

The Digital John D. Wagg Papers

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### ABSTRACT

John D. Wagg was a native of Ashe County, North Carolina and a Southern Methodist circuit minister active immediately before and during the Civil War. His surviving journal, sermons, and received letters allow us to employ him as a window into a particular time, place, and set of conditions. To facilitate this, selections from the Wagg documents have been transcribed, edited, and presented as a Web-based digital edition, the Digital John D. Wagg Papers. This edition is designed to work with many other editions of similarly narrow historical and geographical scope as one historical witness in a network of witnesses.

We must draw from several varieties of documents in the John Wagg collection and from contextualizing historical scholarship to construct a history of Wagg as a product of and participant in his times. Born 8 July 1835, Wagg began keeping a journal in 1854 as he worked toward a degree in medicine at Jefferson, North Carolina, the Wagg family hometown. As a diarist he often explored the place of humanity in a God-made world, a theme that foreshadows his turn from medicine and entry into the itinerant ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in October 1858. Wagg spent the Civil War years preaching throughout western North Carolina and southwest Virginia, generally striving to keep his heavily Confederate-leaning politics from the pulpit. This lifestyle allows the Wagg Papers to bring an alternate point of view to any archive of Civil War documents consisting primarily of the letters of combatants.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

The Digital John D. Wagg Papers project resulted in the production of a digital edition of selections from the surviving writings and letters of John D. Wagg, a Southern Methodist circuit minister active from 1858 to 1865. The material presented here was written to contextualize the Wagg documents on the Web. It will, upon completion of the John Wagg site, appear with the documents at <http://johnwagg.org>. Taken on their own, the introductions, headnotes, and glossary material describe the scope and significance of what was essentially an editing project.

Approximately 190 manuscript pages of documents from the John Wagg collection held by Newman Library at Virginia Tech were transcribed between July 2010 and March 2011. Design of the Web architecture used to present the documents and contextualizing material occurred simultaneously to the transcription beginning in September 2010. Using research compiled during the course of the project and from a visit to the divinity school library at Duke University in early March 2011, the introductions, headnotes, and glossary were written in February and March 2011.

Included here are two introductions to the John Wagg documents. The bibliographic and methodological introduction describes the nature and scope of the documents and suggests the relationship of this project to others, with a particular emphasis on how many editing projects with similarly narrow focuses might work in conjunction with one another as historical witnesses. The biographical and historical introduction deals with the life of John Wagg from the start of his journal writing in 1854 until his death in 1866, using Wagg, his family, and his acquaintances as means of approaching the broad historical events of this period.

Also included are a series of headnotes affixed to certain documents where they appear on the John Wagg site, and a glossary of people, places, quotations, and terminology employed by the documents. This material bears directly upon the documents, and, in the absence of the documents themselves, may seem somewhat isolated, but it should demonstrate the degree to which the documents were annotated and the areas in which most effort was spent on annotation.

As it is difficult to demonstrate in prose the nature of the John Wagg Web site itself, an example of encoded text and its Web-viewable equivalent are appended here. This should illustrate the work required of the transcription, encoding, and document design aspects of the project.

## CHAPTER 2. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND METHOD

The Digital John D. Wagg Papers project is designed to fill a gap in the digitized Civil War-era documents offered by the Center for Applied Technology in the Humanities at Virginia Tech. The efforts of professors and students in presenting documents from the mid-nineteenth-century United States have thus far centered on the correspondences of Joseph Burrage of Maryland, a Union Army officer, and the Smith brothers of Virginia, who fought for the Confederacy. These collections consist primarily of letters to and from combatants, letters dealing largely (though by no means exclusively) with army camp life and suffused with mortal investment in the war effort. I selected John D. Wagg, Methodist circuit minister, as the focus of my addition to the CATH offerings, due to his being a noncombatant. His point of view differs markedly from those provided by CATH presently. Wagg's loyalty to his North Carolina homeland is undeniable, but he spent much of his time away from the front lines of conflict, and he corresponded largely with other Methodist ministers and parishioners within his jurisdiction, themselves noncombatants. We should not downplay Wagg's personal investment in the war effort – he lost a brother to the battle at Gettysburg, and his home county was beleaguered by Union saboteurs – but, by and large, Wagg's diary writings and correspondences demonstrate the perspectives of those who stayed home and lived on in the midst of national turmoil.

This project attempts to present as wide a range of documents from the Wagg collection as is possible while fairly representing the distribution of documents in the collection. The physical collection at Newman Library includes 47 letters, one by Wagg, the rest addressed to Wagg by acquaintances; a journal consisting of 67 written pages and including entries from 1854 to 1858; a pocket diary and 1859 almanac, largely empty; a notebook containing 114 written pages of sermon outlines and notes; and a number of loose documents consisting mostly of sermons, but also including John Wagg's 1858 church credentials and three poems penned by Wagg. Included and examined here are the journal in its entirety; thirteen letters demonstrative of John Wagg's place in the social and religious climate of his time, two including newspaper clippings; 26 sermons of varying length from the sermon notebook; six further sermons independent of the

notebook; two pages of church credentials; and two poems. These selections were transcribed between July 2010 and March 2011.

The digital format allows the editor great freedom in the selection and presentation of documents. The editor is chiefly limited by time – time spent organizing and preparing documents for presentation, constructing a user-friendly interface, and, perhaps most importantly, engaging in the traditional editorial enterprise, contextualizing documents comprehensively enough that users know what they have on their hands to begin with. The particular strength of the digital edition may lie in its freedom from material constraints; the editor can present as many textual variants as time allows. While I chose to include John Wagg's journal and the selection of letters presented here for the sake of situating Wagg in his place and time, the sermons chosen for presentation were selected both to demonstrate Wagg's predominant biblical interests and to shed light upon his composition process. Where possible, multiple revisions of sermons are represented. The great majority of the sermons are not dated, rendering definitive notions of chronological progression impossible in some cases, but it is at least possible to obtain a sense of Wagg's concerns by considering those ideas to which he devoted the greatest amount of time and effort. Variations upon particular themes can be viewed where they appear in the chronological progression of documents, demonstrating the time spent by Wagg between revisions. Variations might also be isolated and compared; this process is facilitated by text encoding that allows ordering of documents by common themes or Biblical references.

All documents have been encoded using the XML-defined Text Encoding Initiative standard, a system of tags designed specifically for use in marking up literary and historical texts. TEI-encoded documents can be easily transformed into Web sites and a number of static digital formats, and might be ported easily from one project to another, assuming that both projects follow the TEI P5 guidelines. Code uniformity should ensure that, generally speaking, any comprehensive stylesheet meant to apply to TEI-encoded documents can be made to accommodate any TEI-encoded document with minimal modification. This degree of separation between descriptive markup and visual formatting allows editors to explore visual and organizational variants on a single set of encoded documents. For example, while this site displays a minimal, diplomatic

transcription of the Wagg documents, the encoding specifically indicates all instances of spelling and grammar inconsistent with contemporary standards. This information can be used in presenting standardized versions of the documents or in conducting linguistic analysis; while beyond the scope of this project, such concerns might be central to another. Here, XSL and XPATH were used to transform the documents into usable Web pages, with PHP employed for the purpose of receiving user input in determining which documents to display at a given time.

The practical challenges of Web design can differ dramatically from those of print editions. One cannot always count on code of whatever variety translating identically into visible, functional Web pages in different browsers, or even in different iterations of the same browser. The digital editor must assume the role of Web designer, of typesetter as well as author; the digital editor's business extends beyond the organization and contextualization of data to encompass the technical needs of end users, needs as basic as unhindered browsing and productive searching. The editor must navigate the divide between visible, navigable hypertext, as presented visually, and raw encoded text meant to facilitate searching and comparison but not necessarily to be seen as-is, between "presentational," "image-oriented" stylesheet output and "analytic," "text-based" XML-TEI (McGann, "Editing as a Theoretical Pursuit," 88). Negotiation of this space is rarely easy. The two kinds of documents differ rather fundamentally, and yet, where digital editions are concerned, the user interacts with both, using the former to indicate text to be searched in the latter, with such searches providing data to populate another instance of the former.

It seems prudent to think of such concerns not as distractions from the traditional enterprise of editing, but as extensions thereof. When we combine these pursuits, we enable a model of the literary edition that resembles the customizable home page, a digital space that allows users to select and arrange (editorially contextualized) documents as needed, to interact with these documents using any of a number of applications (applications that allow location-based annotation, for example), and to save progress and backtrack. Peter Shillingsburg calls such an ideal the "knowledge site," "an environment where each user can choose an entry way, select a congenial set of enabling contextual materials, and emerge with a personalized interactive form of [a] work" ("An



Electronic Infrastructure,” 88). And Shillingsburg remains realistic about the scope of such a project: “[c]reating an electronic edition,” he notes, “requires skills rarely if ever found in any one person” (“An Electronic Infrastructure,” 94). The digital edition of any notable size must necessarily represent the result of collaborative effort.

We must bear in mind, however, that the demands of an expansive, comprehensive edition are not always concurrent with those of a small edition such as this. This site cannot be comprehensive in itself – it does not even attempt to reproduce every extant John Wagg document. It has been designed for usefulness in the absence of the “go big or go home” strategy that defines digital projects with considerable funding, staff, or development time (Linder). This carries three practical implications. First, this project is situated in the CATH archive alongside other collections of Civil War-era documents in the hope that a greater variety of documents will result in a broader picture of the period. Second, the historical information included here is meant specifically to connect this project to closely-related areas of research. Third, the Wagg documents are encoded with extensibility in mind: new documents could be added to this collection with ease, and the Wagg Papers might be included in more extensive archives dealing with Appalachian history, American Methodism, or the Civil War.

In particular, I have embraced the idea of hypertext as “decentered” in the design and organization of this project (McGann, “The Rationale of Hypertext,” 70). This model, as propounded by Jerome McGann, has two immediately relevant implications. First, the digital edition or archive resembles the library in that it “is logically ‘complete’ no matter how many volumes it contains – no matter how many are lost or added” (McGann, “The Rationale of Hypertext” 72). The digital editor “is encouraged not so much to find as to make order” (McGann, “The Rationale of Hypertext” 71). In this sense, a small-scale digital edition is to an expansive archive of American historical documents – e.g., *The Valley of the Shadow* at the University of Virginia; *Kentuckiana Digital Library*, a collaborative effort of Kentucky libraries and archives – as a small, specialized collection is to the Library of Congress. Both are technically “complete,” as completeness is a product rather than a determinant of the documents contained – yet the latter is undoubtedly more useful in isolation, given its scope, while the former likely works best in conjunction with other primary and secondary sources. Fortunately, the

Web provides an environment where no hypertext need exist in isolation for long. Thus the second implication of decentered hypertext: the digital edition, regardless of size, exists as one archive in “an archive of archives” (McGann, “The Rationale of Hypertext” 71). Moreover, this meta-archive – the Web itself, of which the scholarly Web represents one substructure – is decentered by design. The Digital John Wagg Papers site is designed, particularly at the backend code level, to “play nicely” with similar archives and relevant research. Such is the motivation behind my encoding the documents using TEI: every textual aspect of this project – the Wagg documents themselves, the glossary, headnotes, this introductory material – could be transferred fairly painlessly between TEI-compliant projects.

This design goal has likewise informed my contextualization efforts. It may be that the digital edition and the library resemble one another yet again in that neither “tells you where to begin or what volume to pull down” – it may be that we can achieve a fuller understanding of the digital edition from the user’s perspective if we accept this than if we reject it (McGann, “The Rationale of Hypertext,” 72). Yet I remain resistant to this conceptualization. I recognize that the small-scale edition is most useful to users with specialized needs – in my case, users interested in specific inhabitants of a specific region during a very brief span of years – and that, accordingly, the edition should attempt to address these needs (Shillingsburg, “An Electronic Infrastructure,” 83). Providing users with adequate contextualizing information aids them in determining whether particular documents suit their needs; this is, after all, the enterprise of the editor during a time when no text is to be considered useless. And, in the case of broader research endeavors, the small-scale edition works best as one of a wide range of resources. The editor might assume the role of disinterested archivist, of knowledge-keeper, merely presenting documents and allowing researchers to sort them out, but this seems irresponsible. This is not the tack often chosen by editors of print editions, nor is it a strategy much in evidence in digital editions, which tend to include, at the very least, introductory material of some kind and some manner of visible taxonomy. The editorial apparatus may be fairly light, as in the case of *The Valley of the Shadow*, but a project of that scale includes documents enough to contextualize one another and to render one another more useful. Not all users arrive at a Web site knowing precisely what they mean to do with it, nor can an editor

anticipate every user's needs; this is particularly true of a collection of documents with a rather small historical and geographical focus. The Digital John Wagg Papers site, as a small archive among archives, must position itself relative to other resources, lest it risk isolating itself and undermining its own usefulness.

The biographical and historical introduction is meant to walk users through the documents presented, contextualizing the documents with a focus on John Wagg's writing practices, Civil War-era politics, and the Methodist Church. Glossary and headnote information supply further specifics where possible. The goal of this site is by no means to provide a comprehensive study of the Civil War, American Methodism, and Appalachia, nor do I intend this to serve as a comprehensive biography of John Wagg; to accrue enough information for such an undertaking (assuming that enough information exists, given Wagg's relative obscurity), one would need far more time and resources for extended local research than were available to me. I find that the approach taken by David Kimbrough in his biography of Joseph Tarkington, an Indiana Methodist itinerant, applies here: Kimbrough seeks to employ the Tarkington family as "a window" into "cultural, social, and religious history" (xvii). I mean for John Wagg to serve as such a window, albeit one somewhat narrower than the prominent Indiana family at issue in Kimbrough's work. As this is, after all, an archive of historical documents rather than an extended study, I must assume that the documents have some capacity to speak for themselves – that Wagg is a window prior to my intervention, as it were – but I have at least framed the window at hand in terms of scholarship dealing with those conditions that most probably influenced Wagg's voice.

This project is, ultimately, a testament to the "new gods" of textual scholarship and editing, "gods of diversity, multiplicity, process, and fluidity combined with a scrupulous observance of the limitations and integrity of surviving artifacts" (Shillingsburg, "Complexity, Endurance, Accessibility" 26). It is perhaps an undertaking more literary than historical; historical information is subordinate to the documents here, and is provided primarily to promote textual understanding. But this project bears traces of movements in postmodern historical scholarship as well. Most pertinent of these are microhistory, distinguished by its use of particulars or "clues" in suggesting wider truths, and the related "revival of narrative history," the use in historical studies of literary

techniques and minor biographical detail (Peltonen 349; Crossley 12). Both grant that history is interpretation rather than representation of past events. The Wagg documents represent a very narrow focus, a miniscule window resultant from the biases of one man, and this makes them a prime vehicle for the sort of study that conceives of history in terms of the many particulars that comprise it.

One might wonder whether, in this case, an approach that privileges discrete texts in themselves, rather than as parts of greater works, was really ideal. Those of Wagg's sermons extant in multiple revisions might indeed be organized into "works"; some would lend themselves to the production of eclectic editions representing what the editor understood to be Wagg's intentions. And why present only diplomatic transcriptions – why include no standardized texts more accessible to casual readers and no facsimiles of the source documents? Admittedly, much of this has to do with the constraints of time and technology. Standardizing documents, especially personal documents whose productions did not require any sort of adherence to the language standards of their time, requires a great deal of labor. Facsimiles proved impractical due to the fragility of the notebooks in the Wagg collection. But I needn't dodge theoretical concerns by invoking practical matters. If Peter Shillingsburg is right in saying that "the goal of a scholarly edition," particularly an edition using the advantages of the Web, "should be to provide access to specific texts" – as I believe he is – the responsibility of the scholarly editor lies less in producing new texts (or unearthing ideal texts, as some have it) than in aiding readers in determining whether texts suit their needs ("An Electronic Infrastructure" 82).

This assumption has led me to prioritize contextualization over standardization, an approach that foregrounds the usefulness of microhistory. The research included here was selected on the basis of how specifically it describes the environment in which John Wagg lived and wrote; for example, studies of Ashe County, North Carolina are represented more heavily here than studies of Appalachia or North Carolina broadly, which in turn are represented more heavily than studies of the entire South, and so on. The historical scholarship expands upon the documents. But for a user who accesses contextualizing information by way of the documents themselves, the documents may well expand upon the historical scholarship, investing broad social movements with immediacy and consequence. With proper contextualization, the John Wagg Papers

become a site of dialogue between the voice of the historical individual and the agglomerate, disembodied voice of “history itself,” and the result is that the latter is no longer as disembodied as once it was. This is especially true when many such projects work together to offer a number of accounts, sometimes in accord with one another, sometimes competing, of what “really” happened. Here is where the Wagg documents excel as one node in a network of networks.

The Wagg documents themselves interact with one another in a similar way. If we know from the journal that Wagg always took great pleasure in nature, we might make more sense of Wagg’s attempts in his sermons to discern invisible natural orders by reading the Bible against the world around him. Or, alternately, if we know that Wagg’s sermons often return to the idea of the divine in nature before we come to the journal, we might conclude that his youthful appreciation of nature is a religious matter, even a kind of worship. We can extrapolate from such personalized connections to reach an understanding of Wagg’s place relative to Methodist diarists and nineteenth-century nature writers. The hypertext format allows, even encourages readers to approach the documents in any order, to make their own kind of sense of the Wagg collection as their personal needs require. I have attempted to facilitate this, to offer multiple entryways into the documents that all lead to something useful. The user whose research merely touches upon some facet of John Wagg’s life may enter the site, locate the relevant segments, and leave with a more complete understanding than before – in this way, the Wagg Papers interface with external research, and this is perhaps where much of their usefulness lies.

John Wagg would no doubt have relished the opportunity to contribute to something greater than himself. He spent his career as a member of a circuit, which in turn belonged to a conference, which in turn belonged to the Church – the Methodist organizational strategy essentially put itinerants to use as elements in particular networks situated in networks of similar networks. As a member of the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a conference that sought to maintain some connection to the Northern Church even after the separation of the churches was made official by the Methodist leadership, and as an itinerant minister assigned to a different region every year or two, John Wagg understood the value of intercourse between networks and individuals whose knowledge and opinions differed. Our advantage over

Wagg is that we can facilitate such intercourse from the comfort of home, office, or library.

### CHAPTER 3. BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

The Reverend John D. Wagg is, perhaps, notable among his peers in that so much of his writing survives. That he wrote as much as he did in the first place, however, merely situates him squarely within a Methodist literary tradition that began with John Wesley, the founder of Methodism himself, who, in addition to writing prolifically, began to promote literacy across social boundaries early in his career (Tolar Burton 13). Wagg, like Wesley, explored numerous varieties of writing. As a young man he took up diary-writing, perhaps under the influence of travel narratives, recording his meditations upon the intersections between nature, God, and the human condition. We might think of such writing as a “private [practice] of spiritual literacy” (Tolar Burton 2). Wagg seems to have quit his journal definitively when he began preaching; the extant notebook of sermons and sermon notes was evidently meant by Wagg to be a continuation of the journal, grandly titled “Diary and Detached Thoughts, or The Jotings and Dotings of an Itinerant,” but at some point Wagg abandoned this title, turned the notebook over, and commenced its businesslike purpose. He spent his career honing his “[c]ommunal spiritual literacy,” developing and revising ideas he meant to transmit to his congregations (Tolar Burton 2). Such a range of documents allows us with some thoroughness to contextualize Wagg as a participant in the broader social and religious movements sweeping across the American South before and during the Civil War.

The contextualization effort is complicated by the relative obscurity of Wagg and his family. Though Wagg appears to have been esteemed by his contemporaries, his death at age 31 prevented him from ascending to any position of great authority within the Church. By the mid-nineteenth-century, the Waggs were a fixture in Ashe County, North Carolina; Wagg family heads were often Methodist ministers, doctors, or both, as was John Wagg’s father (Brown 1). But Ashe County was then something of a frontier region, a gateway to the less settled West. The Waggs enter only into the most geographically-focused historical studies, and then often incidentally, as one important family among several. The near-complete lack of letters written by Wagg to his correspondents further confounds attempts to determine specifically what Wagg thought of his physical and political surroundings at a given time. Considering the travel

demanding of him by his career, we often cannot know where Wagg was, precisely, when he read the surviving letters and wrote the surviving sermons.

We must construct Wagg's history out of a number of sources, a process made somewhat easier by the quantity and variety of documents in the collection. Letters from Wagg's family and friends elaborate upon the body of sermons by suggesting Wagg's concerns and the concerns of Appalachian Methodists during the final antebellum years and the Civil War. The journal affords us an idea of Wagg as a developing religious writer, demonstrating Wagg's earliest explorations of ideas that recur in the sermons. And the historical progression and religious tendencies evident in the collection suggest movements explained by general Civil War-era and Methodist scholarship dealing with events that bore upon Wagg rather directly. A great many sources conspire to give shape to the life of John Wagg, and perhaps the personal observations of John Wagg in turn add a bit of color to these sources.

#### *Student, Diarist, Class Leader*

Wagg's journal begins on 5 September 1854; at this time Wagg was "a little more than 19 years old." He was born 8 July 1835, the eldest child of James Wagg, a doctor, "pioneer religious teacher," and prominent citizen of Ashe County, North Carolina, an Appalachian county which in 1835 had existed for only 36 years (Arthur 159, 224). Having chosen to follow his father into the medical profession, the young Wagg attended Jefferson Academy in the town of Jefferson, the Ashe County seat, and – so far as he informs his journal – studied diligently so that he might grasp the complexity of the human body. Wagg's journal reveals few of the specifics of his schooling, however; he generally satisfies himself with noting that school has kept him from his personal writing before he moves on to one or both of his favorite topics, the weather and geography of Ashe County and the place of human agents in a created world.

That a young man of Methodist background with an interest in medicine would contemplate the latter is not terribly surprising. In Wagg's case it may have been inevitable. In his estimation, everything he learns of anatomy brings him closer to "the wisdom of the creator;" what we might distinguish as religion and physical science,



Wagg considers a single pursuit. This may reflect the immediate influence of Wagg's father, but such an approach was not uncommon among Methodists. John Wesley considered scientific inquiry a devotional activity; he appreciated the investigations into nature attendant to medicine (Holifield 13). Further, he felt that the function of the soul was inexorably tied to the activity of the body, and thus that poor health might deter, albeit not prevent, spiritual salvation (Holifield 13, 21). Methodist theologians of the early nineteenth century subordinated health to piety, but the religious leadership never neglected matters of the body entirely – particularly in the United States, where circuit riders, traveling preachers of the sort that Wagg would become, might be called upon to act as physicians in remote regions lacking doctors (Holifield 48). For Wagg and his father, physical healing and spiritual salvation were most probably two aspects of one vocation.

It would likewise come as no surprise if John Wagg the circuit rider, the John Wagg of late 1858 and beyond, spent a good deal of time contemplating nature, given his time spent traveling between settlements. Indeed, once ordained a minister, Wagg would provide his flock with evidence of God in nature and attempt to discern the physical reality of such Biblical phenomena as angels. But Wagg's interest in nature, and in writing about nature, predates his travels throughout North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee. His first journal entry concludes with a description of his surroundings:

It is a warm evening, a few silvery clouds are adorning the sky, and the sun is pouring fully, but obliquely, through them[.]

All nature seems inanimate, not a leaf is stird upon the trees, the birds seem to be slumbering. In fact nothing moves from the shade without it is compelled to ...

Later entries devote themselves entirely to descriptions of physical features in the Jefferson area. Wagg is fond of proclaiming that the beauties of Italy pale beside those of his homeland. Wagg's use of his personal journal to explore his physical environment was not, like his approach to medicine, inspired by decades of distinctly Methodist tradition; John Wesley elaborates upon travel in his journals only rarely, and what descriptions he provides focus upon people and their religious practices (Tolar Burton 70). But travel writing was a staple of nineteenth-century literature. Wagg must have

been impressed by Elvira Ann Phipps' *Memorials of Clutha: Or, Pencillings on the Clyde*; he quotes from a passage in which Phipps reflects upon a stretch of Scotland through which the River Clyde flows:

I had been indulging a thirst for those glorious scenes which the hand of a bountiful Creator hath spread out over the surface of nature, to captivate the eye of man, to inspire his soul ...

I was in a land well calculated to produce these emotions – a mountain land, *where sublimity sits enthroned*, and every object as it meets the eye, whispers of immensity, and tells significantly enough of him who fills infinite space, and inhabits “all forms from the vast to the minute.” [Wagg's quotation in italics] (67)

Phipps goes on to note that the piousness of the inhabitants lends itself to the pervasive godliness of the environment. Indeed, as she makes evident in her “Prefatory Address,” Phipps writes distinctly for those who see evidence of the agency of God in nature (v, vii). This category would not have excluded John Wagg.

Wagg's emphasis on spirituality in nature may explain the absence from his writing of more practical matters. Prospectors explored the mineral potential of sites in southeastern Ashe County throughout the 1850s, and yet Wagg makes no mention of how the mining enterprise might alter his beloved landscape. He may simply have lacked knowledge of the 1854 mining venture at Gap Creek to the south of Jefferson and the 1855 venture at Ore Knob to the east; by and large the residents of the region took no interest in these early efforts, efforts that would ultimately stall until after the war (Crawford 36-37). Notably, Dr. James Wagg was among the only prominent Ashe County citizens to express interest in mineral exploitation; he went so far as to order a book on mineralogy from Calvin J. Cowles, the Wilkesboro businessman who directed the efforts at Ore Knob (Crawford 36-37). If John Wagg spoke to his father of such things, he declines to mention it in his journal.

Yet Wagg, like many American travel writers, took more interest in populated landscapes than in nature in its uncultivated state (Bredeson 87). Wagg certainly engages in “informative” landscape writing, adorning Ashe County with local and historical “associations” of the sort that previously made the European landscape such a locus of

aesthetic appreciation; his longer meditations bring human elements to the landscapes they describe (Bredeson 90). In pieces such as “My native village, or Mountain Home” (dated June 1854) and “Rural happiness” (dated 21 November 1855), Wagg begins by evoking broad geographical features – mountains, rivers – and from there brings the reader ever closer to the human footholds that, for Wagg, compound the meaning of their surroundings. “My native village” terminates at the town of Jefferson, whose surroundings serve to restore its residents bodily and spiritually:

When [the sick traveler] gazes at the bould peaks, gentle valleys and sparkling rivers; or drinks a cooling draught from a spring which [gurgles] from the rock near him, does he not receive new life? does [not] new blood rush through his veins? and new hope revive his spirits?

“Rural happiness” carries us into the nonspecific farmer’s home and sits us at the hearth with wife and children. But before we achieve these comforts, Wagg confronts us with the errors the rural resident avoids, errors to which city-dwellers are especially prone. Our farmer is not “deluded by the vain hope of obtaining happiness in the acquisition of power wealth or fame,” and, as he stands among his grain, “he remembers that he is unable to cause one grain to germinate and bear fruit. He sees his own inability to promote bodily comfort, and he looks to the Giver of all good for mental enjoyments.”

That those around him sometimes lacked the wisdom of the farmer caused Wagg a good deal of consternation. When particularly gloomy, he uses his private journal to take humankind to task. On 29 September 1854, for example, Wagg proposes a series of broad philosophical questions: “Oh! what is man? what is life? what is the world and time?” He writes as though harried by such uncertainties, but, within two paragraphs, Wagg answers his own daunting queries in a manner consistent with his future involvement in the Methodist Church:

Man is so vain, so bigoted, so puffed up with self esteem, that he forgets who he is, and what he is, and who made him, he forgets [that] he has no power of himself, that he is dependant on an other source for all he has ...

He concludes by imploring readers not to regard him as a misanthrope. “I love you all,” writes Wagg; “I only wish you to fill the place in creation you [were] destined to fill.”

Such concerns are well in line with Wagg's vocation to the ministry, something he seems to have understood and embraced even while attending medical school. On 7 May 1855, Wagg mentions that he "began a second school in this village which will last five monthes," and that he hopes to "prove [himself] worthy of the patronage [he has] received." Wagg is likely speaking of a Methodist class, the smallest and most local unit of membership in the Methodist Church (F. Norwood 130). It is unsurprising that Wagg writes so often in his journal of spiritual matters or frets for the eternal salvation of his fellows: he was expected to direct his class in prayer and Bible study each week. Lay leadership of a small number of Jefferson locals would have been a natural entryway into the ministry, and when the time came for Wagg's examination before the Jefferson quarterly conference for licensure as a local minister, his performance as a class leader would reflect upon him.

### *Exhorter, Minister*

Wagg's perspective – not that of a wealthy clergyman trained at an elite institution, but that of a humble (if educated) man concerned for the spiritual well-being of his social equals – is characteristic of the Methodist ministry of the early nineteenth century. These concerns persuaded Wagg to end his medical studies and devote himself wholly to a career that would allow him to ensure the salvation of people not unlike him. We might compare Wagg to Francis Asbury, whose working-class background allowed him to connect as he did with lower and middle-class Americans when he assumed leadership of Methodist conversion in North America in 1771 (Wigger, "Francis Asbury and American Methodism," 52-53). Similarly, empathy for his unconverted peers and a proclivity for emotional exhortation informed the early preaching career of Peter Cartwright, renowned nineteenth-century Kentucky itinerant (Bray 33-34). By 1858, when Wagg earned his licensure, the American Methodist church had begun to abandon the informal meetings that characterized its early existence, devoting itself to the establishment of churches and schools; Jefferson itself hosted a girls' school, one of several under the jurisdiction of the annual conference in which Wagg would serve (Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 175). As the journal suggests, Wagg was far more

concerned with the salvation of his fellows than with the institutionalization and rising material wealth of the Methodist community, a matter that he simply declines to mention. And yet Wagg, unlike many preachers of modest means who followed Asbury's example, was by no means poor. Dr. James Wagg was a prominent citizen, wealthy enough to own slaves and pay for his son's education (Crawford 145). Wagg thus embodies the transitional, increasingly well-funded status of Methodism in the mid-nineteenth-century even as his straightforward concerns seem consistent with those of an earlier era.

Much as he avoids them in his writing, institutional matters would prove unavoidable as Wagg entered the ministry in 1858. He spent the first half of the year as an exhorter, an aid to the licensed ministry charged with recounting his conversion experience and urging listeners toward a life of holiness (Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm* 29). He was himself licensed to preach locally on 17 July 1858 by the Jefferson Circuit under the jurisdiction of the annual Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which represented a region encompassing circuits in western North Carolina, southwest Virginia, and east Tennessee. That the twenty-three-year-old Wagg began his career in a climate of religious division is perhaps best illustrated by the Northern Methodist Episcopal Church's also maintaining a Holston Conference, based primarily in Tennessee but extending into the Jonesboro area of North Carolina (*Journal of the Holston Conference* 11-12). Such incursions became increasingly common as the Civil War progressed, and were viewed by members of the Southern Church as violations of the 1844 Plan of Separation (Parker 170). The churches attempted to maintain amicability at first, but friction was inevitable; as the conference records of the Northern Church's Holston branch indicate, defection by ministers from one Church to another was not altogether uncommon.

### *Slavery, Schism*

While not a common subject of Wagg's writing, slavery debates had a lasting impact on the Methodist Church, and are thus an important context for understanding Wagg's career as an itinerant preacher. American Methodists, in accordance with the attitude of John Wesley, were traditionally uncomfortable with the practice of slavery.

Francis Asbury prayed for the end of an institution that permitted slaveholders to keep their slaves from religious service, and thus from salvation itself (J. Norwood 10). In the early nineteenth century, American Methodist general conferences, held every four years, witnessed the passing of a series of resolutions condemning slavery, culminating in the 1816 requirement that slave-owning church members should emancipate their slaves wherever their states of residence “will admit of emancipation, and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom” (*History of the Organization* x). By no means did this provision apply to every state, of course, but the Methodists of the early nineteenth century were largely content to render the slavery debate unto Caesar if doing so meant that they could continue their conversion campaign unhindered. These conversion efforts did not exclude slaves: by 1860, approximately one in three American Methodists was a slave (Lakey 29). As the century progressed, however, slavery debates within the Church became increasingly political. The general conferences of 1832, 1836, and 1840 evidenced increasing pro-slavery sentiment among conference members (Lakey 30-31). Supporters of both sides became more radical; moderates tended to ally themselves with the abolitionists, and those who actively tolerated slavery inclined toward genuine support for the institution (J. Norwood 58, F. Norwood 202). And at the general conference of 1844, the conflict between Northern and Southern Methodists came to a head.

On 1 May 1844, 180 delegates from throughout the 33 annual conferences convened in New York City, where they turned their attentions to the matter of slavery almost immediately (J. Norwood 59-60). The debate focused on two ministers who, having come into possession of slaves through marriage, were alleged by some to be in violation of the 1816 resolution. The first, Francis Harding, was a Maryland itinerant who had previously been suspended from the conference for refusing to free his slaves; he appealed at the 1844 conference for the return of his status (J. Norwood 60-61). Harding argued that, in accordance with Maryland state law, the slaves remained the property of his wife; while the law allowed for the possibility of emancipation, Harding was in no position to make legal decisions regarding slaves that technically did not belong to him (J. Norwood 61). Furthermore, a resolution passed at the 1840 general conference stipulated specifically that owning slaves did not exclude one from church status (J.

Norwood 61). Nevertheless Harding's appeal was rejected with a vote of 117 to 56, likely owing in part to the anti-slavery sympathies of conference moderates (F. Norwood 198).

The conference then considered the case of Bishop James O. Andrew of Georgia, who faced a motion that would remove him from the episcopacy for his ownership of slaves inherited upon the death of his first wife (Parker 169; J. Norwood 69). Following his second marriage (to a slave-owning woman), Bishop Andrew intended to resign from his position, but consulting with Southern delegates convinced him that doing so would cause more harm than good: many, perhaps most, Southern conferences would separate from the church if the Bishop were forced to resign over the slavery issue (J. Norwood 67-68). The Bishop had never bought or sold slaves, and at any rate freeing slaves in the state of Georgia was at that time impracticable, seemingly exempting Andrew from the 1816 resolution (F. Norwood 198; Parker 169). But, after extended debate, the conference voted 110 to 68 in favor of a resolution ordering Andrew to "desist from the exercise of [his] office so long as [his] impediment," his slave-owning, remained in effect (F. Norwood 198). As the matter of the separation of the Methodist Church into Northern and Southern branches effectively hinged upon Andrew's retaining his office, this decision made separation inevitable.

The 1844 conference resulted in the formation of a second general conference to be held among the slave states, thus laying the foundations for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the service of which John Wagg would spend his career. It was meant by all parties to be an amicable split; Southern Methodists felt that separation for the sake of maintaining the Methodist foothold in the slave states constituted a smaller sacrifice than would the eternal damnation of thousands of potential converts (*History of the Organization* xi). First of the Southern annual conferences to meet following the divide was that of Kentucky, whose delegates agreed that the Southern church should be considered a branch of the greater Methodist Episcopal Church rather than an autonomous entity resultant from secession (J. Norwood 92). Wagg's own Holston Conference sought to prevent division even after the 1844 general conference, refusing to agree to the Plan of Separation unless a compromise between Northern and Southern delegates absolutely could not be reached (J. Norwood 93). And when delegates from the slaveholding conferences convened in Louisville in May 1855 to solidify the separation,

the Committee on Organization formed to lay out the specifics of the Southern Church was directed by a series of resolutions to provide for the possibility of future reunification (J. Norwood 98).

Unfortunately, amicable separation was practically doomed from the start. The Northern Church considered ridiculous the inclination of some Southern conferences to dissolve their affiliation with the Northern general conference but not with the Methodist Episcopal Church proper (J. Norwood 93). Lack of clarity in the Plan of Separation resulted in disputes over territories along the border between slaveholding and free conferences, and the division of material assets proved a great source of consternation (F. Norwood 207). The Plan of Separation indicated that the Methodist Book Concern, representing the Church's publishing resources, would be divided equally between North and South (Ferguson 233). But, in the wake of heated debates among Northern Methodists as to whether the general conference was even allowed by Church law to enact a division, the Northern general conference of 1848 declared outright the 1844 separation agreement void (J. Norwood 103-104; Ferguson 233). The resultant legal battle over the Book Concern lasted until 1854, when the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Southern Church (F. Norwood 208).

It was not until 1858 that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South removed from its version of the Methodist *Doctrines and Discipline* the rule preventing slaveholder participation (F. Norwood 209). Southern preachers continued to minister to slaves throughout the turmoil of separation, albeit at times as a mere consequence of slaveholders bringing their slaves to sermons (Lakey 34). When John Wagg began preaching, the ratio of free white Methodists to enslaved Black Methodists in Jefferson Circuit was, at 657 to 86, relatively high; in some regions, converted slaves outnumbered converted whites (35<sup>th</sup> Session). That the Southern Church sought to accept but remain distant from slavery, which it firmly considered a civil rather than religious issue, further complicated an already nuanced relationship between religion and slavery in the South (Lakey 31). The general interest in evangelism among slaves in the mid-nineteenth century likely reflected the expansion of American Christianity during that time, but may likewise have resulted from guilt in the face of abolitionist accusations of withholding



salvation from slaves combined with a belief that religion might render slaves more pliable (Lahey 30, 32).

Wagg makes no mention of preaching to slaves – nor, indeed, does he often hint in any significant way at his own attitudes toward the institution of slavery in the documents dealt with by this project. As an itinerant preacher, Wagg would no doubt have been unable to afford slaves, and in any case would have had little use for them, lacking as he did a long-term permanent residence, but, despite slavery being less profitable in the mountainous Holston region than in lowland locales, Wagg surely would have encountered slaves in his capacity as preacher (J. Norwood 92). Indeed, slaves belonging to Wagg’s father may have aided in the construction of the Jefferson Methodist Church, the practical center of Methodism in Ashe County (Crawford 53). Yet, in a politically-charged February 1861 letter to his brother Samuel (who, months later, would be among the first Confederate Army volunteers from Ashe County), Wagg expresses no particular opinion on slavery, stating only that the immediate secession of North Carolina and Virginia from the United States is preferable to alignment with “the cheating hypocritical yankey” (Crawford 77). Some four years later, Wagg confirms in a sermon his unsurprising susceptibility to the prejudices of his time:

Our race is divided into at least three great classes differing from each other in both physical and mental excellence and differing also in civil privileges and rights. The unalterable decree of the God of nature has stamped this difference upon their very nature and no efforts of fanaticism or false philanthropy can ever make them equal.

Certainly Wagg employs anti-abolitionist rhetoric here, but such assertions occur nowhere else in the documents. Never again does Wagg express so strong an opinion on slavery as a socioeconomic institution or a religious conundrum. Whether the relative absence of slavery from Wagg’s writing indicates disinterest, distaste, the distanced acceptance characteristic of his church, or something else entirely, it belies the degree to which slavery was a concern of American Christians and citizens of a nation on the brink of civil war.

*Itinerant on Trial*

In earning licensure from the Jefferson Circuit, Wagg would have demonstrated to the Jefferson quarterly conference of July 1858 his faith in a “pardoning God,” his holiness “in all manner of conversation,” his ability to perform the work of preaching, and his “fruit,” a matter contingent upon whether “any [were] truly convinced of sin and converted to God by [Wagg’s] preaching” (*Doctrines and Discipline* 57-58). Between July and October 1858, Wagg would have acted as a local preacher, encouraging potential converts and maintaining religious fervor in the absence of Holston-licensed circuit ministers (Bray 33). And on 7 October 1858, after less than three months of local work, Wagg sat before a committee at the 35th annual Holston Conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and made a case for his elevation to the position of itinerant. With the recommendation of Jefferson Circuit behind him, Wagg “answered the question put by the Bishop, touching [his] willingness to devote [himself] to the Missionary work, in the affirmative,” and so achieved admission on trial to the Holston Conference (*35th Session*).

As a trial member of the conference, Wagg would have been responsible primarily for delivering sermons; he would not be permitted to conduct baptisms and marriages until receiving deacon’s orders after at least two years of trial membership. He spent his first year of itinerancy in the Virginia counties of Russell and Wise, and presumably began composing sermons in earnest at this time. In all likelihood, the sermons Wagg recorded and preached were his own. Annual meetings of the Holston Conference likely would have presented some opportunity to share notes, as it were, but conference proceedings focused upon Church-operated interests such as schools and publishing. There appears to have been no official handing-down of sermon recommendations from the episcopacy. Preachers were simply expected to draw material from the Bible, particularly material dealing with original sin, faith, and holiness, and to adulterate it as little as possible in presenting it to congregations, as was the Wesleyan way (Brooks 362). American preachers in particular were judged on the basis of their ability to preach extemporaneously and the degree to which they excited the emotions of their audiences (Brooks 371). It seems unlikely, then, that Wagg often preached directly from his notes, particularly since he was considered by some to be a preacher with

“unusual gifts as a word painter” (Price 437). Indeed, many of the surviving sermons take the form of especially brief notes; this is particularly true of the later sermon notebook entries. Yet Wagg penned quite a number of sermons in some form or another. Writing seems to have been his preferred preparatory method. As he writes to his brother Samuel on 18 February 1861, his was “not a life of ease”:

Very far from it – You remember that it was rather a task at school to write a composition two minutes long every week. This will assist you in forming some idea of the labor that it takes to prepare two sermons each week that will be heard and criticized by at least two hundred persons...

In truth, Wagg’s workload was not as pressing as it might have been. His itinerancy allowed him to compose one sermon to be delivered in several locations. Some itinerants, in comparison, averaged several dozen sermons per month (Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 60). The demands placed upon Wagg were by this standard fairly relaxed.

Letters written to Wagg early in his career indicate that he did not initially take to itinerant work. A 14 December 1858 letter from James Stringfield, then an itinerant assigned to the Wytheville Circuit, urges Wagg to bear in mind that “it is not right for us to complain that we are not entirely exempt from difficulties and labor.” Stringfield points out that his having to preach four times a month, in comparison to Wagg’s “one or two sermons a month,” prevents him from devoting as much energy to his sermons as he would like. Most probably Wagg’s difficulties arose not from his workload, but from the demands of travel upon a young man who, though he had previously traveled as far as Georgia, had evidently never spent so much time away from his family. Wagg was also apparently something of an introvert, as his journal suggests; some who met him thought him “peculiarly meek and quiet” (Price 437). He may have found the act of speaking before an audience somewhat taxing, and perhaps the expressive, emotional exhortation for which American Methodists were known did not come easily to him.

Nevertheless Wagg did not allow his personal difficulties to interfere with his work. A letter of 7 July 1859 from T. D. Summers of Boon’s Creek, Tennessee, suggests that Wagg’s attitude toward his work has improved. And on 28 October 1859, during the 36th annual Holston Conference meeting at Abingdon, Virginia’s Temperance Hall, Wagg was examined by committee and deemed fit to continue as a trial member for

another year. Here Wagg was assigned to Spencer Mission in Virginia. This reassignment seems to correspond with an improvement in Wagg's spirits. An 8 November 1859 letter from active Holston Conference elder W. W. Neal suggests that Wagg remained somewhat discouraged by his status as a junior member of the church, but soon after Wagg would write to fellow itinerant A. W. Smith expressing satisfaction with his present assignment.

*Deacon, Elder, Husband, Soldier's Brother*

Some few attendees of the Abingdon meeting may have noted the continuance of Wagg's conference membership. Many would no doubt recall the incident that brought the conference into close contact with the practice of slavery, however much its members might have rather left the issue alone. On 1 November 1859, Coleman Campbell, Presiding Elder of the Franklin District, was expelled from the conference, "his parchments returned," for "an attempt to have carnal communication with a woman of color" (*36th Session*). The young woman in question was "Esther," who "[belonged] to Rev. M. M. Weaver" (*36th Session*). The record of the meeting does not suggest whether Campbell's most egregious crime was adultery itself or adultery with "a colored girl," but Esther's being a slave is of course mentioned prominently and repeatedly (*36th Session*).

Wagg and his contemporaries appear to have been drawn into the politics of the day with some reluctance. Only very rarely do those who wrote to Wagg during the late 1850s speak of political issues. A 13 February 1860 letter from A. W. Smith very briefly mentions a slave revolt at Cassells Woods, Virginia, which seems not to have amounted to much – but only after a lengthier account of the recent childbirth of "Miss. Matilda Beverly." At the 17 October 1860 meeting of the Holston Conference, the meeting at which Wagg was elevated from trial status and granted deacon's orders, members John McTeer and James Kennedy suggested a resolution that the Holston Conference should recommend to the next Southern general conference removal of the appended "South" from the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South:

... Whereas, as a branch of the Catholic Church of Christ, we are opposed to the revival of the African slave trade, and to all agitation thereof, or legislation upon,

the subject of domestic slavery, leaving this “vexed question” to the control of Caesar, to whom it belongs ... Resolved, first, that we recommend the next General Conference to eliminate the affix, South – from our ecclesiastical name Resolved, secondly, that if our Baltimore brethren for reasons satisfactory to them, shall desire or propose a union with our church at any future time, we will not interpose any barrier in the way of such union as harmonizes with the views expressed above. (*37th Session*)

This resolution appears to have amounted to nothing. The following annual conference, however, passed a resolution ensuring that

... this Conference in view of the number of soldiers now in the Confederate Army, in the defense of our common interests, [would] respectfully ask the prayers of the Church in their behalf: and that we extend to the families of our deceased soldiers, our prayers, and our heartfelt sympathies. (*38th Session*)

McTeer and Kennedy were among those who proposed this resolution. Of course, resolving to pray for the wellbeing of local young men in mortal danger requires no particular political affiliation. But that such a resolution was necessary suggests that the members of the Holston Conference found themselves in a position that precluded distancing themselves from current events.

Confederate patriotism among Wagg and his friends and family seems not, in most cases, to have been founded upon support for the institution of slavery – but we cannot, of course, discount slavery as a motivator. In Wagg’s home county, only one in seventeen households owned slaves, but most county leaders were slaveholders (Crawford 62). Dr. James Wagg was a prominent slaveholding Democrat who did not align himself with the Ashe County majority, which in early 1861 yet sought to avoid disunion (Crawford 72). In his February 1861 letter to his brother, John Wagg himself suggests that union is no longer possible, that “[d]isunion has already come.” But, again, Wagg hardly ever mentions slavery; he terms the northern states “abolition states,” but his advocating the formation of a “Confederated States of North America” seems based primarily in a desire to see his homeland achieve great things:

... [A] nationality will arise in the South that the world will respect – honor and fear – There is not a nation in Europe that has in it the same extent of territory the

resources that the S.C. will have – “Cotton is king” and his majesty will demand respect from those who must have clothes and he will enrich the country where he rules

On one occasion, Wagg’s sermon-writing reflects both this attitude and the aforementioned resolution of the 1861 Holston Conference session. There occurs near the end of the sermon notebook a page or so of notes for a sermon titled “[Address] to the Volunteer,” which concludes:

1 We should ask are we right? 2 This fact being established we should pray for and expect [God’s] aid. 3 To ensure this we should obey his laws – avoid intemperance and profanity and give our hearts to him Important because we cannot expect aid without it ... Parents send your brave boys away with your blessing and prayers

No other of Wagg’s sermons addresses the war and its effects so directly. Perhaps, like those with whom he corresponded, Wagg sought to keep such matters remote from the pulpit lest they distract from his primary goal, the salvation of souls. If the remains of his writings are any indication, he succeeded far more often than not.

As an ordained minister, Wagg would have been exempt from military service, but he seems to have considered enlistment early in the war. Samuel Wagg notes his elder brother’s “excitement” in a 30 April 1861 letter, and implores, “if you have any idea of volunteering do come here and join our company” – by this time Samuel had expressed interest in joining what would, following North Carolina’s secession from the Union on 20 May 1861, become the 26th North Carolina Regiment’s A Company, the Jeff Davis Mountaineers (Brown 8). Though he did not enlist, John Wagg attempted late in 1861 to achieve an appointment as a regimental chaplain, an effort that met with little success (Brown 11). Wagg’s enthusiasm for the war seems to have abated after 1861. In 1863, 45 of his parishioners signed a petition suggesting that the time had come “when the ministry Should be laid aside for the musket” (Brown 39). Though Wagg evidently kept the petition, he did not comply, likely owing to the newly-assumed demands of fatherhood.

Samuel Wagg’s excitement did not decline as did his elder brother’s. When, in July 1861, Andrew McMillan assumed captaincy of the 26th North Carolina’s A

Company, Samuel was granted the position of first sergeant (Crawford 79-80). Alfred Wagg, age seventeen, would join his elder brother's company at the end of March 1862 (Crawford 89). And it is no exaggeration to call Company A Samuel Wagg's company. Following the battle at New Bern, North Carolina on 14 March 1862 – a battle that Samuel appears to have missed, as he was assigned to Jefferson as a recruiter – Samuel Wagg replaced the wounded McMillan as captain (Crawford 94, 96).

Those who corresponded with John Wagg throughout 1861 and 1862 speak of increasingly political matters, and their letters suggest that Wagg did the same. In particular, Wagg's East Tennessee preacher acquaintances found their work affected by the unstable political situation in their home region, a region beset by Northern Methodist incursions, pro-Union sentiments, and eventually the Union Army itself. As of his December 1861 letter, W. P. Queen is more or less satisfied with the level of Confederate support in East Tennessee, but he notes his dissatisfaction with local Union volunteers: "I wish them a safe journey and I hope they will never return." Another preacher acquaintance, a man who signs his letters "Gwen," proves less content even than this. He alone among Wagg's acquaintances admits openly to a connection between his "spiritual weapons" and the Confederate cause. Though he considers joining the Confederate Army in North Carolina, he remains steadfast in Knoxville through mid-1862, and for his trouble he suffers harassment by Union supporters and watches much of his congregation migrate northward and into Kentucky. By this time the Union Army held Nashville and had secured the Tennessee River as far southward as the Mississippi border, a situation exacerbated by the 6 April battle at Shiloh, where the Confederate Army of the Mississippi failed to dislodge General U. S. Grant's Army of Tennessee (Connelly 34-35). No doubt "Gwen" would have been further distressed to know that the northern Methodist Church claimed Knoxville as a circuit of its own Holston Conference.

Wagg's political commitments appear to have changed during this time, though the precise nature of this change is impossible to ascertain, given only the surviving letters written to Wagg by his acquaintances. It was at the very least a change the likes of which John McTeer and "Gwen" disapproved. The latter describes Wagg's shift in a 25 May 1862 letter as an endorsement of "the government where pettycoatism holds the entire sway," perhaps suggesting that Wagg's politics had become more like those of his

wife. This is, unfortunately, the last we hear of Wagg's personal politics. It seems fairly safe to assume that Wagg's change in politics does not indicate an indulgence of Union sympathies on his part, given his family's investment in the Southern cause and his prior Confederate patriotism. Perhaps he simply tired of living in regions so near the fighting.

Wagg spent most of 1861 and 1862 working the Hillsville Circuit in Virginia, where he met his wife, Lavinia Anderson. The two were married on 13 May 1862. No record remains of Wagg's courting of Lavinia (or "Vin," as the letters often name her), but his correspondences suggest that it may not have been a straightforward affair. For some months prior to the marriage, Wagg expressed interest in a certain "Sallie" (possibly Sallie Leslie, mentioned by Wagg in a Hillsville class book dated 20 October 1861); a 26 December 1861 letter from itinerant W. P. Queen urges Wagg not to let his love for Sallie render him "a spaniel," and an 11 February 1862 letter from "Gwen" expresses disapproval of Wagg's involvement with Sallie, encouraging him to realize that he loves Lavinia Anderson best. Whether partly or not at all as a result of this friendly suggestion, Wagg's engagement to Lavinia was certain by late March 1862, and subsequent letters from his siblings suggest that Wagg was content with family life (Brown 24, 36).

On 17 October 1862, the 39th annual Holston Conference elected Wagg elder. Though such advancement was not altogether rare, Wagg's rise through the ranks of the ministry was notably quick; he spent only the minimum two years prescribed by the Southern Church's *Doctrines and Discipline* as both a trial member and a deacon. As an elder, Wagg would be responsible for administering all church rites and services, including marriage, baptism, and the Last Supper, in his region – in this case Asheville, North Carolina, some 110 miles southwest of his family home in Ashe County, where he would spend the next two years. That Wagg was assigned to such an important station as Asheville at the age of 27 attests to the high regard in which he must have been held as much as does his swift elevation to elder (Price 437).

By this time Samuel Wagg had led his company in battle. On 1 July 1862, the 26th North Carolina took part in a push at Malvern Hill in Virginia that nearly succeeded, under heavy fire, at capturing a Union artillery battery (Underwood 332-333). Following this, the regiment joined the 11th, 44th, 47th, and 52nd North Carolina regiments in a



brigade under the command of Brigadier-General J. Johnston Pettigrew, which, from September to December 1862, remained in continual service throughout Virginia and North Carolina (Underwood 334, 336). The 26th distinguished itself that November at Rawls' Mills in Martin County, North Carolina, where it successfully resisted a Union force of 5,000 led by General John G. Foster, who intended specifically to neutralize foraging Confederate regiments (Underwood 337). This incident would represent the height of the 26th Regiment's fortunes.

Following a series of defeats, General Foster was driven to New Bern, North Carolina, which became a target of General D. H. Hill, newly-assigned commander of the Confederate Army in North Carolina (Underwood 339). Hill's taxing and ultimately ill-fated push toward New Bern wore the 26th Regiment ragged; by the end of March 1863, the regiment suffered from a lack of food and clothing as well as from days of marching through swamp and rain, sometimes by night (Crawford 113). Having failed to capture New Bern, the entirety of Pettigrew's Brigade was on 1 May 1863 assigned to Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and marched to Richmond – practically just in time to participate in the 1-3 July battle at Gettysburg (Underwood 341).

It is a testament to how badly the battle went for Lee's army generally that the 26th North Carolina was all but obliterated in three days of fighting. As Pettigrew's Brigade approached McPherson's Ridge to the west of the town of Gettysburg, the 26th marched at the left flank, where it was exposed to fire from very close range (Crawford 118). Samuel Wagg's Company A consisted of 92 men when the fighting began; at the end of the first day, 11 had been killed and 66 wounded (Underwood 359). Fourteen Company A men were pressed into the 3 July assault on Cemetery Ridge to the south of Gettysburg; of them ten were wounded or declared missing, and one, Captain Samuel Wagg himself, fell to grapeshot (Crawford 119, Underwood 359-360). Samuel lingered long enough to pass his pocketbook on to James Turner, a friend, who delivered the book and news of Samuel's death to Dr. James Wagg some two weeks later (Crawford 119).

No reaction of John Wagg to his brother's death survives, and the letters make no mention of the matter. We can safely assume, given the familiarity that marked Wagg's correspondence with his brother, and Wagg's 1856 reaction to the death of another brother, then thirteen years old ("with a mind which bespoke twenty"), that Wagg would

have been much depressed by the news. Wagg may have been pleased to recall that his influence, along with that of his devoutly Christian family, had at least partly rescued his brother from a path of liquor, foul language, and romantic flightiness encouraged by the soldiering life – though, for one as prone to emotional rises and falls as Wagg, this may have offered little consolation (Crawford 118). That Alfred Wagg missed the battle at Gettysburg, having previously been assigned to a corps of engineers, no doubt would have come as some relief (Crawford 201). But, in any event, Wagg’s life as a Methodist elder at a significant Holston Conference station carried on, as did his life as a husband and, as of 6 March 1863, father to Martha Elizabeth (“Bettie”) Wagg.

News from Wagg’s family and friends remained grim throughout the mid-1860s. A. J. Frazier, a Tennessee preacher acquaintance, writes on 19 May 1863 of his fears of being intercepted by Union soldiers while traveling to preach. Wagg himself seems to have faced similar difficulties while assigned to Bristol, Virginia in 1865. Such concerns stand to reason when we consider that these men witnessed the work of Union saboteurs, or “bushwhackers,” whether firsthand or through their correspondence. Soon after Wagg departed Asheville in late 1864, he received a letter from lawyer Joshua Roberts informing him of the death of Asheville mayor C. M. Roberts (evidently of no relation) following his being shot by a Union sniper. Roberts writes again in February 1865, noting that the Asheville courthouse has burned down as a result of sabotage. Nor was the situation much improved in Wagg’s home county; near as it lies to Tennessee, from which many Union loyalists entered North Carolina, Ashe County suffered its share of shootings and burnings (Crawford 142-144). Unpredictable violence and small-scale confrontations between Confederate home guard and Union bands proved all too common in western North Carolina during the latter years of the war (Inscoc and McKinney 238).

### *Family, War’s End, Death*

In addition to difficulties caused by the political climate in which he lived, Wagg began in 1864 to face problems much closer to home. Wagg’s childhood residence in Ashe County was destroyed by fire on 17 March 1864, likely as a result of a faulty

kitchen chimney, and while none were injured in the blaze, the Waggs lost a great deal of property, including books and expensive medical equipment (Crawford 145, Brown 48). Lavinia Wagg died on 6 August of that year, some two months prior to the annual meeting of the Holston Conference at which Wagg was evidently assigned to Bristol, Virginia. By February 1865, Wagg lived apart from his daughter; Bettie Wagg lived for a time in the care of one maternal aunt, Emily Sutherland, before being taken in by another, Elizabeth Wilkinson of Carroll County, Virginia (Brown 1, 52; *HeritageQuest Online*).

Perhaps Wagg had already begun to suffer the effects of the tuberculosis that would end his life, but, if so, this did not daunt him immediately. He continued to compose and deliver sermons at Bristol – another Holston station held in high regard – and, throughout early 1865, occasionally traveled to Asheville to preach (Price 437). He seems even to have considered remarriage, though his health prevented this (Brown 53). Wagg's last recorded delivery of a sermon occurred on 18 June 1865. It was presumably not long after that Wagg became too ill to preach and was superannuated by the Holston Conference. He relocated to Hillsville, where his daughter lived with the Wilkinsons, and, despite his illness, he continued to serve the church in what capacity he could, aiding passing itinerants with their travel arrangements.

John Wagg continued to correspond with acquaintances through May 1866. Neither Wagg nor his acquaintances make mention of the end of the Civil War on 9 April 1865 or the subsequent assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. They speak of mundane matters – of faith, of pretty girls and marriage – and of churches ruined during the war, and occasionally of Wagg's illness. This illness would claim him on 13 June 1866 (Brown 55). He was then some three weeks shy of 31 years old.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South outlived John Wagg by 73 years, lingering until common doctrine, the urging of young members, and changing global conditions reunited the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1939, near the brink of U.S. involvement in a very different sort of war than that which Wagg knew intimately (F. Norwood 409). Wagg lived only just long enough to witness the political and economic turmoil of his home region in the wake of the Civil War; he did not live to see the traditional farm-based economy of Ashe County supplemented by mining and trading (Crawford 148, 164). But no doubt Wagg would have taken fairly little notice of such

things. He was first and foremost dedicated to the salvation of souls, a dedication that his daughter would maintain in his absence. Perhaps Bettie Wagg was influenced by the note her father inscribed in her mother's Bible, which concludes, "if ever a prayer burnd from a fathers heart one shall burn from your papa's that his little Bettie may live by [the Bible's] teachings and meet him in heaven" (Brown 55). Or perhaps we might attribute her piety to Wagg family tradition. Whatever her motivation, Bettie Wagg was, as of her death on 31 March 1898, "a faithful worker in the church" and a Methodist class leader as her father had been (Brown 59).

### *Context*

John Wagg – Southern Methodist itinerant, Confederate supporter, friend and minister to soldiers and their families, himself brother to two soldiers – was undoubtedly a product of and participant in the conditions of his time. Scholarship dealing with these conditions has allowed us a fuller understanding of Wagg's life than would have been possible from his own writing. We must grant, too, that the documents in the collection speak to one another – that aspects of himself that Wagg effaces in his sermons become clear from the letters, that the journal provides the sermons with something of a composition history, that Wagg's career trajectory as a young diarist becomes more evident when we consider the vast body of sermons to come. These two processes – text interacting with context, texts interacting with one another – are rather similar. The Wagg Papers site is a microcosmic representation of the vast network of primary document collections and historical research efforts in which the Wagg Papers are situated. It exemplifies how several witnesses in dialogue afford us a rich and intensely human understanding of historical events even while participating in this process on a broader scale, as one project among many.

This is something that, like as not, could occur on some level in any medium of writing, but hypertext is expressly designed to facilitate connections between documents and collections of documents. It is a medium that allows documents to interact with one another almost effortlessly – and in some cases, given the intervention of search engines, quite accidentally. The Wagg documents and their contexts have been arranged in such a

way to suggest possible uses, but it is practically impossible to know, ultimately, how this collection will be situated alongside other possible collections. Hypertext networks allow conversations between individuals who never would have met in their lifetimes, individuals with continents and oceans between them – perhaps John Wagg will inform comparisons between the American Civil War and civil wars half a world away, or will contribute his particular concerns to studies of transatlantic Methodism.

One site cannot begin to anticipate all such uses, nor should it necessarily try to do so; the hypertext format encourages users to order and make sense of documents according to the demands of personal need. Therein lies its strength. The context provided here should of course not be taken as a prescription, a set of guidelines that rigidly define how one must use these documents. Users are invited to read the documents (and the contextualizing information) in any order, to discover John Wagg on their own terms, and to follow the paths made available when John Wagg intersects with historical events, if they so choose. This site attempts merely to make some such possible paths evident.

## CHAPTER 4. HEADNOTES

Not every document presented on the John Wagg Papers Web site includes headnotes, but certain documents warranted elaboration of the social, political, and religious movements mentioned therein. All substantial headnotes from the John Wagg site are reproduced here in the order in which the respective documents appear on the site for the purpose of demonstrating the focuses of contextualizing research. Where titles are quoted, John Wagg's spelling remains intact.

Journal entry: 27 September 1854

Wagg's emphasis here of the inefficacy of human action alone foreshadows his assertions as a minister that, while good works are necessary to maintain grace after salvation, salvation itself is contingent upon faith, upon giving oneself to God. This accords with the Wesleyan idea of grace: God must initiate salvation, even if He allows us to choose whether to accept it (Suchocki 542).

Journal entry: 8 February 1855

Wagg's lengthy recounting of this dream is perhaps more in line with Methodist tradition than his affording dreams little credence generally. Early Methodists did not hesitate to base practical decisions on dreams, which they viewed as prophetic (Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 106). Wagg's attitude reminds us that he was not an early Methodist, but a member of a church undergoing a shift away from high emotion and toward institutionalization.

Journal entry: 7 May 1855

The "school" of which Wagg speaks here is likely a Methodist class. Methodism in Wagg's time was organized into meetings of increasing size and geographic scope, and the class was the smallest and most local of these. Wagg would have been responsible for leading ten or twenty Jefferson residents in Bible study and prayer.

Journal entry: 26 August 1855

It is possible that Wagg's Methodist piety contributed to his high regard for the sciences. John Wesley considered the practice of science a devotional activity (Holifield 13). And the scientific mindset that Wagg cultivated as a young man would lead him as a minister to inquire into the structures of spiritual phenomena, including incorporeal entities such as angels and the Trinity itself.

Journal entry: 26 November 1857

It is unclear in this case whether Wagg means by "school" a religious endeavor or a primary school of some kind. Their letters suggest that the Waggs participated in the educational system of Ashe County; Samuel Wagg may have taught before or during his time as a clerk for the Waugh brothers (Brown 3).

Journal entry: 1 April 1858

The illness mentioned here is possibly that which killed Elizabeth Wagg, John Wagg's mother, who seems to have died some time in 1858 (Brown 3, 58).

Journal entry: June 1854

Here, Wagg values nature in a way that, though it may seem contradictory, is consistent with nineteenth-century American travel writing. Wagg moves steadily from raw nature, from mountain and valley, toward settled villages; the human element seems to invest nature with meaning. But it is "the bould peakes, gentle valleys and sparkling rivers" that fill the traveler with "new life." Such alternating celebration of "pure" nature and affording cultivated nature a privileged position was common in natural description by American authors, and would continue to be for some time after Wagg's death (Bredeson 86-87). The poem that ends this section is apparently incomplete; evidence of two pages torn from the journal follows.

Journal entry: April 1853

This fragment occurs following two missing pages. Its 1853 date seems to suggest either that Wagg may have copied earlier writings into the journal, or that he used the

latter pages of the journal for essay-writing and poetry before he commenced journal-writing proper at the notebook's beginning.

Journal entry: 15 November 1855

Wagg describes his moon-denizens in distinctly angelic terms. Indeed, though he speculates at times about orders of being that mere humans cannot know, he remains confident that all are the product of God.

Journal entry: undated ("Thou God seest me.")

Though Wagg acknowledges the value of science and human ingenuity, he maintains that there comes a time when we cannot help ourselves. Science is useful in that it allows us some knowledge of the world as fashioned by God, Wagg suggests, but the world is temporary, and science alone cannot save us from our inherent sinfulness – this is a rather Wesleyan conception (Holifield 14-15).

Journal entry: undated ("What is man that thou art mindful of him?")

Wagg reveals in this essay two motivations for the study of nature. Firstly, he implores us to "study the works of creation and learn our nothingness, Learn how little we possess of which to be proud." Secondly, he reminds us that God "lives every where, in every atom of matter that he has created." Here, again, Wagg's approach to natural science is quite Wesleyan, particularly in the latter case. John Wesley suggested that human sinfulness turns all nature against us, but that no amount of sin can eject God from all things, and thus that hope of salvation persists (Holifield 14-15).

Letter from J. Torbett (Princeton, VA) to John Wagg, 11 November 1858

Wagg never speaks of the overlapping jurisdictions of Protestant sects as does Torbett. Torbett's comment that "[t]he Methodists are the most numerous denomination within the bounds of this cir[cuit]" is more broadly applicable; in 1860, Methodist churches accounted for 38 percent of all churches in the United States (Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 175). In letters from late 1859, A. W. Smith makes passing mention of conflict between Methodists and Baptists, and notes his difficulty in dealing with



Campbellites (because of their tendency toward emotion, a tradition that the Methodists had begun to abandon at this time), but overall the letters suggest general tolerance among denominations in the Holston region – Torbett mentions here that the Baptists control the Princeton church, but this does not seem to trouble him overmuch.

Letter from Joshua Roberts (Asheville, NC) to John Wagg, 24 February 1865

As this letter indicates, a number of nineteenth-century Methodist leaders were members of Masonic Lodges (Andiñach 142). Scholarship on this trend largely deals with its influence upon missionary work and African American Methodism, issues with little relevance to John Wagg, who, at any rate, appears not to have been a Mason himself.

Letter from M. Tatum (no location given) to John Wagg, no date given

Presumably this letter was written in late 1862 or early 1863, when John Wagg lived in Asheville, North Carolina. Included is an obituary written by Wagg cut from an unknown newspaper. The Tatum family in this case seems to have been based in Patrick County, Virginia, a region in which Wagg may have preached as part of his Hillsville circuit.

Sermon on Amos 4:12 (“Prepare to meet thy God”)

This sermon is characteristic of Wagg not in that it makes heavy use of the threat of punishment, a strategy employed by Wagg only occasionally, but in that it urges listeners to recognize the vast power of God. Better to be on the side of such an unfathomably great entity, Wagg always seems to say, than to trust one’s fate to mere human capabilities.

Sermon on Revelation 22:17 (“The Water of Life.”)

Wagg’s urging here that Christians disseminate knowledge of God throughout the world is as close as he comes to acknowledging the existence of nonwhite Methodist Church members. Surely Wagg would have preached to slaves, but at no point does he mention this. Perhaps he felt no need to; ministry to slaves by the Methodist Episcopal

Church, South was not a concentrated endeavor, but incident to slaveholders bringing their slaves to services intended for whites (Lahey 34). Still, it's notable that Wagg attempts to be fairly inclusive with his "go into all the world" list. He would in a later sermon assert that there are at least three fundamental classes of human beings different from one another in physical and mental capability, but he would not, evidently, have excluded any of these from salvation.

Sermon on Psalms 8:4 ("Man.")

As this sermon suggests, original sin is a foundational principle of Methodism. John Wesley defended the doctrine both as immediately biblical and as one of the Anglican Articles of Religion (Bryant 522, 536). Practically speaking, original sin was the necessary counterweight to Wesleyan grace: without original sin, the grace of God becomes unnecessary, as we may simply choose not to be sinners (Bryant 524).

Sermon on Jeremiah 8:22 ("The Balm of Gilead")

Wagg seems to connect his medical education with his preaching career here. Sin as disease was a Wesleyan (and previously Catholic) conception; after 1738, Wesley inclined toward the idea that the disease of sinfulness was absolutely fatal (Holifield 14-15).

Sermon on II Kings 7:3 ("THE LEPERS OF SAMARIA")

The instruction to "see page 68" sends the reader to what is essentially a reorganization of the same sermon with less emphasis on disease and more on reward. The second is perhaps meant as an elaboration upon the first, rather than as a wholly separate attempt to deal with the same subject matter, considering that the two appear within five pages of one another in the sermon notebook.

Sermon on I Corinthians 13:13 ("Love to God")

This is perhaps the only sermon in which Wagg privileges the acts of the faithful over their faith – though, true to his Methodism, he never goes so far as to suggest that works might ever substitute for faith in earning salvation initially.

Sermon on Hebrews 13:1 (“Brotherly Love”)

It is possible that the “Union” Wagg mentions in the final paragraph is the United States, which would make this one of only two sermons in which Wagg broaches Civil War politics in any way.

Sermon on Daniel 2:21 (“Adress to the Volunteer”)

This is the only sermon in which Wagg unambiguously confronts the issue of the Civil War, and even here his focus is upon local army volunteers rather than national politics. Wagg and his itinerant acquaintances generally attempted to keep politics from the pulpit, and Wagg, at least, seems to have succeeded in most cases – though, given the extemporaneous nature of Methodist preaching during Wagg’s time, we cannot know what Wagg told his congregations that he did not write in advance.

Sermon on Luke 12:32 (“The Flock of Christ”)

Wagg’s standards [of who was and was not a Christian] were evidently high. The various branches of American Methodism alone would encompass some three million members by 1876 (Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 201).

Undated poem (“I love your home in the mountains”)

This poem is neither titled nor signed, but it concludes with a number of small sketches of a town in the mountains, presumably Hillsville, Virginia.

Undated poem (“A Mocking Bird”)

No evidence remains of the identity of “Allie,” who may correspond with the “Alice” spoken of in the 8 February 1855 journal entry, that in which Wagg recounts his lengthy dream. We can ascertain from the Wagg documents only that she was a female acquaintance who died some time before Wagg began his journal. She was almost certainly not a member of the immediate Wagg family (Brown 1; *HeritageQuest Online*).

## CHAPTER 5. GLOSSARY

A number of people, places, terms, and quotations apparent in the documents are defined in the John Wagg site's glossary. The glossary of biblical references is excluded, as it simply quotes in full Bible verses mentioned in fragmentary form or cited by chapter and verse in the documents, and evidences no additional editorial elaboration.

### *Places*

#### Abingdon, Virginia

A town in southwest Virginia, near the North Carolina border.

#### Allegheny Mountains

A mountain range that runs southwest along the Appalachian Plateau from central Pennsylvania to West Virginia (U.S. Geological Survey). Wagg notes that Jefferson, North Carolina is situated in a valley with the Allegheny Mountains to the west and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east.

#### Athens, Tennessee

A town in southeastern Tennessee, approximately 30 miles west of the North Carolina border. W. W. Neal writes Wagg from here on 12 November 1859.

#### Ashe County, North Carolina

A county in northwest North Carolina, bordering both Virginia and Tennessee. As of the mid-nineteenth century, The Wagg family appears to have lived in the region since and perhaps before the county's founding in 1799. Its proximity to East Tennessee, where there remained Union sentiments throughout the Civil War, made Ashe County the site of violence between Confederate home guard contingents and Union snipers and saboteurs.

### Blue Ridge Mountains

A 550-mile mountain range that runs southwest from southern Pennsylvania into Georgia (U.S. Geological Survey). Wagg notes that Jefferson, North Carolina is situated in a valley with the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Allegheny Mountains to the west.

### Bristol, Virginia

A town situated at the border between southwest Virginia and northwest North Carolina. Wagg was assigned here in 1865 before his retiring from active ministry due to his failing health. The Bristol station was held in high regard by Holston Conference members at the time (Price 437).

### Campbell County, Tennessee

A county in northeast Tennessee, approximately 20 miles northwest of Knoxville.

### Giles County, Virginia

A county in southwest Virginia, situated on what is now the southeastern West Virginia border.

### Grayson County, Virginia

A county in southwest Virginia, immediately north of Ashe County, North Carolina. Grayson appears to have been within the jurisdiction of the Holston Conference's Hillsville Circuit, as A. D. Stewart mentions in his 20 February 1865 letter to Wagg that an upcoming Hillsville quarterly meeting will be held at the Grayson courthouse.

### Hendersonville, North Carolina

A city in western North Carolina that borders Asheville to the south. Hendersonville lent its name to a Holston Conference circuit.

### Hillsville, Virginia

A town in southwest Virginia approximately 14 miles north of the North Carolina border, and the central town of the Holston Conference's Hillsville Circuit. John Wagg was assigned to the Hillsville Circuit from October 1860 until October 1862. Here Wagg met and married Lavinia Anderson. As Wagg's health declined in 1865, his daughter Martha Elizabeth lived with John and Elizabeth Wilkinson of Hillsville. Wagg expressed his attachment to Hillsville in poetry, comparing the town to the city upon a hill described by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.

### Jacksboro, Tennessee

A town in northeast Tennessee, approximately 30 miles northwest of Knoxville. A. J. Frazier writes Wagg from here on 19 May 1863.

### Jefferson, North Carolina

The home of the Wagg family; John Wagg was born here, as was his father Dr. James Wagg (*HeritageQuest Online*). Located in northwest North Carolina approximately 10 miles south of the Virginia border and 15 miles east of the Tennessee border, Jefferson served (and continues to serve) as the Ashe County seat.

### Knoxville, Tennessee

A city in eastern Tennessee, approximately 30 miles northwest of the North Carolina border. The Northern Methodist Episcopal Church's Holston conference may have been based here (*Journal of the Holston Conference*). A preacher acquaintance who names himself "Gwen" writes Wagg from Knoxville in April and May 1862 complaining of local Union sentiment.

### Montgomery County, Virginia

A county in southwest Virginia near both the North Carolina border and what is now the West Virginia border, containing the cities of Christiansburg and Blacksburg. Wagg wrote an obituary, published in an unknown newspaper, for Elizabeth C. Kinser of Montgomery County.

### Mount Jefferson

A mountain in Ashe County, North Carolina. The town of Jefferson is situated at its northern base. Wagg refers to this mountain as “Negro Mountain;” its name was changed in the 1970s (U.S. Geological Survey).

### Milledgeville, Georgia

A town in Georgia, approximately 80 miles southeast of Atlanta. Wagg spent the Christmas of 1853 there “among strangers.”

### Princeton, West Virginia

A town in Mercer County, a county presently at the southern border of West Virginia. Holston itinerant Josiah Torbett describes the town to Wagg as “a larger village than Jefferson with a court house–jail–three taverns–five stores–one church and it under the controll of the Baptist.”

### Rheatown, Tennessee

A town in northeast Tennessee, approximately 12 miles north-northeast of the North Carolina border. Holston itinerant A. J. Frazier is assigned here when he writes to Wagg on 4 June 1861.

### Russell County, Virginia

A county in southwest Virginia near the borders of North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and present-day West Virginia. Wagg spent the first year of his itinerancy (October 1858 - October 1859) in the counties of Russell and Wise.

### Salem, Virginia

A city in Virginia, adjacent to Roanoke and approximately 21 miles southeast of the present-day West Virginia border.

### Speedwell, Virginia

A town in the southwest Virginia county of Wythe, approximately 17 miles north of the North Carolina border. John M. McTeer writes Wagg from Speedwell on 24 March 1862.

### New River

A tributary of the Kanawha River that forms in Ashe County, North Carolina, flows through southwest Virginia, and terminates in Fayette County, West Virginia (U.S. Geological Survey). Wagg mentions that the New River looks “like a silver snake” from atop Phoenix Mountain near Jefferson.

### Wise, Virginia

In the documents, “Wise” refers to the county in southwest Virginia on the Kentucky border. The present-day town of Wise is called Gladesville by A. W. Smith, who writes of it on 13 February 1860. The town’s name was changed to Wise in 1924 (Commonwealth of Virginia).

### *People*

#### Anderson, Lavinia

John Wagg’s wife, born 1837 in Virginia (*HeritageQuest Online*). She and Wagg were married on 13 May 1862. Died 6 August 1864.

#### Austin

Possibly Samuel L. Austin of Jeffersonville Circuit, Abingdon District. At the 1858 annual Holston Conference, he was turned down by the committee that accepted Wagg as a trial member, though “permission was granted the presiding Elders to employ [him] if necessary” (*35th Session*). He was admitted on trial at the following year’s meeting (*36th Session*).



## Crismond

Possibly John M. Crismond, presiding elder of the Wytheville District in 1862-1863 (*39th Session*).

## Cumming[s]

Possibly A. W. Cummings, who was investigated by the 1860 annual Holston Conference for “saying that the great body of Ministers of the Church North, or those who had written letters to this place against him were liars, thieves & cut-throats, and were not entitled to credit, and ought not to be believed. These declarations if not true are against the laws of God” (*37th Session*).

## Frazier, Andrew J.

Admitted into the Holston Conference on trial, 22 October 1860; admitted as a full member and elevated to the position of deacon on 17 October 1862 (*37th Session; 39th Session*). Frazier may have lived in Ashe County prior to becoming an itinerant.

## Hamilton, George H.

Born 1816 (*HeritageQuest Online*). George Hamilton was an Ashe County Democrat and slaveowner with extensive holdings in the region (Crawford 51). He was, as of early 1861, opposed to secession (Crawford 72). When Dr. James Wagg’s house was destroyed by fire in 1864, Hamilton led an effort to raise money for the Wagg family (Crawford 145).

## Kennedy

Possibly James S. Kennedy, who was elected to the Emory and Henry College Board of Visitors on 23 October 1860 (*37th Session*).

## Long

Possibly W. R. Long, a Methodist Episcopal Church, South minister who transferred to the Northern Church’s Holston Conference in 1863 or 1864 (*Journal of the Holston Conference*).

McTeer, John M.

Born 1823 in Tennessee (*HeritageQuest Online*). McTeer was an elder in the Holston Conference when John Wagg began his career. He appears to have been heavily involved in the church's educational interests, as the 1860 annual Holston Conference meeting saw him elected to the Board of Visitors of both Martha Washington College and Emory and Henry College (*37th Session*).

Milburn

Possibly Joseph Milburn or Joseph P. Milburn, both of whom were admitted into the Holston Conference on trial in 1861 (*38th Session*). Joseph P. Milburn appears to have left the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and joined the Northern Methodist Church's own Holston Conference in 1863 or 1864 (*Journal of the Holston Conference*).

Neal, W. Wiley

Born 1826 (*HeritageQuest Online*). As an elder in the Holston Conference, Neal served on the committee that accepted John Wagg as a trial member on 6 October 1858 in Chattanooga, Tennessee (*35th Session*). He involved himself in a variety of church interests; at the 1858 conference, he participated in committees on publications and temperance (*35th Session*). He was at the 1860 annual Holston Conference elected to the Board of Visitors of both Emory and Henry College and Martha Washington College (*37th Session*). As of September 1860, John Wagg lived with Neal's family at Pearisburg, Virginia (*HeritageQuest Online*).

Roberts, Joshua

An Asheville, North Carolina lawyer, born 1795 (*HeritageQuest Online*). John Wagg's daughter was born at Roberts' house.

Smith, A. W.

Born 1833 in North Carolina (*HeritageQuest Online*). As of June 1860, Smith was a lawyer in Wise County, Virginia (*HeritageQuest Online*).

Stewart, Absolom D.

An itinerant minister. Stewart was admitted on trial to the Holston Conference at the 1858 annual meeting and raised to deacon at the 1860 meeting, in both instances alongside John Wagg (*35th Session, 37th Session*).

Tatum, M.

Possibly Mary A. D. Tatum of Patrick County, Virginia, born 1827 (*HeritageQuest Online*).

Thompson

Possibly Kimbro Thompson (born 1830) or Edward W. Thompson (born 1834), both doctors at Hillsville, Virginia as of June 1860 (*HeritageQuest Online*).

Torbett, Josiah

Born 1830 in Tennessee (*HeritageQuest Online*). As a trial member of the Holston Conference, Torbett led the Methodist class to which Wagg belonged in Jefferson, and certified Wagg as a local exhorter on 1 January 1858. At the 1858 annual Holston Conference, at which Wagg was admitted on trial, Torbett was elevated from trial status and made deacon (*35th Session*).

Wagg, Elbert

John Wagg's younger brother, born 1842 (Brown 1). Died 13 March 1856.

Wagg, Martha Elizabeth

Daughter of John and Lavinia Wagg, born 6 March 1863. Sometime after the death of her mother on 6 August 1864, "Bettie" Wagg began living with her maternal aunts – first Emily Sutherland, then Elizabeth Wilkinson (Brown 1, 52). She would remain with the Wilkinsons at Hillsville, Virginia following her father's death on 13 June 1866 (*HeritageQuest Online*). She died 31 March 1898, and was at the time of her death a Methodist class leader (Brown 59).

Wagg, Samuel

John Wagg's younger brother, born 1840 (*HeritageQuest Online*). He worked for a time as clerk to the Waugh brothers, Ashe County merchants, before enlisting with the 26th North Carolina Regiment, of which he became captain in March 1862 (Crawford 77, 96). He was struck by grapeshot on 3 July 1863 at Gettysburg and died soon after (Crawford 119, Underwood 359-360).

Waugh, Nathan H.

Born 1824 (*HeritageQuest Online*). The Waugh brothers moved to Ashe County from Tennessee in 1845 (Crawford 6). A Whig, Waugh was the only non-slaveholding resident of Ashe County with property valued at over \$10,000 (Crawford 34). The Waugh brothers operated a trading firm that employed Samuel Wagg briefly before his enlistment; the firm declined throughout the 1870s (Crawford 77, 164).

Wexler, S. C.

Presiding elder of the Jefferson Circuit of the Holston Conference in 1858. Wexler approved Wagg to preach locally on 7 July of that year.

Willie

Possibly William Tatum of Patrick County, Virginia, a farmer, born 1820 (*HeritageQuest Online*).

### *Literary Quotations*

“The Banner of the Cross”

An anonymous hymn present in a hymnal published by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1857. It seems unlikely that Wagg found the hymn in this particular book, however, as the Methodist Episcopal Church and its publishing concern represented the Northern branch of Methodism. As printed, the quotation reads:

GO, ye messengers of God;  
Like the beams of morning, fly;

Take the wonder-working rod;  
Wave the banner-cross on high. (*Hymns* 126)

*Cato*

Joseph Addison

This tragic play centers upon Cato the Younger, a politician of the late Roman Republic. Wagg quotes briefly from a scene in which Cato delivers a monologue on the immortality of the soul:

The soul, secure in her existence, smiles  
At the drawn dagger, and defies its point.  
The stars shall fade away, the sun himself  
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years.  
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,  
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,  
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds. (Tickell 186)

“A Dream”

Thomas Campbell

Wagg reproduces the beginning of this poem’s first stanza, which, in full, may apply to Wagg’s experience with the dream he recounts at length in the journal:

WELL may sleep present us fictions,  
Since our waking moments teem  
With such fanciful convictions  
As make life itself a dream.—  
Half our daylight faith a fable;  
Sleep disports with shadows too,  
Seeming in their turn as stable  
As the world we wake to view.  
Ne’er by day did Reason’s mint  
Give my thoughts a clearer print  
Of assured reality,

Than was left by Phantasy  
Stamped and colored on my sprite,  
In a dream of yesternight. (Campbell 96)

*An Essay on Man*

Alexander Pope

Wagg quotes from throughout Pope's 1732 philosophical poem, firstly in a 20 March 1856 journal entry, later in a sermon dealing with Psalms 8:4 ("What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"). As the latter was likely written in 1859 or 1860, Pope evidently resonated with Wagg for at least some three or four years.

*Memorials of Clutha; Or, Pencillings of the Clyde*

Elvira Ann Phipps

This travel narrative describes the landscape around the River Clyde in Scotland. Phipps' descriptions of mountainous regions populated by pious folk must have resonated with Wagg; in his journal he quotes briefly from the following section:

I had been indulging a thirst for those glorious scenes which the hand of a bountiful Creator hath spread out over the surface of nature, to captivate the eye of man, to inspire his soul ...

I was in a land well calculated to produce these emotions—a mountain land, where sublimity sits enthroned, and every object as it meets the eye, whispers of immensity, and tells significantly enough of him who fills infinite space, and inhabits "all forms from the vast to the minute." (Phipps 67)

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

William Shakespeare

In the section to which Wagg refers, Theseus, the Duke of Athens, compares "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet." Of the poet in particular, he says:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven

And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name. (Wells and Taylor)

Wagg seemed to admire the poet's practice; he attempted poetry himself on occasion, and he notes that the Ashe County environment is thoroughly inspirational. "[B]ut if I have any Poetical faculties," he says in the journal on 31 January 1855, "they are hard to develope."

*The Minstrel; or, The Progress of Genius*

James Beattie

It's curious that Wagg would quote this poem when referring to his own striving for success in the medical profession. The first stanza, to which Wagg refers, is quite pessimistic:

AH! who can tell how hard it is to climb  
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar!  
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime  
Hath felt the influence of malignant star,  
And wag'd with Fortune an eternal war;  
Check'd by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,  
And Poverty's unconquerable bar,  
In life's low vale remote hath pin'd alone,  
Then dropt into the grave, unpitied and unknown. (Beattie 1)

Perhaps, given Wagg's frequent darkness of mood early in the journal, the general attitude of these lines resonated with him in a way that more hopeful poetry would not have.

*Satire IX*

Juvenal

This appears to be a quote from Juvenal's *Satire IX*, perhaps by way of William Harvey, though these were commonly-repeated lines in the mid-nineteenth century. As Wagg renders it:

There is a lust in man, no charm can tame,  
Of loudly publishing his neighbor's shame;  
On eagles wings immortal scandals fly,  
While virtuous actions are but born to die!

"The Soul"

An anonymous hymn. As printed in an 1859 American Puritan hymnal, the quotation reads:

What is the thing of greatest price,  
The whole creation round?—  
That which was lost in Paradise,  
That which in Christ is found:

The soul of man—Jehovah's breath—  
That keeps two worlds at strife;  
Hell moves beneath to work its death,  
Heaven stoops to give it life. (*The Puritan Hymn and Tune Book* 49)

*Twelfth Night*

William Shakespeare

Wagg quotes the musing of Sebastian upon being mistaken by Olivia, a countess, for his sister Viola, with whose male persona Olivia has fallen in love. Sebastian finds no cause for complaint.

What relish is this? How runs the stream?  
Or am I mad, or else this is a dream.



Let fancy still my sense in Lethe steep.  
If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep. (Wells and Taylor)

*The Wesleyan Methodist Association Magazine 1856*

Wagg possibly quoted this from the 1856 issue of the Wesleyan Methodist Association Magazine, a volume of biblical articles published in London. This would date the essay in which the quote appears several years later than that which precedes it in the journal, but this would be consistent with the otherwise inconsistent or absent dating found throughout the journal's final pages.

*Woodstock, or The Cavalier*

Sir Walter Scott

Wagg mentions reading this novel and others by Walter Scott (to the detriment of his regular journal-writing) in a 7 July 1856 journal entry.

*Terms and Phrases*

Amo, Amas, Amat

Conjugations of Latin amo, "to love," suggesting that Wagg had as of September 1854 begun to study Latin, as he later confirms (Cawley).

Camp Meeting

Camp meetings, essentially revivals occurring in the woods, were among the most distinctive of Methodist gatherings. Though perhaps born of necessity in frontier regions lacking adequate preaching spaces, camp meetings became means by which preachers in even well-settled areas made religion emotional and personal for their congregations (F. Norwood 158). By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the purpose of the camp meeting had begun to shift away from passionate conversion and toward edification (F. Norwood 162).

### Deucalion

Deucalion, son of Prometheus, survived a heavenly flood by heeding his father's advice and constructing a large chest, in which he drifted for nine days (Crane). Wagg compares this to the flood of Noah.

### Foolscap

A notebook, specifically one of foolscap, a kind of writing paper (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

### Julian the Apostate

Flavius Claudius Julianus, emperor of Rome from 361 until his death in 363 ("Julian the Apostate"). He earned the title "the Apostate" for his attempts to restore paganism to a privileged position over Christianity ("Julian the Apostate").

### Otus and Ephialtes

Sons of Poseidon who set mountains atop one another in an attempt to reach the gods, whom they meant to overthrow (Crane).

### Peritonitis

Inflammation of the peritoneum, the lining of the abdominal cavity (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

### Phaeton

The son of Helios, who fails to control the chariot of the sun and nearly runs the sun into the earth (Crane).

### Philomela

A princess of Athens; she was raped by Tereus, the king of Thrace and her brother-in-law, who cut out her tongue to prevent her from revealing what had been done to her (Crane). She later transformed into a nightingale; this is likely what "Gwen" refers to in his 15 April 1862 letter.

*S.S. Great Eastern*

An iron steamship which, at the time of its launching in 1858, was at 700 feet long and 22,500 tons the largest ship ever built (“*S.S. Great Eastern*”).

Scarlatina

Scarlet fever, a bacterial infection distinguished by a reddening of the skin (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This may have been the cause of Wagg’s mother’s death.

Somnus

Somnus (Roman) or Hypnos (Greek), a personification of sleep sometimes associated with death (Crane).

Suilanae

Wagg is possibly referring to his Latin studies again, as “sui” is a Latin reflexive pronoun (Cawley).

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## APPENDIX A. EXAMPLE OF ENCODED TRANSCRIPTION AND WEB OUTPUT

The following is the transcribed, XML-TEI-encoded text of an entry from John Wagg's journal dated 20 December 1854. In raw form – that is, prior to being transformed by XSL stylesheets – all the text of the project looks similar to this. TEI-defined tags are used to indicate paragraphs, page breaks, and aspects of the text such as the date of the journal entry, spelling and grammar that differ from contemporary standards, and words which in the manuscript are unclear. Tags are also used to indicate any mention of people, places, literary texts, Bible passages, or uncertain terms, many of which are transformed by stylesheets into links to the glossary.

```
<div type="entry" xml:id="date.1854-12-20">
```

```
  <p xml:id="JohnWagg_Diary_1854_1858.20"><date>Dec 20<seg  
rend="super">th</seg> 1854</date> Many weeks have passed by since I have  
<orig>writen</orig> <orig>any thing</orig> in my <orig>Scrap  
Book</orig>.</p>
```

```
  <p xml:id="JohnWagg_Diary_1854_1858.21">I hardly know why I  
have so <orig>shame fully</orig> neglected it I have been at home all the time. I  
have been employed at my study (Medicine) part of the time and the other part I  
have idled away.</p>
```

```
  <p xml:id="JohnWagg_Diary_1854_1858.22">I was at a candy party  
last night and enjoyed <orig>myselfe</orig> finely, since my last writing I have  
had many pleasant <unclear>seasons</unclear>, sometimes I have for hours  
<orig>forgoten</orig> my misery, and been lured <orig>of</orig> the path of  
despair, but alas! those <orig>hour</orig> were short, they soon passed by, and  
left me unhappy at <orig>preasant</orig>, and, nothing, but a dark future before  
me. The near approach of Christmas, causes to look back and contrast the last  
with <orig>the the</orig> one that is now <unclear>fast</unclear> at hand, last  
Christmas I was near <placeName key="milledgevilleGA"><orig>Milliledgeville  
Ga</orig></placeName> 550 miles from home. I was <orig>ther</orig> among  
strangers I had no friends to share with me my days, and,
```

<orig>sympathise</orig> with my sorrows, but notwithstanding that I enjoyed  
<orig>myselfe</orig> a great deal better than I do now.</p>

<p><hi rend="underline">J D Wagg</hi></p><pb

xml:id="JohnWagg\_Diary\_1854\_1858p8"/>

</div>

Once transformed by the document stylesheet, the above journal entry appears on the Web as follows. Links to the glossary appear in blue. Words that are unclear in the manuscript are indicated with a dotted red underline. General formatting attempts to balance readability with accurate representation of the appearance of the documents in manuscript form.

**Dec 20th 1854** Many weeks have passed by since I have written any thing in my Scrap Book.

I hardly know why I have so shame fully neglected it I have been at home all the time. I have been employed at my study (Medicine) part of the time and the other part I have idled away.

I was at a candy party last night and enjoyed myselfe finely, since my last writing I have had many pleasant seasons, sometimes I have for hours forgotten my misery, and been lured of the path of despair, but alas! those hour were short, they soon passed by, and left me unhappy at preasant, and, nothing, but a dark future before me. The near approach of Christmas, causes to look back and contrast the last with the the one that is now fast at hand, last Christmas I was near [Milliledgeville Ga](#) 550 miles from home. I was ther among strangers I had no friends to share with me my days, and, sympathise with my sorrows, but notwithstanding that I enjoyed myselfe a great deal better than I do now.

J D Wagg