

Materialist Methodists

*Ceramic Highlights from Olivet's Wesleyana Collection
an object study in industrialisation, reproducibility, and religious class
consciousness in nineteenth century British Methodism.*

A Project of:

The Wesley Collections: A Material History of British Methodism

In Collaboration With:

The Department of History and Political Science

Olivet Nazarene University Archives

The Department of Art and Digital Media

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Exhibition Talk: April 17, 5:00-6:00pm

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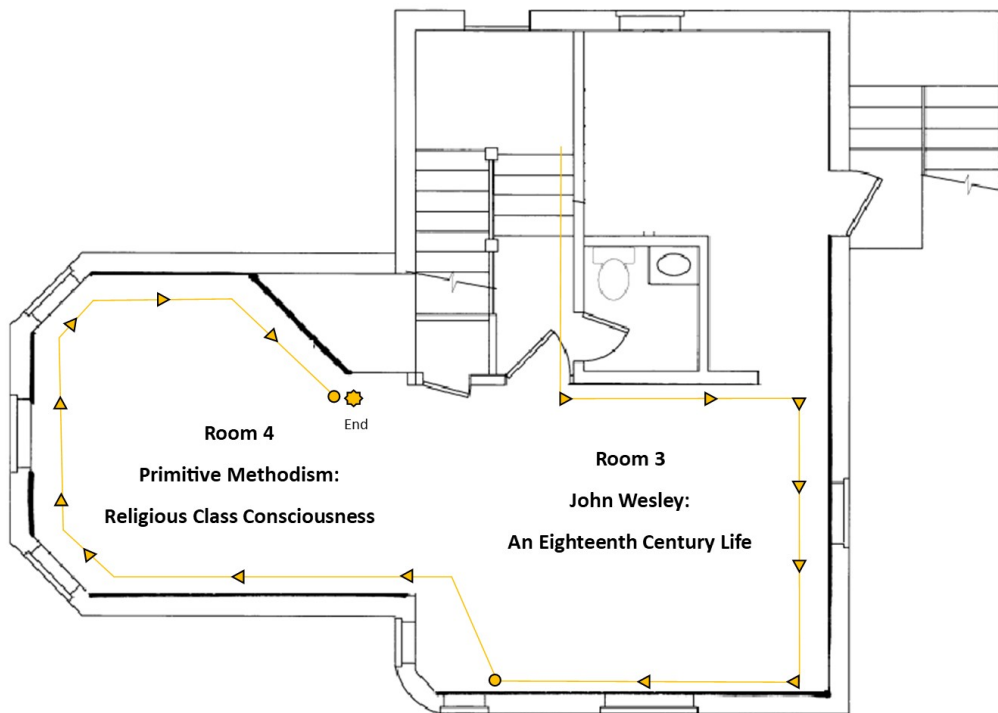
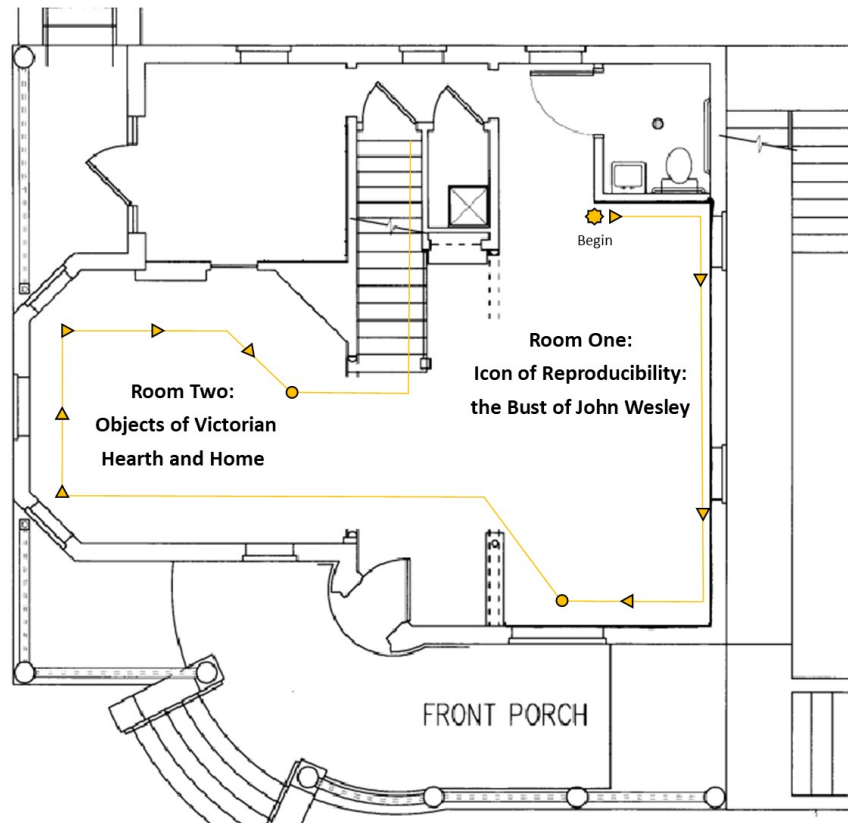
And

Bryson Doering, B.A. History '26



Portrait Busts of John Wesley, c. 1791-1850. ONU Wesley Collections. Photography by Shannon Rajchel, B.F.A. '23

Ground
Floor



Second
Floor

Room One: Icon of Reproducibility: The Bust of John Wesley

From March 31 to April 4 of 1784 John Wesley was in the Staffordshire pottery town of Burslem. It is most likely during this stay that he sat for the life cast that is the basis for all of these subsequent busts. However, there are some who maintain this happened on another visit to Burslem in 1781 due to several busts with reverse inscriptions using this likely erroneous date. Whatever the date, the artist was Enoch Wood (1759-1840), and he would soon become one of the leading producers of Staffordshire Pottery at his factory in Fountain Place, Burslem. Thus, from their inception, Wesley's image and bust were situated within the rising world of British industry and factory reproducibility.

More information on the life of Wesley can be found later in this booklet alongside further objects displayed on the second floor of the Victorian House. However, first, we would like you to begin here in this room of busts observing and being observed by Wesley. In this replicated image, we ask you to ponder the role of industrial reproducibility alongside this icon of authentic gospel faith.

1. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005190

c. 1791. Workshop of Enoch Wood
Burslem, Staffordshire, England.
Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Black and white. Grey marbled base
Height: 13" Width: 7 ¼"

Gallery Note: This is likely one of the oldest busts and oldest objects held by Olivet's Wesley Collections. With its flared shoulders when seen from the reverse, it is typical of the style produced immediately after Wesley's death in 1791. The reverse also contains the inscription: "THE REVEREND JOHN WESLEY, M.A. FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND FOUNDER OF METHODISM. HE SAT FOR THIS BUST TO MR. ENOCH WOOD, SCULPTOR, BURSLEM, 17[81?], AND DIED IN 1791, AGED 88 YEARS. IS NOT THIS A BRAND PLUCKED" The final lines are a reference to Zechariah 3:2 and Wesley's rescue as a young child from a fire at the Epworth Rectory.

2. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005192

c. 1791-1799. Workshop of Enoch Wood
Burslem, Staffordshire, England.
Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Black and White. Green, Black, and Gold marbled base
Height: 11 ¼" Width: 6 ¼"

Gallery Note: This is likely another early version of the busts produced after Wesley's death from Enoch Wood's Burslem factory. Its reverse inscription reads: THE REVEREND JOHN WESLEY, M.A. FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND FOUNDER OF METHODISM. HE SAT FOR THIS BUST TO MR. ENOCH WOOD. SCULPTOR BURSLEM AND DIED IN 1791 AGED 88 YEARS. The Biblical reference has been omitted.

3. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005052

c. 1791-1799. Workshop of Enoch Wood
Burslem, Staffordshire, England.
Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Black and White. White marbled base.
Height: 11 ½" Width: 6 ¾"

Gallery Note: Similar to object #2 (*WC 2005192*) this is another early version of the busts produced after Wesley's death from Enoch Wood's Burslem factory. However, there is perhaps some alteration to the facial colouring that has occurred. As with *WC 2005192* its reverse inscription also lacks the Biblical reference and reads: THE REVEREND JOHN WESLEY, M.A. FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND FOUNDER OF METHODISM. HE SAT FOR THIS BUST TO MR. ENOCH WOOD. SCULPTOR BURSLEM AND DIED IN 1791 AGED 88 YEARS.

4. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005193

c. 1800-1850
Staffordshire
Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Grey and white. Multi-colored marbled base.
Height: 11 ¾" Width: 6"

Gallery Note: With its rosier cheeks and lack of any reverse inscription, this is probably one of the earlier nineteenth century busts on display. In the transformations to the face, it is already indicative of the wider processes that transformed Wesley's image across the period.

5. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005070

c. 1800-1899
Staffordshire
Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Monochromatic white
Height: 10" Width: 6"

Gallery Note: In the stark whiteness of this bust, there is a definite visual change in Wesley's representation. Undated and without reference to any place of production, it is most likely from the nineteenth century and definitely produced somewhere among the Staffordshire pottery towns.

6. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005072

c. 1800-1899
Staffordshire
Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.

Monochromatic brown.
Height: 10" Weight: 5 ½"

Gallery Note: As with object #5 (*WC 2005070*) there is a similar starkness, though a colour shift in this bust. Again, it is undated and has no maker's mark, though likely of nineteenth century Staffordshire production.

7. Flatback Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005175

c. 1850
Staffordshire
Flatback Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Black and white. Red marbled base.
Height 11 ¾" Width: 6"

Gallery Note: Here is a typical example of a mid-Victorian bust designed for display on a mantelpiece or shelf in a lower middle to middle class home. These busts are known as "flatbacks" due to the design of the rear of the bust allowing it to sit near to a wall. Thus, in its composition it represents the growing consumer power of those lower down the social scale and the transformations to the bust of Wesley caused by the industrial revolution's associated consumer revolution. A very similar bust, object #27 (*WC 2005055*) is located in room two as part of the "Objects of Victorian Hearth and Home" display.

8. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005278

c. 1800-1899
Staffordshire
Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Black and White. Red marbled base.
Height: 10 ½" Width: 6"

Gallery Note: Undated but from the nineteenth century, this bust is smaller in general, and the facial expression of Wesley himself also seems more "condensed." Perhaps the smaller size represents a desire to simplify production and lower the selling price of this particular line of busts.

9. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005054

c. 1800-1899
Staffordshire
Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Black and White. Purple marbled base.
Height: 10 ½" Width: 6"

Gallery Note: Undoubtedly the most striking feature of this bust is the nature of Wesley's eyes. Compared to the busts of the 1790s, there is a clear corruption of Wesley's image as it has been reproduced over time. This bust is undated but from the nineteenth century.

10. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005176

c. 1875-1920

Staffordshire

Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.

Black and white.

Height: 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ " Width: 4"

Gallery Note: Small, this bust bears the faint inscription of "Wesley" on its front. Undated, this could perhaps be an early twentieth century image of the Methodist founder.

11. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005136

1988. Sue Sutton

Gladstone Pottery, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent,

Staffordshire, England

Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.

Black and White. Black base.

Height: 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Width: 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Gallery Note: This 20th century bust was produced by the Chester and Stoke District of the Methodist Church for their 1988 Wesley Celebrations. It is the only confirmed 20th century bust in the exhibit. Though smaller, it represents a return to a more authentic depiction of Wesley as compared to our 19th century busts on display. It was made at the successor to the historic Gladstone Pottery and China works located in Longton, Staffordshire which now forms part of Stoke-on-Trent. For an historic view of the pottery works, see object #54 in room 4 "Primitive Methodism: Religious Class Consciousness."

12. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005075

c. 1850

Staffordshire

Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.

White and Black. Gold Gilded base

Height: 10" Width: 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Gallery Note: With its unique base bearing the inscription "Wesley" and monochromatic face, this particular bust is one of the more remarkable on display. Compared with the original productions from Enoch Wood in the 1790s, it is further evidence of the transformation to Wesley's image across the nineteenth century.

13. Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005058

c. 1850

Staffordshire

Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.
Black and White. White and Blue decorated base.
Height: 10 ¼" Width: 5 ¼"

Gallery Note: Undoubtedly the most unique bust in Olivet's Wesley Collections, it is a fitting end to the ongoing changes to Wesley's image as seen in this display. With the unique naturalistic base, the striking pin-prick eyes and dotted eyebrows it is a signal representation of change in the iconography of Wesley.

Room Two: Objects of Victorian Hearth and Home

These objects have been selected and arranged to recall the nature of the Victorian domestic environment. Across the nineteenth century, under the reign of Queen Victoria (r: 1837-1901), Britain and British households witnessed a remarkable transformation to the economy and availability of consumer goods. The general fall in the price of staple commodity goods across the first part of the century allowed the working classes to spend more of their income on objects such as the ones in this cabinet. As an example of the fall in commodity prices, in 1801 a standard loaf of bread cost 1s. 10 ½ d. (1 shilling, 10.5 pence). By 1850 the price of bread had fallen to 6 d. A similar process replicated itself across the British economy. Methodists in their role as factory owners, and Primitive Methodists as factory labourers, were at the core of these transformations to economy and consumption.

Against the south wall are also displayed two almost identical “loving cups” commemorating the re-foundation of Wesley’s Kingswood School in 1851. A traditional name for two handled jars, loving cups gained prominence among eighteenth century Methodists as part of their “love feasts,” or small groups of believers who gathered for singing, testimony, and scripture study. These cups were often used for the simple taking of bread and water, reminders of Methodist practical simplicity and the prohibition on all but ordained ministers in the Church of England from offering the eucharist.

The Kingswood School was originally founded by Wesley in 1748 as a school for the children of poor colliers, or labourers in coal fields, outside of Bristol, England. Here again is further early evidence of Wesley’s interest in the labouring poor and the connection between Methodism and class.

Southeast Wall Shelf

14. John Wesley Kingswood School Loving Cup

WC 2005089

1851

Staffordshire

Loving cup depicting John Wesley.

Reverse: Kingswood School.

White and blue. Decorative transferware.

Gallery Note: In addition to commemorating the new foundation of the Kingswood school, this object together with its pair #15 (*WC 2005086*) are notable as the first appearance of transferware in the objects of this exhibition. A process pioneered in the mid-eighteenth century, it gained widespread popularity by the middle of the nineteenth. It is done with use of a metal plate engraving –usually copper- that is inked and then tissue paper is pressed upon it. Bearing a reverse image, the tissue paper is then pressed against the object to transfer the design. Avoiding the cost of hand painting and allowing quicker production, transferware increased the affordability of decorative pottery. There are several example of transferware across this exhibition, including on many Primitive Methodist objects.

Southwest Wall Shelf

15. John Wesley Kingswood School Loving Cup

WC 2005086

1851

Staffordshire

Loving cup depicting John Wesley.

Reverse, Kingswood School.

White and black. Decorative transferware.

Height: 5 ¼”

China Cabinet, Bottom Shelf

16. Primitive Methodist teapot

WC 2005015

1907

Staffordshire

Primitive Methodist Teapot Commemorating

Hugh Bourne and William Clowes along with

centennial of the first Mow Cop Camp meeting, 1807

White with blue trim. Decorative transferware.

Gallery Note: This is the first of many objects produced to commemorate the centenary of the first Primitive Methodist camp meeting held in 1807 near a castle folly called Mow Cop, about a three hour walk from the center of modern Stoke-on-Trent. It also depicts the Primitive Methodist founders Hugh Bourne and William Clowes. Expelled from more traditional Wesleyans due to their embrace of the camp meeting, the gathering at Mow Cop became central to the identity and iconography of Primitive Methodism. See Room 4 “Primitive Methodism: Religious Class Consciousness” for more objects.

17. Metal Cast Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005169

c. 1800-1899

John Wesley miniature bust

John Wesley miniature bust wearing clerical robes, cast in iron.

Height: 3 ¼”

18. Wesleyan Methodist Centenary Mug

WC 2005067

1838

Staffordshire

Wesleyan Methodist Centenary mug.

White and black. Decorative transferware.

Gallery Note: This object along with several other objects in this cabinet date to 1838, and were produced to commemorate the centenary of Wesley's Aldersgate Experience in 1738.

19. Miniature Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005177

c. 1800-1850

Staffordshire

Miniature Portrait Bust of John Wesley

Bust of John Wesley with Marbled red base

Height: 4 ¼"

20. Primitive Methodist Teapot

WC 2005073

1907

Staffordshire

Primitive Methodist Teapot Commemorating Hugh Bourne and William Clowes along with centenary of the first Mow Cop Camp meeting, 1807 and the Tunstall Chapel.

Black and white with gold trim. Decorative transferware.

China Cabinet, Middle Shelf (Shelf 2)

21. John Wesley Pulpit and Clock Statuette

WC 2005272

c. 1800-1850

Staffordshire

John Wesley Pulpit and Clock Statuette

Wesley standing in pulpit, preaching pose with Bible, clock depicted in pulpit.

Height: 11 ½"

Gallery Note: Intriguing in their composition, this is first of two Pulpit and Clock statuettes on display. A possible origin for this motif may in fact be one of Wesley's sermons titled "The Signs of the Times" based on Matthew 16:3 "Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" It was composed by Wesley late in his ministry, in the summer of 1787. The pairing of the clock and pulpit reminds the observer that he or she must live a life of moral and spiritual discernment in light of Christ's expected return.

22. Metal Cast Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005168

1838

John Wesley miniature bust

John Wesley miniature portrait bust wearing clerical robes,
cast in iron, paperweight?

Height: 4 ¼”

23. Statuette of John Wesley

WC 2005092

c. 1850

Staffordshire

Statue of John Wesley in clerical robes

White with flesh tone accents, holding the Bible.

Height: 9 ¼”

24. Metal Cast Portrait Bust Stamp of George Whitefield

WC 2005172

1838

Metal cast portrait bust stamp of George Whitefield.

Portrait bust with stamp on bottom.

Height: 3”

Gallery Note: Together with item # 22 (*WC 2005168*) this is possibly part of a larger desk set for the 1838 centenary of Wesley’s Aldersgate experience. This bust of George Whitefield is a wax letter seal stamp. Whitefield (1714-1770) was a friend and fellow revivalist alongside both John and Charles Wesley in the early stages of their ministry, particularly before John Wesley left for Georgia in 1735. However, Whitefield and John Wesley fell out in the 1740s over the definition of grace and issues related to Calvinist interpretations of the 39 Articles of the Church of England.

25. John Wesley Pulpit and Clock Statuette

WC 2005281

c. 1800-1850

Staffordshire

John Wesley Pulpit and Clock Statuette

Wesley standing in pulpit, preaching pose with Bible, clock depicted in pulpit.

Height: 11 ½”

China Cabinet, Upper Shelf (Shelf 3)

26. Portrait Pitcher of John Wesley

WC 2005014

c. 1800-1899

Staffordshire

Portrait Pitcher of John Wesley in profile, preaching pose

White with blue accents

27. John Wesley and Adam Clarke Loving Cup

WC 2005020

c. 1850

Staffordshire

Loving cup depicting John Wesley.

Reverse: Adam Clarke.

White and blue. Decorative transferware.

28. Portrait Pitcher of John Wesley

WC 2005149

c. 1800-1899

Staffordshire

Portrait Pitcher of John Wesley in profile, preaching pose

White with blue accents

Fireplace Mantle

29. Flatback Portrait Bust of John Wesley

WC 2005055

c. 1850

Staffordshire

Flatback Bust of John Wesley in clerical robes.

Black and white. Red marbled base.

Height 11 ¾" Width: 6"

Gallery Note: Similar to object #7 (*WC 2005175*), this is a typical example of a mid-Victorian bust designed for display on a mantelpiece such as this very Victorian mantelpiece. It is intriguing to speculate what this bust has seen from its original mid-nineteenth century perch on a British fireplace to its current position on a mid-American Victorian fireplace here at Olivet in 2023.

Room Three: John Wesley: An Eighteenth Century Life

With a life that spanned almost the entirety of the eighteenth century, John Wesley (1703-1791) was witness to all of its great transformations. He was born in the small town of Epworth in rural Lincolnshire to Samuel and Susanna Wesley. Samuel was the local minister in Epworth who found himself in the isolation of Lincolnshire due to political fallings out with the increasingly Whig character of the established church (the Wesleys were Tories, and some even suspect Susanna of Jacobite leanings).

Nonetheless, his father's position in the church eventually allowed Wesley to gain a place at Oxford, studying first at Christ Church where he was an undergraduate from 1720-1724. He then took Holy Orders in 1725 before become an M.A. Fellow at Lincoln College from 1726-1728. While at Oxford both he and his brother Charles participated in what was known as the "Holy Club," a group dedicated to a pursuing pure and holy lives. So great was their methodic intensity that their fellow students began mocking them as "Methodists." The term would later be adopted by all of Wesley's followers.

In 1728 Wesley was ordained in the Church of England by the Bishop of Oxford. Technically this began Wesley's pastoral ministry. However, Wesley still felt that there was an absence in his faith. Invited by its founder James Oglethorpe, he tried to fill this with missionary work in the Georgia colony from 1735-1737. All of Wesley's endeavour came crashing down after his failed relationship with a young woman named Sophia Hopkey. Wesley was forced back across the Atlantic where, in 1738, he found himself among a group of Moravian Christians studying the book of Romans near the old Aldersgate in London. It was May 24, and as he read Martin Luther's opening commentary on the book of Romans, Wesley had a sudden physical-spiritual sensation where he felt his heart "strangely warmed" and a resulting total relief from the weight of sin. Out of this came Wesley's personal spiritual transformation and the wider transformations of the evangelical revival in England that would grow into Methodism.

After Aldersgate, Wesley began preaching everywhere and to everyone. He preached among the coal miners in Wales, to the rich and the good on the fashionable streets of Bath, in any pulpit that would welcome him, and even on his father's own grave when denied the pulpit in his native Epworth. Preaching, and the preaching of vital personally experienced and verifiable faith rooted in scripture was the essence of Wesley's calling. For this reason, we have selected several statuettes in this room that present Wesley in his fundamental role as a preacher. Bible in hand, communicating the personal experience of the Gospel, it is the essential image of the Methodist founder.

As he preached, his movement and his place in British society grew in its fame (and also infamy from those in the established Church who feared what they perceived as his disruptions to order). Wesley's stature by the end of the eighteenth century is part of the explanation for the creation of the busts on display on the first floor. It also explains why Wesley's image soon appeared on work of Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795), one of the leading potters, designers, and industrialists of the day. Indeed, Wedgwood famously presented Wesley with a teapot in 1761, produced at his famous Eturia Works near Stoke-on-Trent, another early association between Staffordshire industry and Methodism.

Olivet's Wesleyana collection has a few twentieth century Wedgwood items with others that have yet to be dated, and could in fact be imitation Wedgwood from later factories in Tunstall, Staffordshire. Still, they are examples of the classic raised cameo style of Wedgwood's jasperware, those on display in the traditional blue and white.

The final items on display in this room are some of the more eye-catching pieces in Olivet's collection: Sunderland Lusterware. Produced outside of Staffordshire in the County Durham town of Sunderland, these pieces were cheaper versions of Wedgwood's early nineteenth century "moonlight" finish. In Sunderland, this effect was achieved with a type of "splatter" technique in pink, gold, and white glazing. Most lusterware is unmarked and undated, though most are from the first half to middle of the nineteenth century. Olivet's collection does have rarer identifiable pieces from Dixon, Phillips & Co., a partnership only in operation in Sunderland from 1839-1865.

30. Wedgwood Jasperware Cameo Portrait of John Wesley

WC 2005047

undated. Wedgwood?

Eturia, Staffordshire, England?

Profile portrait of John Wesley in clerical robes.

Blue with white portrait of John Wesley in center, wood frame.

31. Wedgwood Jasperware Cameo Portrait Plate of John Wesley

WC 2005101

1977. Wedgwood.

Eturia, Staffordshire, England

Wedgwood profile portrait plate of John Wesley.

Blue with white portrait in center of John Wesley.

32. Wedgwood Jasperware Cameo Portrait of John Wesley

WC 2005049

undated. Wedgwood?

Eturia, Staffordshire, England?

Profile portrait of John Wesley in clerical robes.

Blue with white portrait of John Wesley in center, wood frame.

33. John Wesley Plate

WC 2005033

c. 1850

Staffordshire, England

Plate depicting John Wesley in center, preaching profile.

White with transfer portrait in center of John Wesley, floral rim.

34. John Wesley Plate

WC 2005035

c. 1850

Staffordshire, England

Plate depicting John Wesley in profile in the center.

Black and white. Decorative transferware.

35. John Wesley Plate

WC 2005099

c. 1850
Staffordshire, England
Plate with profile portrait of John Wesley
White with blue center and pink rim

36. Statuette of John Wesley

WC 2005129

c. 1800-1850
Staffordshire, England
Statuette of John Wesley standing in preaching profile.
White and black clerical robes with flesh accents.

37. Statuette of John Wesley

WC 2005131

c. 1800-1850
Staffordshire, England
Statuette of John Wesley standing in preaching profile.
White and black clerical robes with flesh accents.

38. Statuette of John Wesley

WC 2005132

c. 1800-1850
Staffordshire, England
Statuette of John Wesley standing in preaching profile.
White and black clerical robes with flesh accents.

39. Statuette of John Wesley

WC 2005135

c. 1800-1850
Staffordshire, England
Statuette of John Wesley standing in preaching profile.
White and black clerical robes. Flesh accents. Red Bible and red base.

40. Statuette of John Wesley

WC 2005137

c. 1800-1850
Staffordshire, England
Statuette of John Wesley standing in preaching profile.
White clerical robes. Red Bible and inscription on base.

41. Statuette of John Wesley

WC 2005138

c. 1800-1850

Staffordshire, England

Statuette of John Wesley standing in preaching profile.

Black and blue clerical robes.

42. Statuette of John Wesley

WC 2005180

c. 1800-1850

Staffordshire, England

Statuette of John Wesley standing in preaching profile.

Black clerical robes. Flesh tones. Green base.

43. John Wesley Lusterware Plate

WC 2005034

c. 1850

Staffordshire, England

Lusterware Plate depicting John Wesley in preaching profile.

White with pink rim and shading depiction in center.

44. John Wesley Lusterware Square Plate

WC 2005036

c. 1850

Staffordshire, England

square lusterware plate depicting John Wesley in profile.

White with Lusterware around edges

45. John Wesley Lusterware Square Plate

WC 2005166

1839-1865, Dixon, Phillips & Co.

Sunderland, County Durham, England

Square lusterware plate depicting John Wesley in profile

White with shading depiction of John Wesley. Lusterware lining edges.

46. Wesleyan Scriptural Lusterware Plate

WC 2005153

c. 1850

Staffordshire, England

Lusterware plate with Scriptural text.

White with lusterware lining around edges

47. Adam Clarke Lusterware Square Plate

WC 2005165

1839-1865, Dixon, Phillips & Co.

Sunderland, County Durham

Square lusterware plate depicting Adam Clarke in profile

White with shading depiction of Adam Clarke. Lusterware lining edges.

48. Lusterware Portrait Pitcher of Adam Clarke

WC 2005250

c. 1850

Staffordshire, England

Lusterware pitcher with portrait of Adam Clarke.

White with shading depiction of Adam Clarke and decorative lusterware along sides, Spout, and base.

Gallery Note: Adam Clarke (1762-1832) was an early nineteenth century leader in Methodism, serving as its Conference President 3 times from 1806-07, 1814-15, finally from 1822-23. He is perhaps most famous for his Biblical commentary, a standard of holiness Biblical interpretation published in 1810. Clarke was selected by Wesley himself for education at Kingswood school beginning in 1778 (see objects #14 & 15) and entered the ministry in 1782. In his connections to Wesley late in life, his Biblical scholarship, and his leadership of the Wesleyan movement as it entered the nineteenth century, he is an excellent transition to the next phase of Methodist history in room 4.

Primitive Methodism: Religious Class Consciousness

Primitive Methodism was born in the labouring environment of the dawning nineteenth century. As such, it represents the increased association across the period of the working classes with some of the heirs of Wesley's movement. Yet, this association was frowned upon by many conservative elements at the time, including among the Wesleyan leadership, and has also long frustrated historians and activists of Marxists leaning. It may also have surprised Wesley himself had he lived to see it. Throughout his life, Wesley cared for the poor and those at the margins of British society, he even denounced the horrors of slavery in 1774. But, he also remained a staunch political conservative, or in British parlance a Tory, for the whole of his life, famously opposing the rebellion of the American colonists.

Rather than events in British North America, it was another revolution across the English Channel that helped to transform politics and ultimately fragment the Methodist movement. Wesley died in 1791 as the French Revolution and its radical program of de-Christianization was gaining steam. Events in France pushed British elites in a more conservative direction and made them fearful of crowds and the mob. Soon, this reticence took hold in the leadership of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion as they began to more assertively support anti-Radical measures in the British government. Increasingly, this alienated poorer members of the movement, so that in 1797 the first split occurred with the formation of the Methodist New Connexion. Led by Alexander Kilham, it was a protest against a consolidation of Methodist leadership in the hands of the clergy as opposed to the laity. Ten years after the formation of the New Methodist Connexion and its pursuit of what might be called "religious democracy" the Primitive Methodist camp meeting at Mow Cop was held.

The two most important leaders in the birth of Primitive Methodism were Hugh Bourne (1772-1852) and William Clowes (1780-1851). Both men had deep connections to the industrial and labour history of Staffordshire, Clowes was a working potter in Burslem and distant relative of Josiah Wedgwood. Hugh Bourne was a water wheel-wright. As with the New Methodist Connexion, many like Bourne and Clowes who were drawn to what would become Primitive Methodism chafed under the increasingly reactionary control of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. Primitive Methodists also felt that the organisationalism of the Wesleyan Methodists had obscured the vibrancy of John Wesley's original movement, and they sought a primitive spiritual rejuvenation. When news reached them of the backwoods revivals known as camp meetings taking place on the American frontier, they saw a revival of the eighteenth century open air preaching of John Wesley. Their goal was a return to this dynamism in English Methodism. The result was the Mow Cop camp meeting of 1807.

Mow Cop split Methodism and defined the Primitive Methodists. Fearful of the crowds, the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion condemned the gathering. Bourne and Clowes were soon deprived of their Methodist class tickets, symbols of their status as Methodists. Embracing their new found place as "outsiders," by 1811 they had formed a new group: Primitive Methodism. Embracing a democracy of lay control in the church and establishing Sunday Schools across the pottery towns and into the wider industrial zones of Britain, they became a major religious source of the British labour movement. The Primitive Methodist chapel became a space of identity formation for the British working classes, helping its participants to define themselves as both a class and a culture. As a result, a natural connection between Trades Unionism and Primitive Methodism emerged. In the first half of the nineteenth century, this could spawn radicalism, as the 1842 Pottery Riots attest. However, by the end of the century, the chapel had helped in the transition to respectability for the labour movement.

With the rise of more radical forms of political Marxism by the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, many advocates of violent class-based revolution blamed Primitive Methodism for what they saw as its capture of the working classes. They claimed more effort went into the formation of Sunday Schools than founding the worker's paradise. For non-Marxists who would prefer not to see the destructive bloodiness of Bolshevism established in the British Isles, the Trades Union and labour connection of Primitive Methodism seems something to praise rather than blame. Allowing workingmen a space to organize and address the legitimate struggles of the factory condition, Primitive Methodism achieved progress for the poor and marginalized in a way that moderated violent revolutionary impulses in a gospel context.

Objects in this room commemorate the founders of Primitive Methodism alongside images of the castle folly near the site of the 1807 Mow Cop camp meeting. It also features a framed tea towel from a private collection depicting the coal fired bottle ovens where many of these objects were made. In the political, social, and denominational diversification of Methodism seen here, it is also a fitting end to this exhibition's exploration of the many images of Methodism over time.

49. Miniature Vase of Hugh Bourne

WC 2005114

c. 1907

ADAMS, Tunstall, Staffordshire, England

Miniature vase with embossed depiction of Hugh Bourne

Blue with white embossed Hugh Bourne

Gallery Note: This object together with objects #49, #50, and #53 in this room (*WC 2005115*, *WC 2005127*, and *WC 2005121*) were produced to commemorate the centenary of the Mow Cop camp meeting in 1807.

50. Miniature Vase of William Clowes

WC 2005115

c. 1907

ADAMS, Tunstall, Staffordshire, England

Miniature vase with embossed depiction of William Clowes

Blue with white embossed William Clowes

51. Miniature Vase of William Clowes

WC 2005127

c. 1907

ADAMS, Tunstall, Staffordshire, England

Miniature vase with embossed depiction of William Clowes

Blue with white embossed William Clowes

52. Mow Cop Saucer

WC 2005008

c. 1850

Staffordshire, England

Plate with depiction of Mow Cop Hill
White with brown depiction of Mow Cop

53. Mow Cop Vase

WC 2005167

c. 1850
Staffordshire, England
Miniature vase with depiction of Mow Cop Hill
White with brown depiction of Mow Cop. Green grass.

54. Primitive Methodist Jardinière

WC 2005121

c. 1907
Staffordshire, England
Large jardinière with depictions of Hugh Borne, William Clowes, and Mow Cop Hill.
White with colored in depictions of Hugh Bourne, William Clowes, and Mow Cop hill.
Rust/orange colored glaze around base and rim.

Gallery Note: A jardinière is a term used to describe large ceramic pots designed for house plants. Popular in late Victorian and Edwardian houses, this object was made for the centenary of the 1807 Mow Cop camp meeting.

55. Framed Tea Towel of the Gladstone China and Potter Works

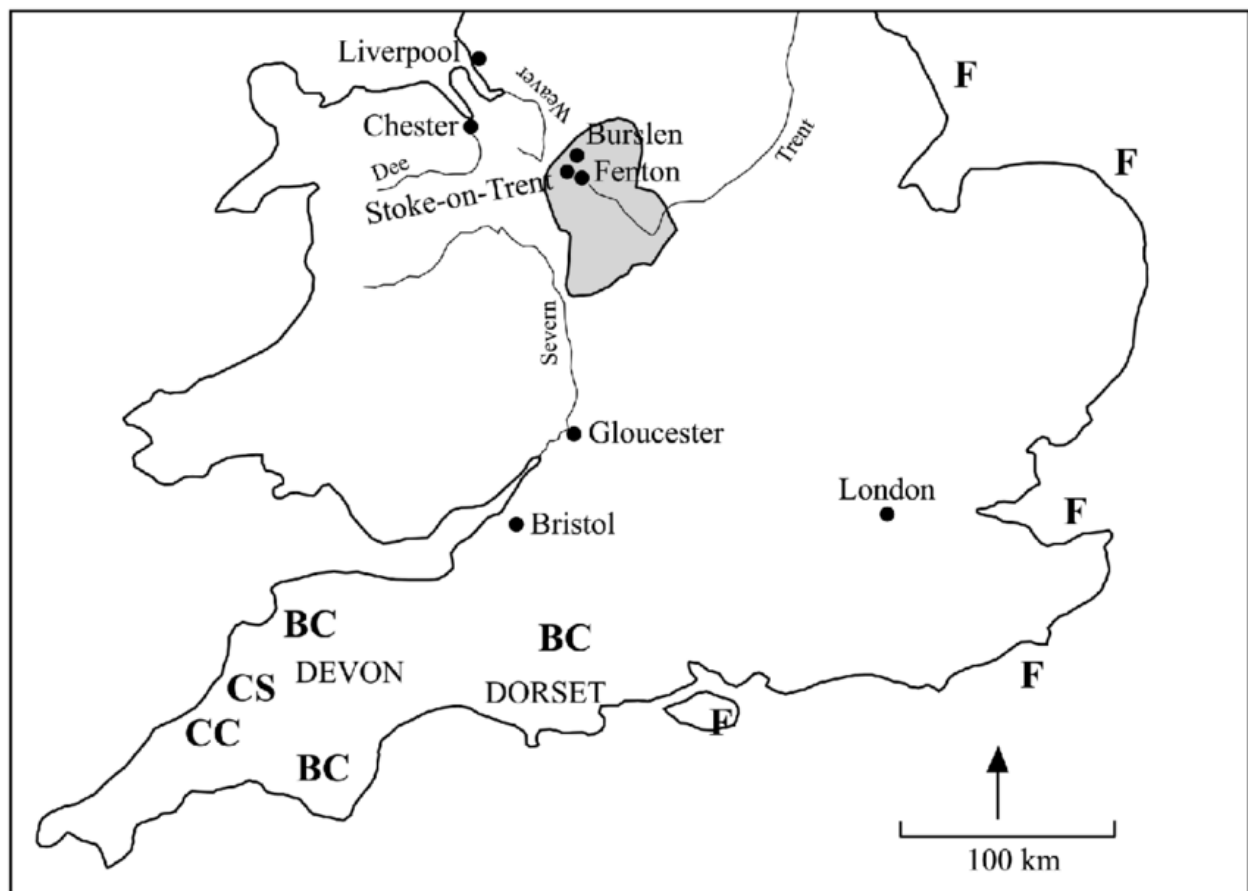
Private Collection

2022
England
Printed Tea towel depicting the Gladstone China Works,
Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.
Tea towel depicts painting a 1970 painting by artist Reginald G. Haggard (1905-1988)

Gallery Note: Originally founded in 1787, what came to be known as Gladstone Pottery and China produced work in cooperation with Wedgwood's site in Etruria. By the late nineteenth century it had changed ownership several times and in 1876 was renamed after the Liberal Party Prime Minister William Gladstone. The painting replicated on the tea towel depicts the great bottle oven kilns of nineteenth century pottery production. Heated by over 14 tonnes of coal each and belching smoke, these ovens reached temperatures of up to 1250 C, or, almost 3,000 F. This was the grueling environment in which the Primitive Methodist potters worked.

Map showing Southern England, the 18th century Staffordshire pottery district (grey area) and the sources of ceramic raw materials. BC = Ball clay, CC = China clay, CS = Cornish stone, F = Flint.

From: Maggetti, Marino & Heege, Andreas & Serneels, Vincent. (2015). Technological aspects of an early 19th c. English and French white earthenware assemblage from Bern (Switzerland). *Periodico di Mineralogia*. 84. 139-168. 10.2451/2015PM0009.



Notes

This booklet produced for “Materialist Methodists: Ceramic Highlights from Olivet’s Wesleyana Collection, an object study in industrialisation, reproducibility, and religious class consciousness in nineteenth century British Methodism” an exhibit of the digital humanities and public history project: *The Wesley Collections: Material Studies in British Methodism*. It is authored by Kyle B. Robinson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Olivet Nazarene University Department of History and Political Science with the assistance of Bryson Doering, ONU B.A. History ’26. All claims are their own. All typos are someone else’s fault.

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Gallery Hours:
M-Th 4:30 - 7:30 PM
F/S 1:00 - 4:00 PM