PASTOR ACCEPTS ASSOCIATE POST

Rev. Dorothy Carroll Thurmond
to Join Corinthian Brotherhood Church¹³

The Rev. Dorothy Carroll Thurmond, former pastor of Lealman Community M.E. church, has accepted the associate pastorate at the First Church of Corinthian Brotherhood of which Mrs. Ann Ree Colton is president. She will preach at the Knights of Pythias hall, 531 Eighth Street north, each Sunday morning at 10:45 o'clock and tomorrow morning will have "The True Cross" for her sermon topic.

The Rev. Mrs. Thurmond is a graduate of Boston University and received her ordination in the M.E. church last year. She held a local preacher's license since 1927. For three years she assisted in the church school and was student worker at Trinity Episcopal church, Boston church of Philip Brooks, and for four years, assisted an Episcopalian rector in the Maine diocese¹⁴ where she taught Bible in the public schools and co-operated in community pageantry and music. She also co-operated in the larger parish movement in Maine, preaching in Congregational and Baptist churches.

In 1940 Rev. Charles Carroll transferred to the Wyoming Conference and was appointed to Parrish Street in Wilkes-Barre – where he served until retiring in 1945. Dorothy, who had returned to using her maiden name, now began thinking

Thurmond (1856-1924) had already deceased. Nothing more is known about him, except that he was still living in St. Petersburg when his mother died in 1961.

¹¹ *The Independent*, 10/17/1936, page 5.

¹² *Times*, 4/10/1938, page 16

¹³ This was a local independent congregation, not part of any denomination.

¹⁴ Other sources state that the previously mentioned work in Maine was with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Since women at that time did not have full clergy rites in any mainstream denomination, and since Dorothy's early service was always in a subordinate role, it's difficult to document exactly where and in what denomination or capacity she served. Even the date of her local preacher's license is variously reported as 1925 or 1927.

about following her parents to Pennsylvania – as she had previously done to Florida. Consider, for example this article from April 1940.¹⁵

DAUGHTER TO PREACH
FOR HER FATHER

Guest preachers will occupy the pulpit at the Parrish Street Methodist Church at both services on Sunday. Dorothy H. Carroll, daughter of the pastor, the Rev. Dr. Charles E. Carroll, will occupy the pulpit at the morning service, at 11. Her theme will be: "The Four Marys." She is a graduate of Boston University and one of two women who has received ordination orders in the Florida Methodist Conference. She held the pastorate at the Lealman Avenue Methodist Church, in St. Petersburg, for four years.

In August 1940 Dorothy Carroll was named executive director of the Midvale Settlement House¹⁶ in Plains Township, on the northern edge of Wilkes-Barre.¹⁷ But Dorothy maintained her connections in Florida, particularly with a gentleman named Merrill F. Whitmore. In September 1941 Mr. Whitmore of West Palm Beach FL was named the director of men's and boys' activities at Midvale.¹⁸ In December 1941 Dorothy Carroll and Merrill Whitmore¹⁹ were united in marriage in Jacksonville FL.²⁰

Of the many news articles on the Midvale Settlement House, the following one adapted from the Wilkes-Barre Times gives the most relevant information.²¹

MIDVALE MOTHERS OUTLINE PROGRAM FOR SETTLEMENT
GROUP FORMED TO PREPARE LUNCHESES
FOR CHILDREN OF KINDERGARTEN

Mothers of kindergarten children of Midvale Settlement House met yesterday morning at the Settlement House and outlined a schedule for mothers who are assisting in preparation of hot lunches for the children attending settlement classes. Quarters for the children, complete to a singing canary, is attracting the attention of kindergarten authorities and much pride is being taken by the children in their new home. Midvale Kindergarten, with its attendance in the thirties, is not accepting any further registrations allowing only an active enrollment of 35, between five to school age.

Midvale gym, under supervision of Merrill Whitmore, director of men's and boys' activities, sponsored a dance last night, the first in a series for

¹⁵ *Wilkes-Barre Evening News*, 4/5/1940, page 1.

¹⁶ This Methodist ministry of the Woman's Home Missionary Society to foreign immigrants and their families was previously mentioned on page 8 and is more fully discussed in the Appendix.

¹⁷ *Wilkes-Barre Record*, 8/28/1940.

¹⁸ *Wilkes-Barre Record*, 9/30/1941.

¹⁹ Merrill F. Whitmore (1906-1973) was born in Northeast Harbor ME and died in Green Valley AZ. His marriage application lists him as being a social worker and divorced. He and Dorothy had no children together.

²⁰ *Wilkes-Barre Record*, 12/8/1941.

²¹ *Wilkes-Barre Record*, 10/23/1941, page 6.

benefit of the dues which the Settlement pledged to pay toward its budget. Executive secretary, Mrs. Dorothy Carroll, said those loaning 10 or more new recordings are admitted without charge. Dances, which will be held from 8 to 11 p. m., are to be a weekly program open to all interested.

Through kindness of Mrs. Franck George Darte²², Mrs. Charles Clift, and Plains High School authorities much equipment has been added, including six pairs of boxing gloves, a rowing machine, exercisers, basketballs, footballs, punching bag, wrestling mat. Large classes have registered for the various clubs and courses. Boys under 14 are admitted only to the afternoon classes, with young men and older men attending at night. In the basement of the former annex there is a game room. A radio with two amplifiers has been added, one amplifier sending music to the game room, the other to the gym.

During the coming week several of the Sewing Clubs for Girls are planning Halloween parties. Under direction of William Keeley and Claude Newhard of the WPA, indirect lights, a gift of Mrs. Darte, have been installed in several of the classrooms. Boys of the Settlement neighborhood are learning practical knowledge under the tutorship of these men. The gym was improved with framed screens on all windows to protect the glass. After a meeting with the Junior Council, Mr. Whitmore posted rules and regulations.

After directing the work at Midvale for four years, Dorothy Carroll Whitmore resigned to follow her husband to Detroit.²³

DIRECTOR RESIGNS TO JOIN HUSBAND

Mrs. Merrill F. Whitmore resigned as associate director of Midvale Settlement and has joined her husband, Mr. Whitmore, at Detroit. Mr. Whitmore, former executive of the settlement, was appointed on the protection force of a defense plant functioning as part of the U.S. Army. Mrs. Whitmore is a graduate of Boston University. She served as director of the college young people of Greater Boston, directing and writing community pageants. From 1930 to 1934 she supervised the character education programs in the public schools of Northern Maine. From 1934 until taking over the work of the local settlement, Mrs. Whitmore was engaged in developing a community center at St. Petersburg, and later was ordained local deacon by Bishop Charles Wesley Flint.

Unfortunately Dorothy passed away within a year after moving to Michigan, as detailed in this newspaper notice in the St. Petersburg press, where she was still fondly remembered.²⁴

FORMER METHODIST CHURCH PASTOR DIES IN DETROIT

The Rev. Dorothy Carroll Thurmond Whitmore, 37, former pastor of the Lealman Avenue Methodist church, died Sunday at Detroit, Mich. Rev. Whitmore was the daughter of the Rev. C.E. Carroll, former pastor of the

²² This is the daughter of the Kate Pettebone Dickson featured in the previous article.

²³ Wilkes-Barre Record, 8/16/1943, page 6.

²⁴ Times, 5/5/1944, page 2.

Grace Methodist church, and was one of the two women who received ordination orders from the Florida Conference in 1937. Following her graduation from Boston University, Rev. Whitmore was assistant to three Episcopal churches in and near Northeast Harbor, Me.

She was well-known in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., as director of the Midvale Settlement. In August of last year she resigned here and moved to Detroit, where her husband Merrill Whitmore, is engaged in war work.

Besides her husband, survivors include her parents, Rev. and Mrs. Carroll, a daughter, Donna, and a brother, Lt. Donald Carroll, Pomona, Cal.

The cause or circumstances of Dorothy's death were not revealed, but her death does not end the story of the passing of the faith from one generation to the next. Dorothy's seven year old daughter Donna was taken in by Dorothy's parents, Rev. Charles and Blanche Kingery Carroll. Following Charles' 1945 retirement from Parrish Street, he accepted a faculty position at Stetson University in DeLand FL. It was from Stetson University that Donna Carroll graduated in 1958 – where she had continued the family tradition by being very active in the campus Wesley Foundation.

Donna, who never married, eventually settled in Birmingham AL – where she continued her family tradition of service through her work in the Social Security Administration and in her church, as indicated in the following obituary.²⁵

CARROLL, DONNA, age 65, of Birmingham passed away on March 5, 2002. She was retired from the Social Security Administration. She was a member of the Cathedral Church of the Advent.²⁶ She was a long time participant in activities with the Shepherd Center. She was a long time resident of the Southside Community but due to declining health, had recently moved to a local nursing home. There will be a Memorial Service Thursday, March 14, at 10:30 a.m. in the Chapel at Cathedral Church of the Advent. Donna was a dear and loyal friend who gave herself to many. She will be greatly missed.

And so in the tradition of Susannah Wesley, the flame of faith passed through four generations of Methodist women: from Mary Ann O'Kane Kingery (1838-1910) to Blanche Kingery Carroll (1873-1952) to Dorothy Helen Carroll Thurmond Whitmore (1907-1944) to Donna Carroll (1936-2002) – a passing that included home mission work, the ordained ministry (albeit without full clergy rights for the women), management of a Settlement House, and other works too numerous to list. While Blanche Kingery Carroll did not possess the worldly wealth of Mrs. Bennett or Mrs. Dickson, the faith she received from her mother and passed on to her daughter and granddaughter has doubtless touched the lives of countless others. The last line of her conference obituary sums it up well: "The wonderful life she lived of service is a great consolation to those she has left behind."

²⁵ *Birmingham News*, 3/13/2002.

²⁶ Cathedral Church of the Advent is the mother church of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama.

Appendix: Midvale Settlement House

The Midvale Settlement House was one of three such enduring projects of the local Woman's Home Missionary Society. The Wyoming Conference 1930-31 report to the WHMS of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for example, gives the following account.

Settlement work: Yatesville, Hanover, Midvale

Settlement work among the foreign-speaking peoples is carried out at Yatesville, Miss Mary Jones, superintendent; at Hanover, Mrs. C.E. Stevens, superintendent; at Midvale, under the supervision of Mrs. Harriet Aussenheimer.

This work includes daily vacation Bible schools, kindergarten, library work, Americanization classes, Sunday school, mothers' classes, boy and girl scouts, etc.

Bugbee's 1952 centennial history of the Wyoming Conference gives the following account of the founding of the WHMS work at Midvale.²⁷

The National Society had restricted local work because so many new projects were started without uniformity in reporting or adequate supervision. But the need was so great, auxiliaries secured permission by promising to support the other obligations first.

As a result of efforts of Mrs. C.E. Mogg and Rev. Von Krug, who was in charge of the foreign work in Wyoming Valley, in 1909 work was opened in a small back room of a saloon, the only available place in the Brookside section of Wilkes-Barre. Later Mrs. Dickson²⁸ provided a ten-room house at Midvale. Under a board of directors from First and Central Church, Wilkes-Barre, with Mrs. Mogg as president, the work progressed.

Mrs. D.B. Street²⁹, who had charge of the deaconess work, was asked to visit Midvale, and through her efforts it was arranged that our Society might contribute to this work. Later, after another visit of Mrs. Street, work among the Italians was authorized, with Miss Mary Jones, a graduate of Folts Institute³⁰, in charge. She was later transferred to Yatesville. Also at this time a mission was started at Hanover, near Nanticoke, with Miss Lettie Ketcham, another Folts graduate in charge.

The Midvale Settlement House was located at 315 S. River Street, Plains township, just south of the present Mikelski Funeral Home.

²⁷ *He Holds the Stars in His Hands: The Centennial History of the Wyoming Annual Conference of the Methodist Church* by Leroy E. Bugbee, selected passages from pages 222-223.

²⁸ This is the Kate Pettebone Dickson featured in the previous article.

²⁹ Mrs. Street of Washington DC was an executive in the national WHMS of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

³⁰ The Folts Missionary Institute in Herkimer NY was operated by the WFMS [Woman's Foreign Missionary Society] of the Methodist Episcopal Church.



site of the
Midvale Settlement House of the Woman's Home Missionary Society
given by Kate Pettebone Dickson 1910
superintended by Dorothy H. Carroll 1940-43

Midvale Settlement House is enrolling pupils for various classes at the Midvale Settlement House. Classes which are being formed are: English for women, Monday and Thursday, at 10 a. m.; Orchestra, Monday night, 7:30 p. m.; Thursday night, Glee Club for Young Men. Any persons interested in these classes are asked to call at the Settlement House, River Street, for further information.

Wilkes-Barre Times Leader, The Evening News
September 27, 1935, page 32

Midvale Settlement House will sponsor a patriotic program tonight at 8. The slogan, "Every Resident of Plains Township a Citizen," is the goal toward which the club is straining every effort. A large map of the United States showing every training camp has been placed on the wall at the settlement and while the audience sings "Keep the Home Fires Burning," each service mother will mark with a tiny American flag the camp at which her son is stationed, thus emphasizing the pledge to their sons that their homes will always be waiting for them. The program will also include the pledge of allegiance led by Mrs. Rose Shannon Baum, teacher of the citizenship class, and "Any Bonds Today" led by Edward Davis, of the WPA staff at Midvale.

Wilkes-Barre Times Leader, The Evening News
February 13, 1942, page 17