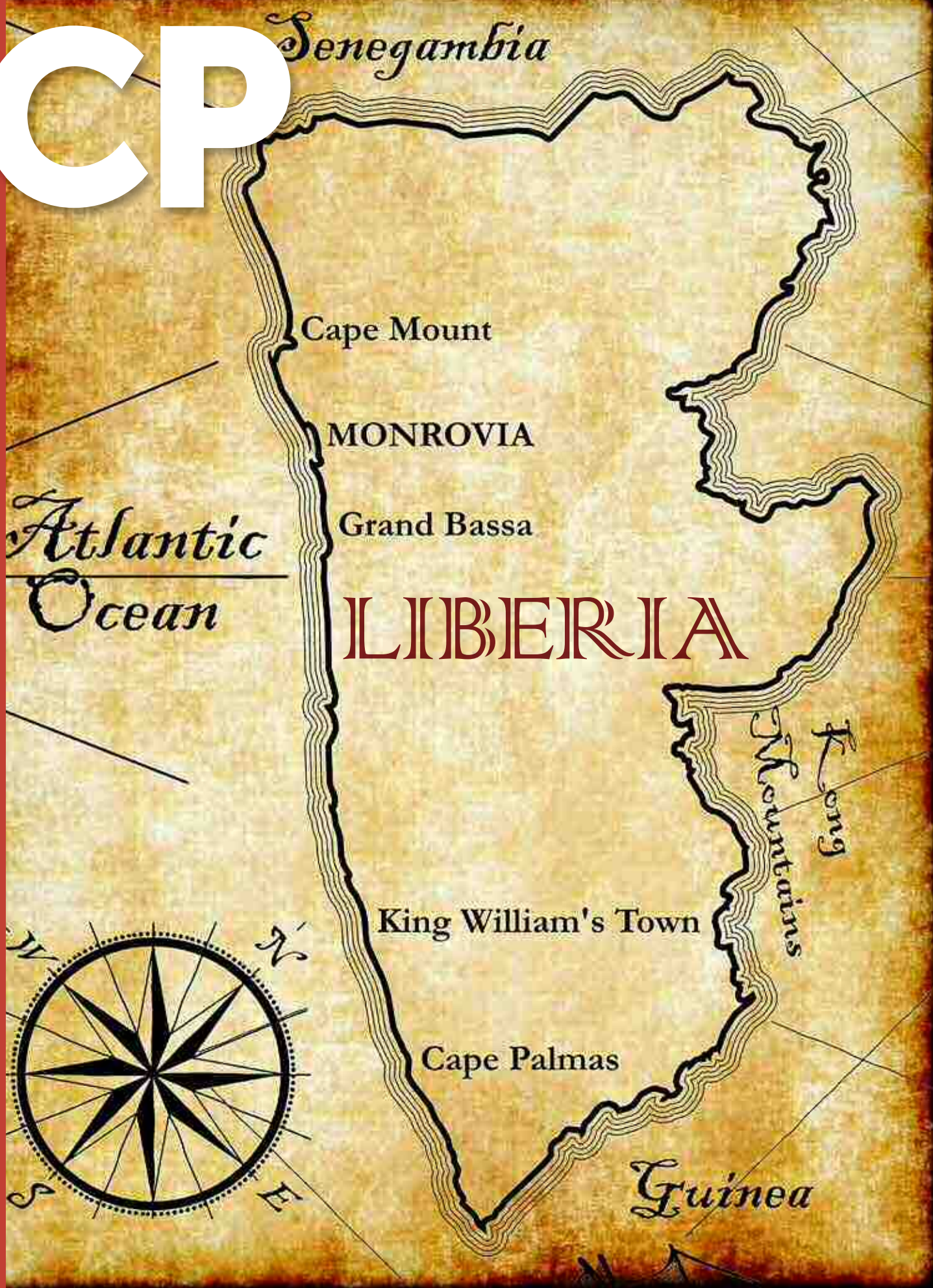
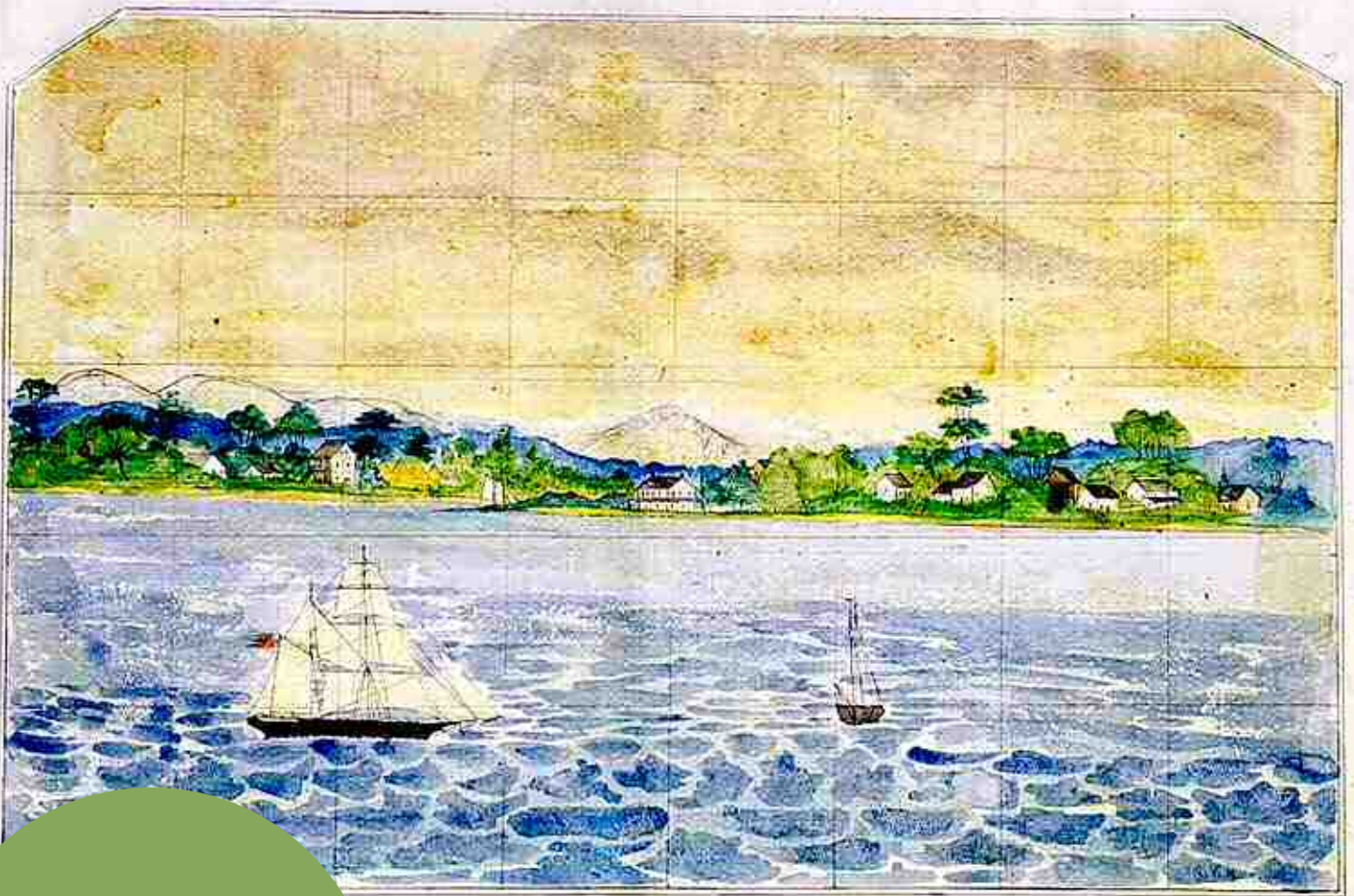


# CP





# Reverend Edmund Weir



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# LIBERIA

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## THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE

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Circulation, Cumberland Presbyterian Magazine, 8207

Traditional Place, Cordova, Tennessee, 38016.

(901) 276-4572 ext. 221.

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**THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN:**

(ISSN 0011-2976) is published by the Communications Ministry Team of the Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in trust for the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, office of publication 8207 Traditional Place, Cordova, Tennessee, 38016. Periodical postage paid at Memphis, Tennessee (USPS PE140040). Published monthly except for November/December which are a combined issue. Copyright ©2021 by the Ministry Council. All rights reserved. Price \$6.95 per copy. Subscription rate \$25 for 11 issues (one year). Printed in the United States of America. The Cumberland Presbyterian is the publication of record for the judicatories of the Cumberland Presbyterian Denomination.

**POSTMASTER:**

Send address changes to:

Circulation, Cumberland Presbyterian Magazine,  
8207 Traditional Place,  
Cordova, Tennessee, 38016.

**MEMBER:**

Associated Church Press  
International Association of Press Photographers

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Volume 193 ■ Number 2

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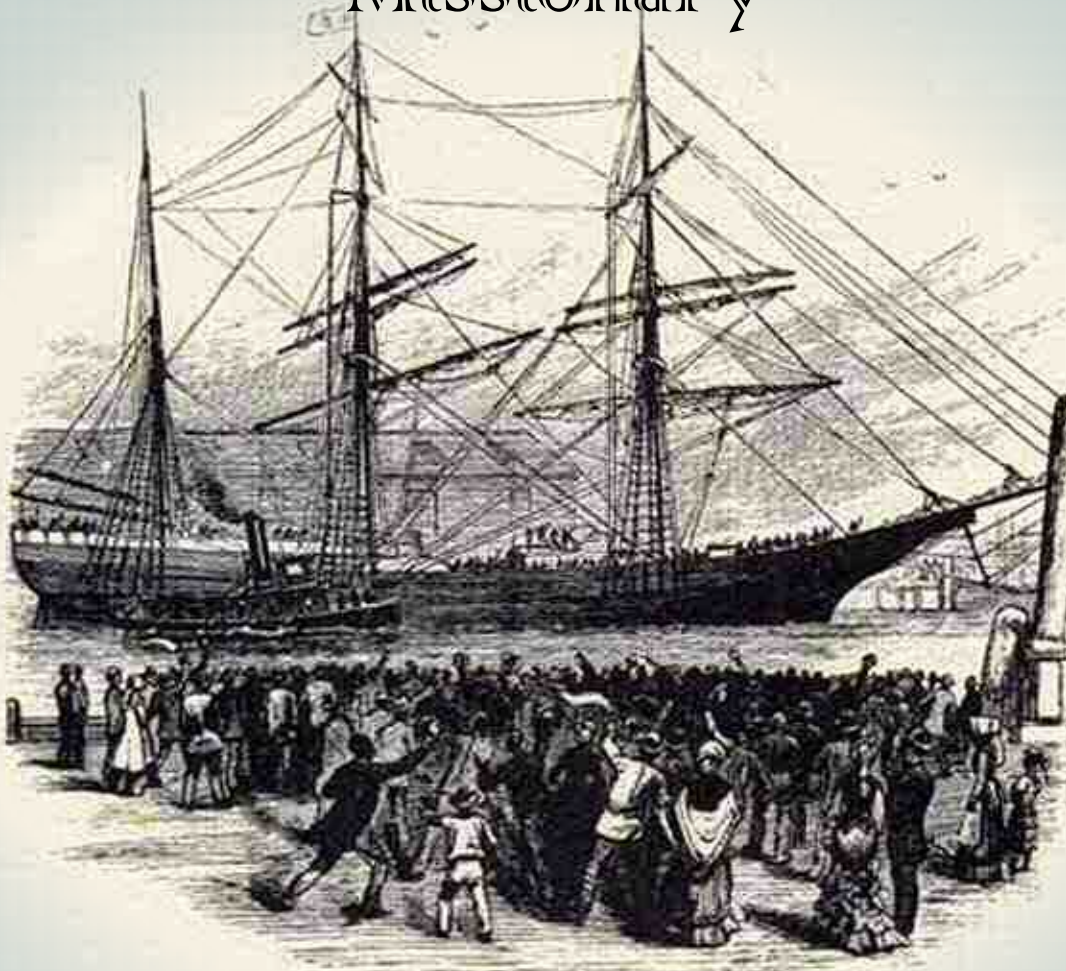
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Liberia, in West Africa, was home to the first CP missions outside of North America.



# Reverend Edmond Weir The First Cumberland Presbyterian Missionary



## Part One Weir's Call to Missions

By Lynn Thomas

**I**t was November 12, 1857; the ship *Mary Caroline Stevens*, was ready to sail. She was a three-mast sailing ship heading to West Africa. The *M.C. Stevens* was docked at the Hampton Roads dock in Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> The American Colonization Society owned this ship. She was brand-new and built for a specific humanitarian mission through a donation from a wealthy donor named John Stevens.<sup>2</sup> The ship, costing \$36,000 to build,<sup>3</sup> was named after his daughter. The Society's strategy was this ship would make two trips a year to Liberia, Africa.<sup>4</sup>

The November voyage was her third trip; the new ship's first trip to Liberia was in January,<sup>5</sup> and the second in May 1857.<sup>6</sup> Those on board were mostly African-American freed slaves excited to be part of a movement which would legally free them from slavery. The African Colonization Society was an attempt by abolitionists to find a middle ground to the American slave dilemma. The Society encouraged slave owners to manumit their slaves to a new American colony formed in Liberia (Liberty), West Africa. Manumission was when a slave owner voluntarily freed their slave; emancipation was when the government changed laws that freed slaves. The Colonization Society also provided resources for freed American slaves to migrate to Liberia. The Cumberland Presbyterian (CP) General Assembly promoted the Society and encouraged CPs to manumit their slaves. On this fall Thursday, as the ship slipped away from Hampton Roads docks, there stood a Cumberland Presbyterian missionary and his wife. The Reverend and Mrs. Edmond Weir held to the ship's taffrail and watched Norfolk disappear on the horizon; they were headed back to Africa.

The *M.C. Stevens* was on her way to Liberia with a load of black American passengers and would return to Norfolk in several months with palm oil and other cargo from Africa.<sup>7</sup> Just before boarding the ship, some of the freed slaves were given gold by their owners to help them get started. The Society promised the freed slaves headed to Liberia five acres of land to farm



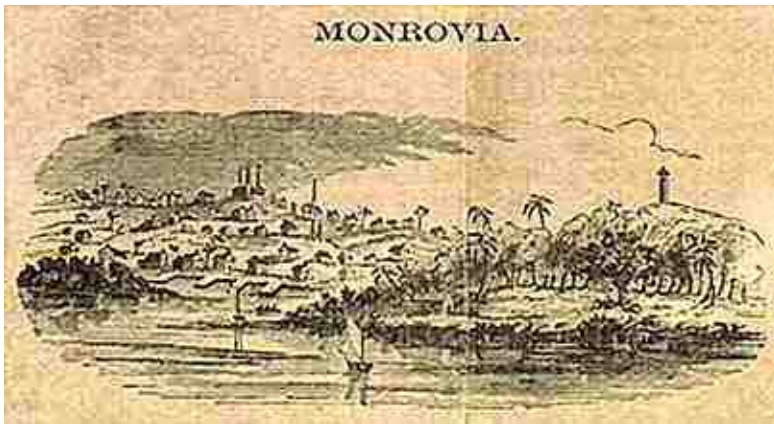
upon arrival.<sup>8</sup> The plan was the new American immigrants would clear the African land, plant crops, and become successful farmers.<sup>9</sup> Rev. Weir and his wife were not new to Liberia; they were actually returning after serving there as bi-vocational missionaries for five years. In 1857 they had just completed a “furlough” in the United States in which they visited many CP Churches to raise support. Edmond, earlier in 1857, met with the Cumberland Presbyterian Board of Missions. The Board accepted him as their first missionary to work outside the United States.<sup>10</sup> During their first five years in Liberia, the Weirs had been on their own. In 1857, the Weirs were returning to Africa with renewed excitement because they were commissioned CP missionaries. As the ship crossed the Atlantic, they undoubtedly felt at peace, they were recognized missionaries by a sizeable Presbyterian denomination, and the CP Church would support them.

Edmond Weir had been a slave but, fortunately, he had received an education. In addition, he felt God's call to be a minister. Edmond was from the Mount Ephraim Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Union County, Kentucky.<sup>11</sup> The CP slaves of the early 1800s were participants in the Second Great Awakening. American slaves were as influenced by the camp meetings as their white owners. The slaves, often seated behind the white camp meeting crowds, attended the worship services with their owners.

Continue on page 6

Before the Civil War, white CP presbyteries guided both white and black men in their call and preparation to ministry. The CP Church, unlike other denominations of that day, did not restrict black slaves from pursuing ministry.





The Holy Spirit did not discriminate. Everyone in the camp meetings felt God's presence. The CP Church stated that salvation did not differentiate skin color, nor should the church deny blacks the right to worship. This understanding allowed blacks the freedom to join white worship services.<sup>12</sup> Witnesses reported that once the evening service had concluded and the white worshipers went to their tents, the black slaves would move to the pulpit area and conduct their own worship services. History records that those who observed black CPs in worship were inspired.<sup>13</sup>

Before the Civil War, white CP presbyteries guided both white and black men in their call and preparation to ministry. The CP Church, unlike other denominations of that day, did not restrict black slaves from pursuing ministry.<sup>14</sup> Historians speculate there were about 80,000 white CPs and 20,000 black CPs living in the United States in 1860.<sup>15</sup> Weir was a member of Anderson Presbytery in Kentucky. Undoubtedly, he had witnessed the revival movement. Although the fervor of the early 1800s camp meetings had waned, revivalism was still a strong part of Cumberland Presbyterian identity in the mid-1800s. At this time in CP Church history, the slaves belonged to the slave owner's church. There was just one CP Church for both races, but separate seating for black slaves was common in local CP churches.<sup>16</sup> The CP Church encouraged black CP men to pastor the black CPs. Black CP pastors were under the care of a white presbytery. This was the case in Anderson Presbytery. Edmond Weir, ordained by a white presbytery, expressed his desire to be a missionary to Africa to the white church leaders.<sup>17</sup>

By 1851, Edmond Weir, with the help of leaders in Anderson Presbytery, was manumitted (freed). In the spirit of foreign mission work, the church's white leaders arranged for Weir's freedom to facilitate his call to be a missionary to Africa. This was their motive for his freedom. Weir, like most slaves, knew of the colonization movement and its outpost in Liberia. The Society recruited slaves in America to move to Liberia and freedom. The CP General Assembly promoted the Society's work and encouraged CP slave owners to consider manumitting their slaves to go to Liberia.<sup>18</sup>

It is probably best to think of Liberia, in this era, as an Alaskan gold rush town.

In fact it is believed that Edmond's owner was on the board of trustees of the CP General Assembly, one Edward R. Weir. It may have been Edward that freed Edmond and his brothers to go to Liberia. Weir had two older brothers, also educated, who had already moved to Liberia, and there they became lawyers.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, we know Edmond knew CPs who had moved to Liberia. In 1851 Edmond raised funds among CP Churches to support his African ministry, but he was not an official missionary of the CP Board of Missions. Edmond and his wife sailed for Liberia, their first voyage, in 1852. His strategy was to gather black CPs already living in Liberia and form a CP Church. His brothers, living in Liberia, helped him when he arrived in Africa. Through their influence, Edmond was elected sheriff, thus affording Weir a means to live in Liberia and to preach.<sup>20</sup> Until Edmond Weir, CP missionaries worked in territories among Native American. Weir was the first CP missionary to work outside the United States or a territory of the United States.

Life in Liberia was not easy. Reports that came back to the Society in the United States spoke of hardships and dashed expectations. Some manumitted slaves wrote they had not received the land promised. Several wrote that the land they received was less than an acre, it was rocky, and their corn would not grow. In addition, some of the Society agents, who were tasked to help the new immigrants, were accused of being dishonest and stealing from the new arrivals.<sup>21</sup>

The Weirs reported hardship but not the suffering others reported. They moved to Cape Mount (Northern Liberia) to the newly established coastal town Robertsport, Liberia. The fact Edmond's educated brothers were living in Liberia certainly protected him from the exploitation others experienced. The small newly-formed coastal village was named after Liberia's first president, Joseph Roberts, a native of Virginia. Liberia was a tropical, hot, and humid country. There were no plains full of elephants, giraffes, antelope, or zebras. Because the coastal areas of Liberia were jungles, conventional farming methods from the United States were not practical.<sup>22</sup> The crops Liberia produced were cassava, palm oil, sugarcane, rice, and, eventually, rubber trees.

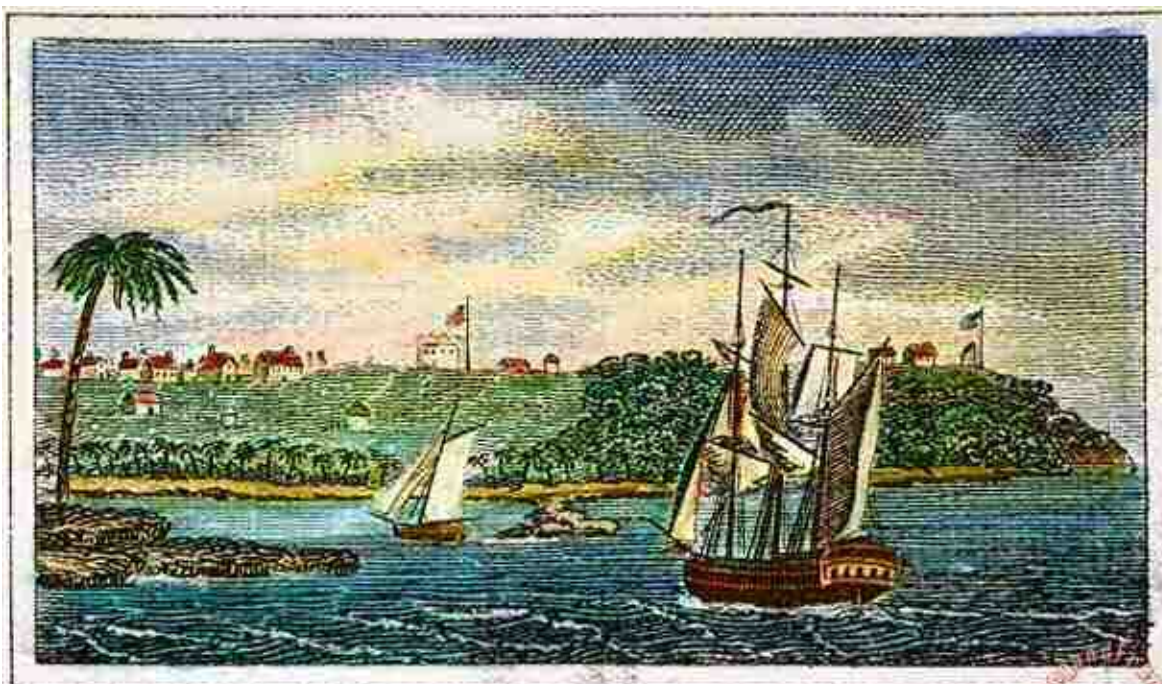
It is probably best to think of Liberia, in this era, as an Alaskan gold rush town. A great many Americans were moving to Africa with little understanding of where they were going. Liberia saw a constant flow of new immigrants, unlike the flood of immigrants that crashed into Alaskan rivers and streams. The hope was not gold; it was freedom and prosperity as farmers. They were all told by the Society this would be the land of opportunity, there would be no obstacles to their success.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Liberia was no promised land for American immigrants. The Society provided military

Weir labored in Liberia with no American church affiliation or support, he was on his own.

training to the new arrivals so they could defend themselves in the deteriorating relationship between the Americans and the Africa tribes already living in Liberia.<sup>24</sup> The colonization Society had anticipated new arrivals would need help, so the Society provided a place to stay upon arrival, education, and training. The transition period, which involved help from the Society, was supposed to be six months. Despite all this, transitioning to Liberia was not easy.<sup>25</sup>

The Weirs, to their credit, during their first five years in Liberia, were able to adapt to life there. Edmond became a bi-vocational pastor, splitting his time between being a sheriff and being a pastor. By slave standards, Edmond was well educated. The more education a person had, the better their condition in Liberia.<sup>26</sup> For about five years, Weir labored in Liberia with no American church affiliation or support, he was on his own. In 1856 or early 1857, he returned to the USA to raise support for his ministry.

In 1857, during the Weirs' furlough, Edmond and Mrs. Weir visited CP Churches and gained support. Edmond was invited to speak at a CP Women's mission event, and after his presentation, the women quickly formed a "society" to support Weir.<sup>27</sup> It is noted in other accounts that the Weir's missionary presentation resulted in CP women forming missionary societies as a way to support Weir and the Africa mission. It is believed these societies were the forerunners of the CP Women's Board of Missions.<sup>28</sup> Because of Weir's church visits, he became known to many CP leaders. He gained the attention and audience of the president of the CP Board of Missions, Rev. Franceway Cossitt. Cossitt was impressed with what he heard. Cossitt had been a CP leader for many years. He was one of the founders of Cumberland College, close to Princeton, Kentucky.

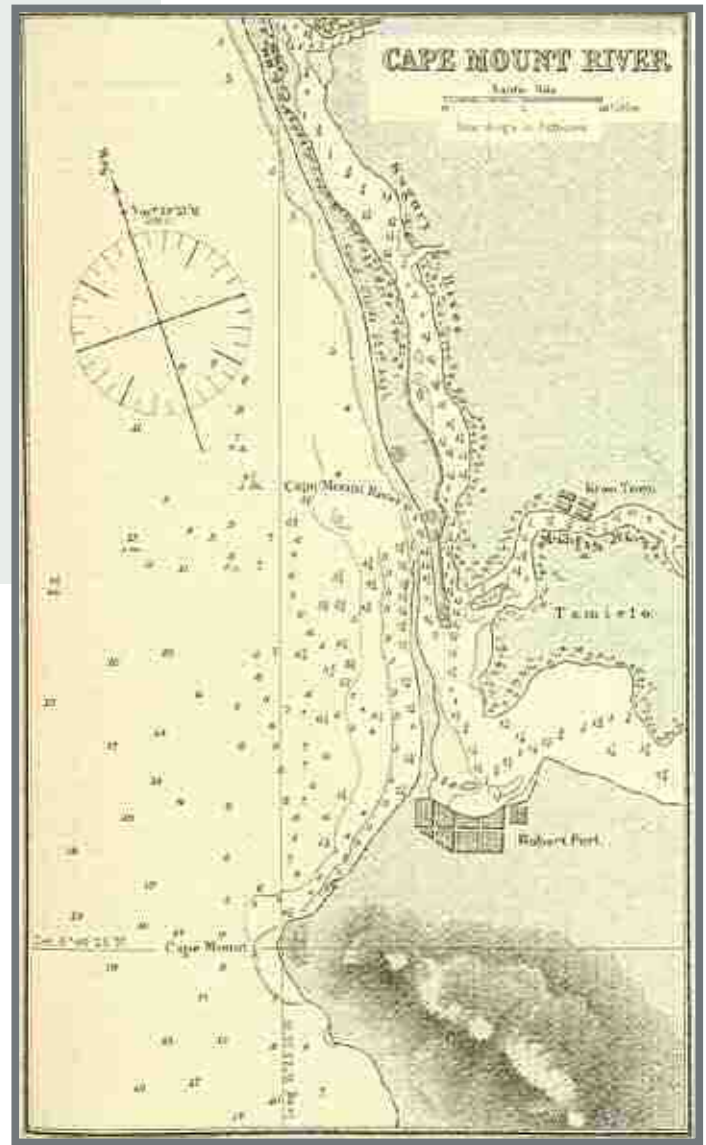


MONROVIA,  
*a settlement of the American Colonization Society in Liberia.*

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Robertsport, town and Atlantic fishing port, western Liberia. It is situated at the outlet of Lake Piso (Fisherman Lake), on Cape Mount.



He was a respected statesman of the church. Cossitt did all he could to win both emotional and financial support for Edmond Weir.<sup>29</sup> The Board of Missions, collaborating with Weir, determined that Robertsport was where the first CP Church should be built. Over \$600 was raised, and in 1857 Edmond Weir was commissioned as the first CP Missionary of the CP Church. This amount was about half of what Weir needed, but he took it back to Liberia and started construction of the new CP Church. ✠

*This extensive article on Edmond Weir was written because there is a need to compile what we currently know about the first Cumberland Presbyterian missionary. Information about Reverend Weir is hard to find, and it is hoped that this article, and its extensive footnotes, will help future researchers add to this body of work.*

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Edward Maris-Wolf, "Liberty, Bondage, and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Free Black Expulsion Law and Self-Enslavement in Virginia, 1806-1864" (PhD Dissertation, Richmond, Virginia, The College of William and Mary, 2011), 221.

<sup>2</sup> Memory Mitchel, "Freedom Brings Problems: Letters from the McKays and the Nelsons in Liberia," *North Carolina Historical Review* 70, no. 4 (October 1993): 435.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 434.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 434.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 435.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 437.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>8</sup> "Liberty, Bondage, and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Free Black Expulsion Law and Self-Enslavement in Virginia, 1806-1864," 196.

<sup>9</sup> "Freedom Brings Problems: Letters from the McKays and the Nelsons in Liberia," 439.

<sup>10</sup> J.V. Stephens, *The Cumberland Presbyterian Digest, 1899* (Nashville, Tenn: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1899), 507.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Gore, *A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Kentucky to 1988* (Memphis, Tenn: Joint Heritage Committee of Covenant and Cumberland Presbyteries, 2000), 228.

<sup>12</sup> 227.

<sup>13</sup> B.W. McDonold, *History of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, Fourth Edition (Nashville, Tenn: Board of Publication of Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1899), 433-34.

<sup>14</sup> *A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Kentucky to 1988*, 228.

<sup>15</sup> Ben M. Barrus, Milton L. Baughn, and Thomas H. Campbell, *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 1998), 175.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Campbell, *One Family Under God, A Story of Cumberland Presbyterians in Black and White* (Memphis, Tenn: Frontier Press, 1982), 12.

<sup>17</sup> *History of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 333.

<sup>18</sup> *One Family Under God, A Story of Cumberland Presbyterians in Black and White*, 228.

<sup>19</sup> *History of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 333.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>21</sup> "Freedom Brings Problems: Letters from the McKays and the Nelsons in Liberia," 440-41.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>23</sup> "Liberty, Bondage, and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Free Black Expulsion Law and Self-Enslavement in Virginia, 1806-1864," 201.

<sup>24</sup> "Freedom Brings Problems: Letters from the McKays and the Nelsons in Liberia," 439.

<sup>25</sup> "Liberty, Bondage, and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Free Black Expulsion Law and Self-Enslavement in Virginia, 1806-1864," 205.

<sup>26</sup> "Freedom Brings Problems: Letters from the McKays and the Nelsons in Liberia," 439.

<sup>27</sup> *History of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 333.

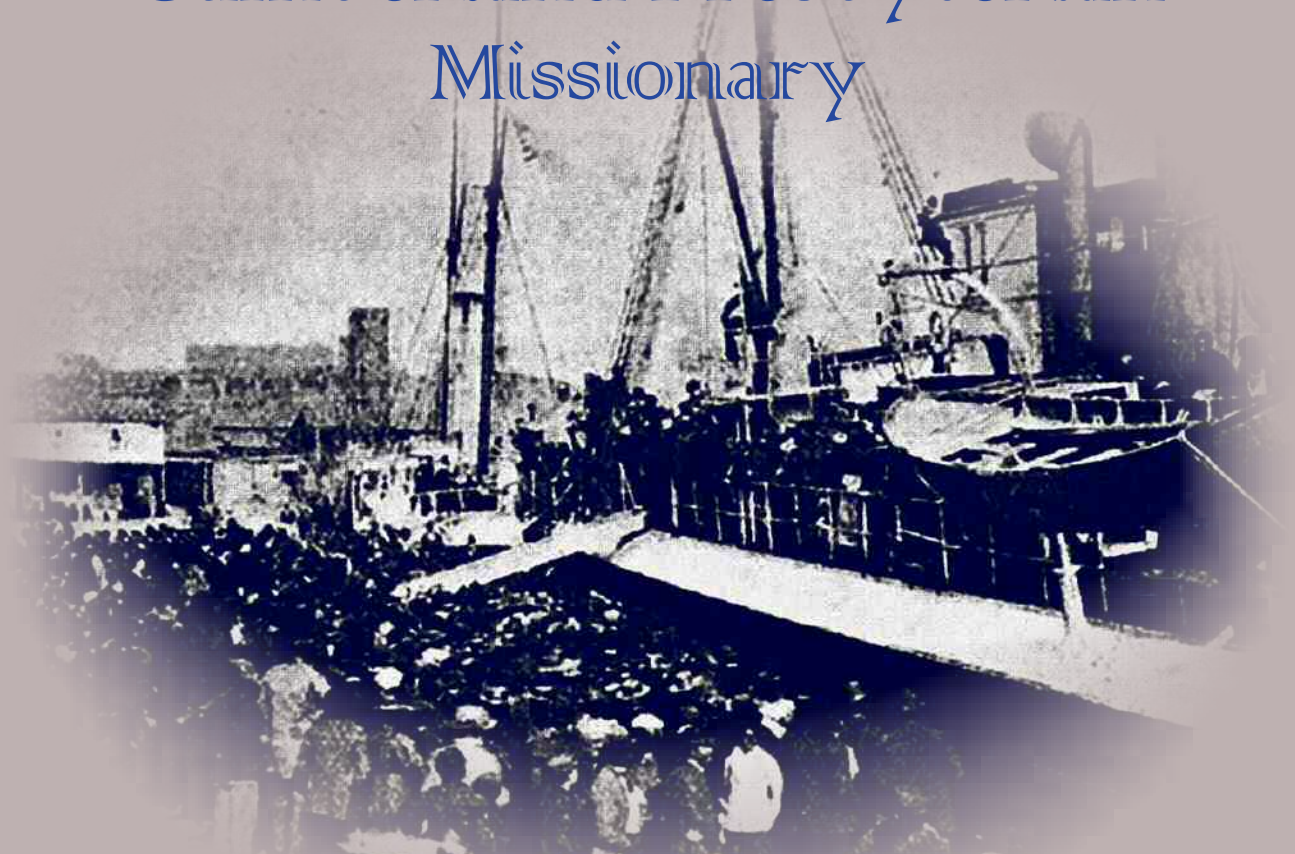
<sup>28</sup> *A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Kentucky to 1988*, 290.

<sup>29</sup> *History of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 334.



REVEREND EDMOND WEIR

The First  
Cumberland Presbyterian  
Missionary



Part Two

Weir's Service in Liberia  
& His Legacy

By Lynn Thomas

This extensive article on Edmond Weir was written because there is a need to compile what we currently know about the first Cumberland Presbyterian missionary.

Information about Rev. Weir is hard to find, and it is hoped this article, and its extensive footnotes, will help future researchers add to this body of work.

Part One appeared in the February 2021 *Cumberland Presbyterian*.

While on furlough in the USA in 1857, Rev. Weir's main appeal was for funds to build a Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Robertsport, Liberia. In addition, he passionately appealed to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church to quickly send more missionaries. Weir believed the opportunity was ripe for CP success in Liberia. The Board of Missions, led by the Reverend Cossitt, made appeals throughout the denomination for black ministers to go to Liberia.<sup>30</sup> The General Assembly asked slave owners, who had CP ministers as slaves, to manumit them so they could go to Liberia. In the end, not many slave owners wanted to manumit their slaves, and few black CP ministers wanted to go to Africa. Consequentially, there were no new CPs that were able or willing to go to Liberia to help the Weirs.

On the November 1857 voyage back to Liberia there were 108 souls, including Edmond and his wife on the ship *M.C. Stevens*. The ship could accommodate almost 250 passengers. The Society set up a foundation that owned the ship and charged \$40 per passenger. The Society's sponsored passengers were given preference. Either the Society paid the passenger fee, or the passenger paid.<sup>31</sup> Being this was the Weirs' second trip to Liberia, they most certainly paid their own fare to Liberia. The freedom ship in Hampton Roads dock awaited the appropriate winds, and then pulled her anchor and headed to sea. Excitement turned to nausea when the ship hit the first swells of the ocean. During the five-week voyage the Weirs were served two meals a day, a late breakfast and an early dinner. They were expected to help clean and maintain the ship, as well as refrain from improper language, fighting, or horseplay.<sup>32</sup>

Two other passengers on this voyage would soon gain notoriety in the USA. William Watson and James Booker were both manumitted slaves heading to Liberia. Their owner had died and willed that they go to Liberia as free men. Their owner even shared part of his inheritance with them, which they were given moments before boarding the ship. This was what the American Colonization Society suggested, that if an owner could not manumit their slaves while alive, that it be done in their will at their death. The passengers all had time to get to know each other during the five weeks at sea.<sup>33</sup> The *M.C. Stevens* was not a large ship, and this voyage was only half-full.

James and William arrived in Robertsport. It only took them a few weeks to realize Liberia was not what they had been told. It was no land of milk and honey, and the farm they got was not five acres. Within two months, William and James decided to return to Virginia. They returned on the second leg of the *M.C. Stevens*' round trip. Upon arrival, they had a legal problem. They were manumitted to live in Liberia. The Virginia courts had to decide what to do. The William and James case became a national story. In order to gain favor in the eyes of the Virginia court, William and James denounced the colonization society as a big swindle and accused the Society of actually enslaving freed slaves in Liberia. This was not true, but their criticisms did get the



attention of the pro-slave advocates, and they used William and James to discredit the Society and the abolitionists. William and James, only desiring freedom, were simply pawns being manipulated by pre-Civil War politics.

Rev. James Weir was consulted by the press about these two men. He was on the ship with William and James for almost six weeks, and Weir knew Liberia. In addition, as a "Presbyterian" minister, he was considered a reputable witness. He wrote that Liberia was not enslaving freed slaves, and that what he had heard about the abuses, he had never seen. Weir's letters and defense of the colonization movement was his attempt to support the Society and the abolitionists.<sup>34</sup> In 1857-58, no one knew that within three years the USA would be in a civil war that would lead to the emancipation of all US slaves. The William Watson and James Booker case provided the pro-slave camp a great story and way to paint the abolitionists as swindlers. Rev. Weir's words, because he was a minister and knew both these men, allowed him to speak with authority that the colonization society was legitimate, and that these men had not experienced what they purported. William and James just wanted to live free in the USA. Sadly, they were re-enslaved again in Virginia. They were emancipated, their second granting of freedom, after the Civil War.<sup>35</sup>

Once in Liberia for their second term of service, the Weirs continued to insist that they needed help; the goal was two more pastors so that there would be three ministers that could form a presbytery in Liberia.<sup>36</sup> They noted the poverty and needs of those around them.<sup>37</sup> In 1860, one year before the Civil War, the Board of Mission reported things were going well in Liberia. Weir reported that he ➤



had conducted a revival which had resulted in several new converts.<sup>38</sup> No doubt, Weir, from the heartland of the Great Awakening, was well versed in revivalism as a tool of evangelism. Then the Civil War came, missionary support stopped, and communications became difficult. Both Edmond and his wife sent letters of desperation back to the USA. They had very little and were unable to buy necessities. They explained that even a letter saying they would eventually receive missionary support would help them get credit so that they could meet basic needs.<sup>39</sup> The Board renewed its commitment to find other manumitted CPs willing and able to move to Liberia. CP women gathered what they could and shipped it to Liberia.

In 1864, toward the end of the Civil War, the Board of Missions reported that communication with the Weirs was difficult. The Board also expressed concerns about the help people had shipped to Liberia not arriving. Desperate communications from the Weirs were coming to the Board from Liberia. The Weirs were emphatic; they needed help. The Board was receiving their letters of distress, but the Board was uncertain that the Weirs were getting the Board's letters and a shipment the CP women had sent. The Board, just days before their 1864 Board meeting, reported that they had finally gotten a letter from Rev. Weir reporting that he had a group of 30 people in his congregation, and that the aid shipment had arrived. He explained he was working in two preaching posts, in addition to working with a Sunday School and a Day School.<sup>40</sup> In Weir's communication, he pleaded for more missionaries so that he could start a Presbytery. The Board renewed its commitment to finding missionaries for Africa.

**T**he Board of Missions met in 1866, after the Civil War, and reported that missionary Weir was "hanging on." They noted that he was desperate for help. He needed more missionaries. Weir warned that, without help, he feared the Liberia mission would fail. In desperation, the Board appealed to the CP Church to find missionaries for Liberia. There was no response.<sup>41</sup> The accounts given in Board reports and excerpts from missionary letters over the years revealed two things: the Weirs were poor and desperate for help, and the Board's appeals for help, which were made to the larger CP Church, were unanswered. Everyone was frustrated because of the lack of resources and repeated unanswered requests for more missionaries.

In September 1868, the Board met in Alton, Illinois, and expressed discouragement about Liberia. They had very little communication with Weir, and they were ready to drop the mission work. To their amazement, Edmond Weir showed up at their meeting. They did not know he was in the USA. Edmond had returned alone to the USA in January 1868, apparently in poor health. It was a desperate move to gain support. The post-Civil War mission Board had no money, but they offered him an opportunity to work with freed slaves in the USA; Weir declined.<sup>42</sup> After meeting with Rev. Weir, the Board consulted with the General Assembly, and the CP Church determined it best to suspend the work in Liberia until such time as they could figure out a way forward. Weir was disappointed. This

Moses Weir helped establish the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1869.



Joseph Jenkins Roberts, ca. 1851. The Liberian colony's former Governor, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, was elected Liberia's first President.

decision effectively concluded the CP Church's first mission work in Liberia. Edmond Weir soon transferred to the Congregational Church.<sup>43</sup>

**D**espite leaving the CP Church, Edmond Weir's legacy and family continued to inspire the CP Church. Edmond Weir had a brother named Moses Weir, who was also a CP ministry. There is no record that Moses lived in Liberia; he might have been a younger brother, meaning there may have been at least four sons (the two older brothers in Liberia, Edmond, and Moses). Moses Weir helped establish the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1869.<sup>44</sup> Soon after helping form the denomination for black CPs, Moses left the CP Church. In 1874, after organizing several presbyteries and synods, the Colored CP Church organized its own General Assembly in a meeting in Nashville.<sup>45</sup> By this time both Edmond and Moses had left the CP Church.

The Reverend Dr. L.L. Thomas, of Longview, Texas, told the story later in his life that when he was the moderator of General Assembly in 1941, a representative from Liberia visited General Assembly in Denton, Texas, and asked to speak with him. Because of strict segregation in those days, Rev. Thomas met with the Liberian man outside. It is believed the man was an elder named Carney Johnson, who explained that he was from the Presbyterian Church of Liberia. The gentleman expressed interest in exploring the possibility of a Liberia relationship with the CP Church. The CP Church, at that time, was segregated. Moderator Thomas encouraged the man to approach the

Colored CP Church. Rev. Thomas knew that there was a historical CP relationship to Liberia, and that this group might be the fruits of early CP mission work. However, because of segregation, it was virtually impossible in that era to advocate Liberian participation in the CP Church. Apparently, the Colored CP Church did eventually accept the Liberia Presbytery, but the relationship never led to any support, missionaries, or relational connections. The 1960 minutes of the Colored CP General Assembly state the relationship with Liberia Presbytery was dissolved.<sup>46</sup>

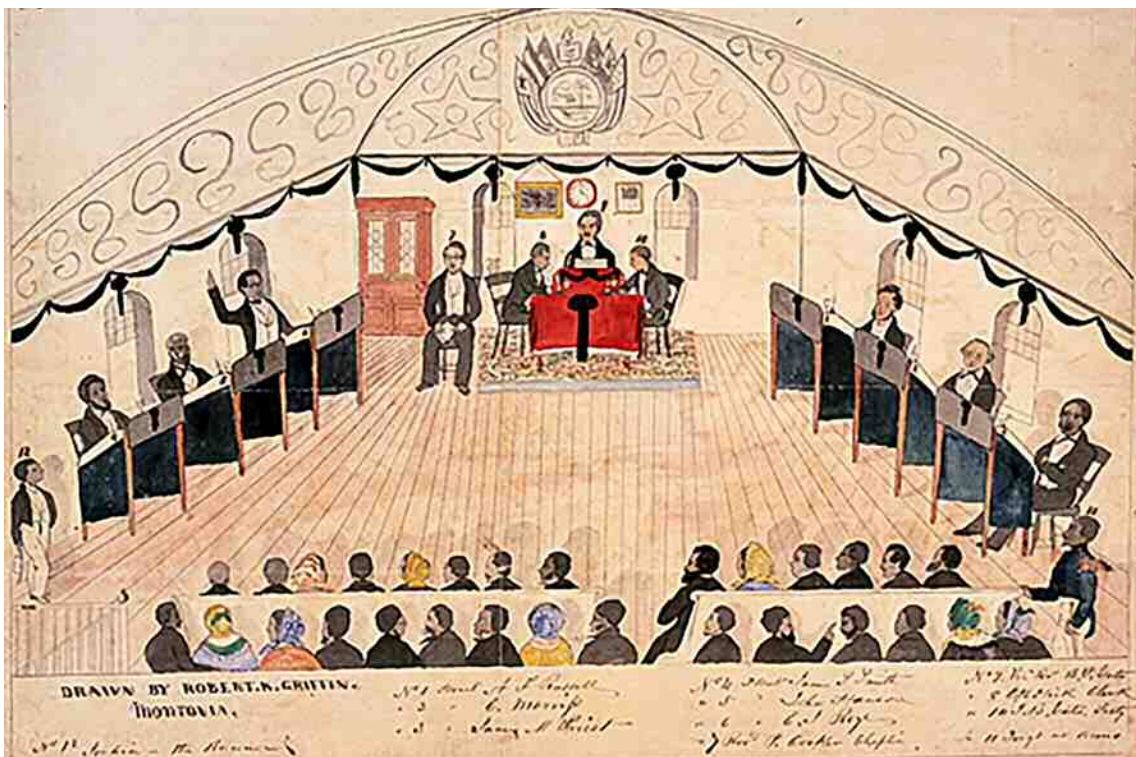
The 1941 General Assembly story was recounted in 1978 by L.L. Thomas to his grandson, Lynndon Thomas. At that time Lynndon Thomas was in Liberia as a youth mission intern.<sup>47</sup> L.L. Thomas explained to his grandson the Edmond Weir connection to Liberia. He instructed his grandson to find the Presbyterians in Monrovia (the capital) and ask if they had any relationship to Edmond Weir. Lynndon Thomas did contact the stated clerk and moderator of the central office of Liberia Presbytery in Monrovia. There was obvious excitement on the part of the stated clerk and moderator to continue a conversation with the CP Church. Lynndon Thomas took contact information back to the USA for other church leaders to pursue. His father, Rev. Don H. Thomas, a member of Columbia Presbytery and Tennessee Synod, presented the idea of accepting Liberia Presbytery to Tennessee

In 1979, the General Assembly approved the acceptance of Liberia Presbytery into Tennessee Synod.

Synod. There were various meetings between synod leaders and the General Assembly Board of Missions. The decision was made by the General Assembly Board to explore the opportunity. Because Edmond Weir was originally from Kentucky and Anderson Presbytery, there were conversations about where to place Liberia Presbytery: Kentucky Synod or Tennessee Synod. In the end, the General Assembly determined Liberia should be affiliated with the CP Church and with Tennessee Synod.<sup>48</sup>

In 1979, the General Assembly approved the acceptance of Liberia Presbytery into Tennessee Synod. The CP work in Liberia was never large. The best report that Edmond gave to the Board of Missions was 30 participants in his group. There was no record that a CP Church was established or organized in Robertsport. In reality, it was discovered that Liberia Presbytery had no relationship with Edmond Weir. This presbytery was the result of mission work conducted by the Presbyterian Church USA.<sup>49</sup> The Presbyterian Church started its Liberia work in 1833<sup>50</sup> and nationalized it in 1899.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, because of the historical connection the CP Church had with Liberia through Edmond Weir, the CP Church received Liberia Presbytery with excitement. In a sense, the CP Church was going back to its first mission field. Both the CP Church and Liberia Presbytery joined together in ministry with high hopes. The CP Board of Missions attempted to deploy a new missionary to Liberia. Although missionaries were sent, those attempts were complicated and short-lived because of the Civil War in Liberia. The distances and difficulties of communication between Liberia and the USA, as well as the expense of supporting mission work in Liberia, eventually produced the same results as the first mission endeavor into Liberia. Because the CP Church was unable to find and deploy ➤



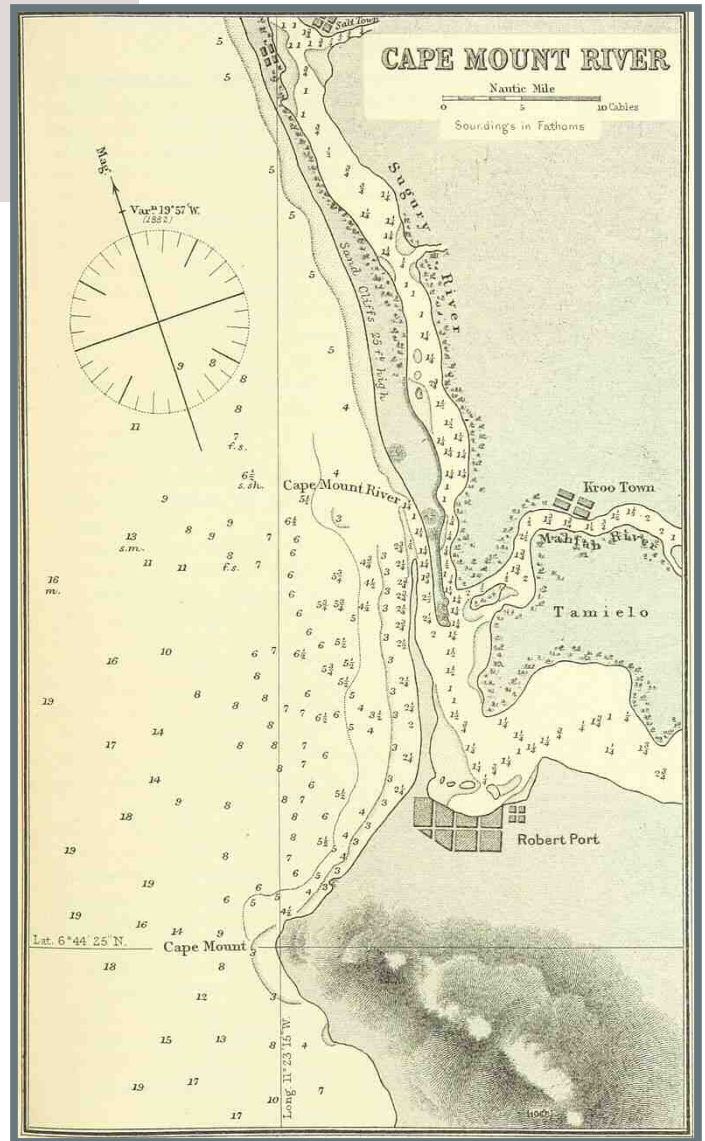
Liberian senate. Watercolor drawing of an assembly of the Senate of Liberia by Liberian artist Robert K. Griffin, Monrovia. 1850-1860.



Edmond Weir left a mission legacy in the CP Church. He demonstrated sacrificial service as a minister and as a missionary.

long-term missionaries to Liberia and was unable to meet the financial challenges of mission work in Liberia, the relationship between the CP Church in the USA and Liberia faded. In 2006 Liberia Presbytery determined it was in their best interest to separate themselves from the CP Church and become an independent presbytery in Liberia. It was their hope they could find new relational connections that could help them deal with their many challenges.

**E**dmond Weir left a mission legacy in the CP Church. He demonstrated sacrificial service as a minister and as a missionary. He overcame unimaginable obstacles to serve as a missionary. He was a slave, he gained freedom, he pushed himself to obtain an education, he was on his own in Liberia, he gained CP sponsorship, he was painfully under-supported, and he continued to fight on as a missionary. His attempts to succeed in Liberia speak to Christian faith, a man living life based on his hopes. The work he attempted in Liberia did not result in CP Churches, but it did result in decades of inspiration for those who have read his story. As an example, the CP Church's foray into missionary work in Liberia in the late 1970s was not because of what Edmond Weir accomplished in Liberia, it was because of who he was. He was a man with a deep commitment to Christ and a willingness to sacrifice his well-being for the cause of Christ and helping others. His life was an inspiration that motivated others to action. In a sense, the CP Church followed Edmond Weir to Africa, both in 1857 and again in 1978. May his testimony inspire all of us to stand with our CP missionaries and the hope they bring to the places where they serve. They all stand in the shadow of the Reverend Edmond Weir. ✚



**ENDNOTES:**

<sup>30</sup>*The Cumberland Presbyterian Digest*, 1899, 507.  
<sup>31</sup>“Freedom Brings Problems: Letters from the McKays and the Nelsons in Liberia,” 436.  
<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 437.  
<sup>33</sup>“Liberty, Bondage, and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Free Black Expulsion Law and Self-Enslavement in Virginia, 1806-1864,” 204.  
<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 221.  
<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 226.  
<sup>36</sup>*The Cumberland Presbyterian Digest*, 1899, 507.  
<sup>37</sup>James W. Knight, *Hearth and Chalice: The Story of Cumberland Presbyterian Women and World Mission* (Board of Missions of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1980), 10.  
<sup>38</sup>*The Cumberland Presbyterian Digest*, 1899, 508.  
<sup>39</sup>*History of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 442.  
<sup>40</sup>*The Cumberland Presbyterian Digest*, 1899, 508.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 509.  
<sup>42</sup>*History of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 442.  
<sup>43</sup>*Hearth and Chalice*, 11.  
<sup>44</sup>Barrus, Baughn, and Campbell, *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians*, 166-67.  
<sup>45</sup>*History of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 436-37.  
<sup>46</sup>*A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Kentucky to 1988*, 337.  
<sup>47</sup>*One Family Under God, A Story of Cumberland Presbyterians in Black and White*, 182.  
<sup>48</sup>*A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Kentucky to 1988*, 337.  
<sup>49</sup>*One Family Under God, A Story of Cumberland Presbyterians in Black and White*, 182-84.  
<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 180.  
<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 181.