

## American Minute with Bill Federer

### Notable Black Preachers: John Marrant, George Liele, Andrew Bryan, David George, Richard Allen, & Harry Hosier

One of the first black preachers in America was **John Marrant**.

Born a free black in New York in 1755, his father died when he was young.

He traveled with his mother to Florida, Georgia and South

Carolina. He learned how to read, play the violin and the French horn.

In 1770, as a teenager during the **Great Awakening Revival**, **Marrant** was taken to hear evangelist **George Whitefield** in Charleston, South Carolina, and he came to Christ.

Being vocal about his new faith, he was rejected by his family.

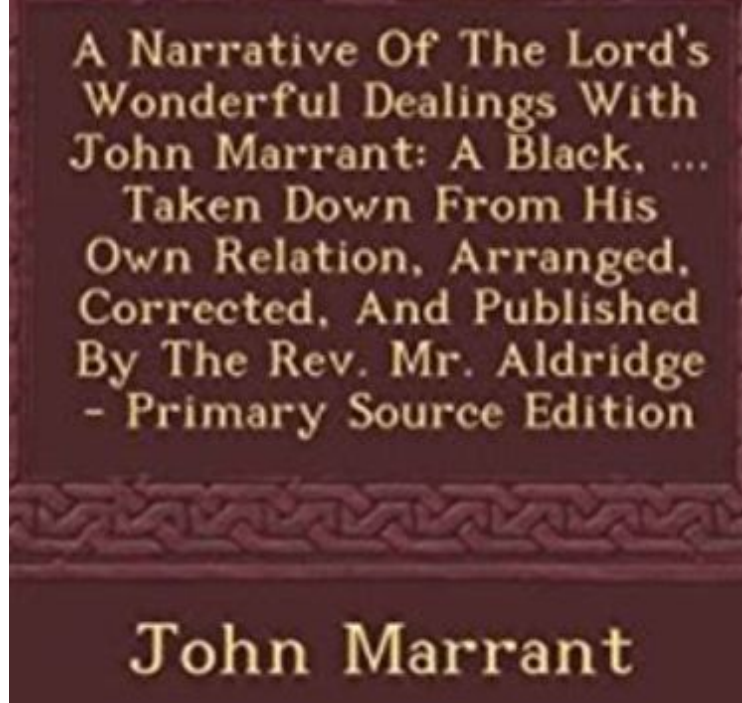
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**Marrant** wandered away and lived in the woods trusting God to provide. He



was befriended by **Cherokee** and learned their language.

As tensions grew prior to the Revolution, with British inciting Indians, **Marrant** was arrested by the **Cherokee** chief and almost executed.



Providentially, he preached to the chief, who converted, and gave him complete permission to proclaim the Gospel among the entire tribe.

He also preached to the **Creek, Catawba** and **Housaw**.

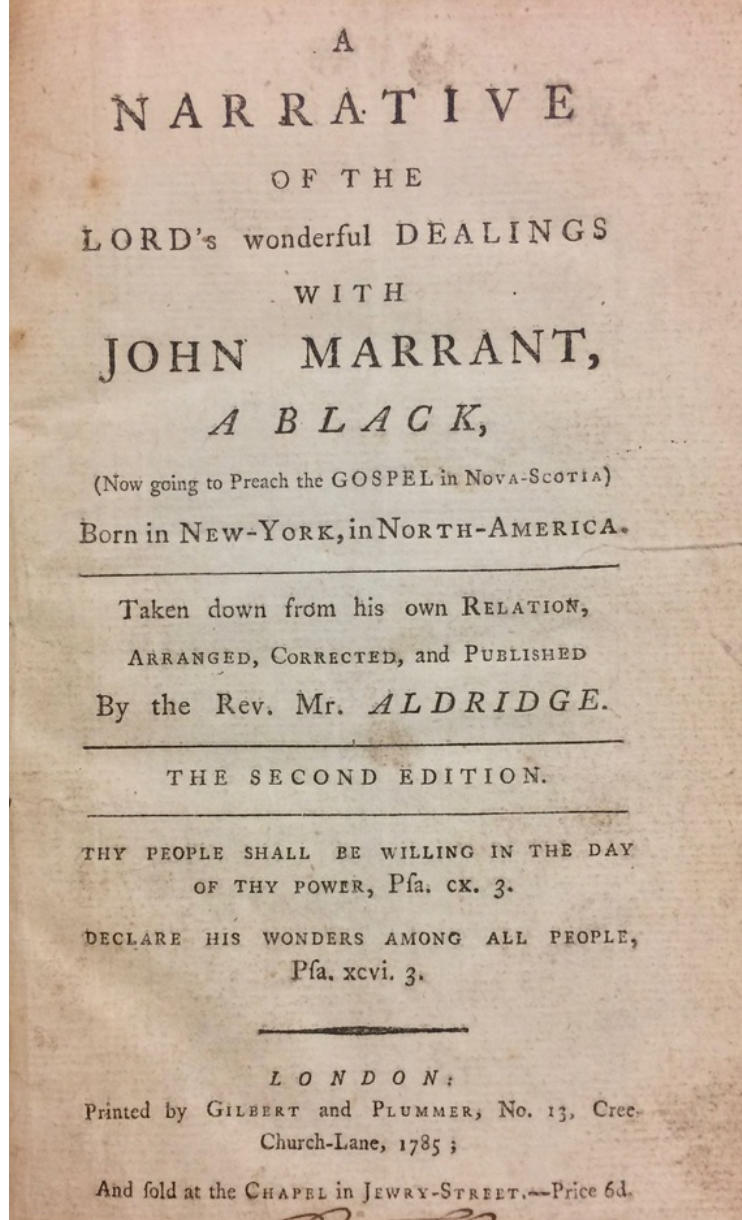
**John Marrant** returned to South Carolina where he preach among slaves.

When the Revolutionary War broke out, he was impressed into the British navy and taken to England where he preached for years.

He later returned to preach the

Gospel in **Nova Scotia** to "a great number of Indians and white people" at Green's Harbour near Newfoundland.

The missionary-minded Countess of Huntingdon published **A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black**, which became incredibly popular and went through 17 editions.



**George Liele** was another early American black preacher.

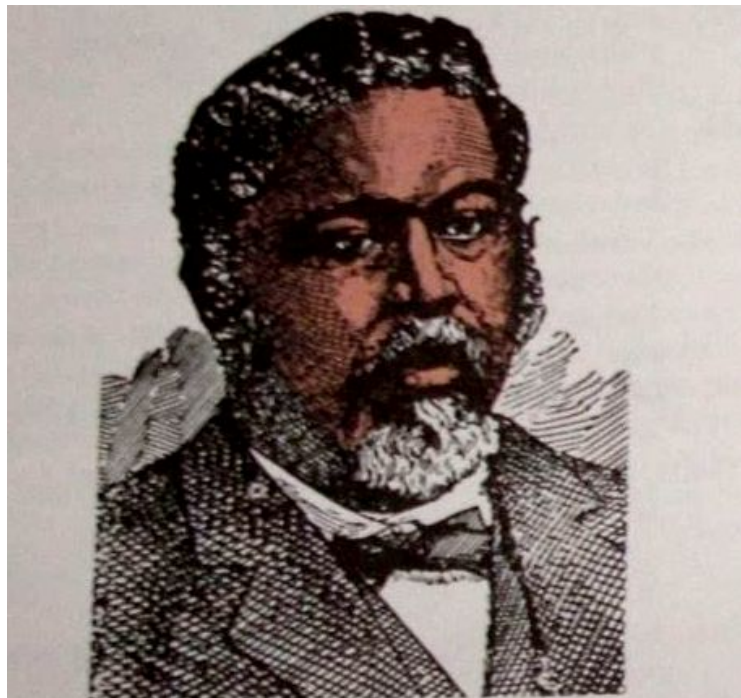
Born a slave in Virginia in 1750, he was taken to Georgia in 1752.

When he was 23, he heard Baptist preacher **Rev. Matthew Moore** and converted.



## REV. GEORGE LEILE

**Liele** later wrote that he “saw my condemnation in my own heart, and I found no way wherein I could escape the damnation of hell, only through the merits of my dying Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”



Rev. George Leile, first Negro Baptist preacher, was ordained May 20, 1775.

**George Liele** attended the **Buckhead Creek Baptist Church**, with his master,





Henry Sharp, who was a deacon.

Henry Sharp encouraged **George's** preaching and freed him.

**George Liele** gained a following and organized them into a

congregation in **Silver Bluff Baptist Church** in Beach Island, South Carolina, 1773 - considered **one of the first black congregation in America.**

When the Revolutionary War threatened, **George** and members of his congregation moved to Savannah, Georgia, where they met in **Jonathan Bryan's barn.**



One of Jonathan Bryan's slaves, **Andrew Bryan**, converted, was freed, and became the pastor of the congregation -- **First Bryan Baptist Church -- one of the first black**

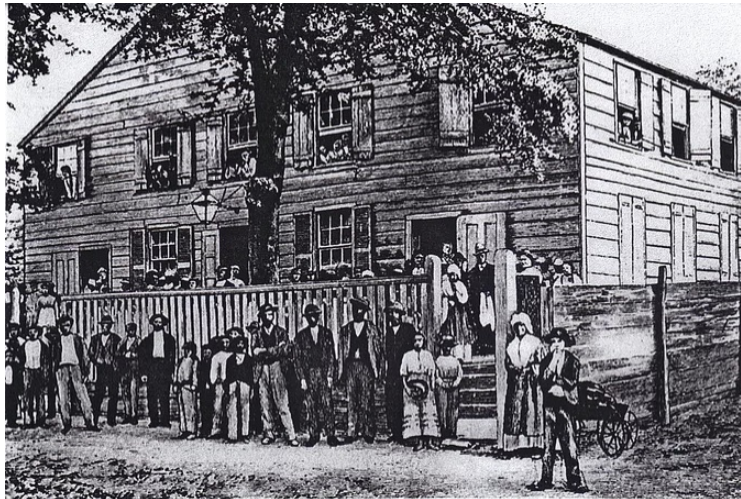
## Baptist churches in North America.



*The First Colored Baptist  
Church in North America, ...*

James Meriles Simms

By 1802, the congregation had grown to 700 members and changed its name to **First African Baptist Church**.



**The Savannah Baptist Association** wrote on the occasion of his death in 1812 (*The Wallbuilder Report, 2005*)::

"The Association is





sensibly affected by the death of the **Rev. Andrew Bryan**, a man of color, and pastor of the **First Colored Church in Savannah**.

This **son of Africa**, after suffering inexpressible persecutions in the **cause of his divine Master**, was at length permitted to discharge the duties

of the ministry among his colored friends in peace and quiet, **hundreds** of whom, **through his instrumentality**, were brought to **knowledge of the truth 'as it is in Jesus.'**"



Among **George Liele's** converts was **David George**.

In 1778, when the British captured Savannah during the Revolution, **David George** went with the British to **Nova Scotia**, where he founded a **black Baptist church**.

Then in 1792, he went with the British to **Freetown, Sierra Leon**, and started another **black Baptist church**.

As the Revolutionary War grew more intense, **George Liele** decided to evacuate.

Alan Neely wrote in the *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (NY: Macmillan, ed. Gerald H. Anderson, 1998, 400-1):

"In order to be evacuated with other royalists and British troops, **Liele** obtained a loan and accepted the status of

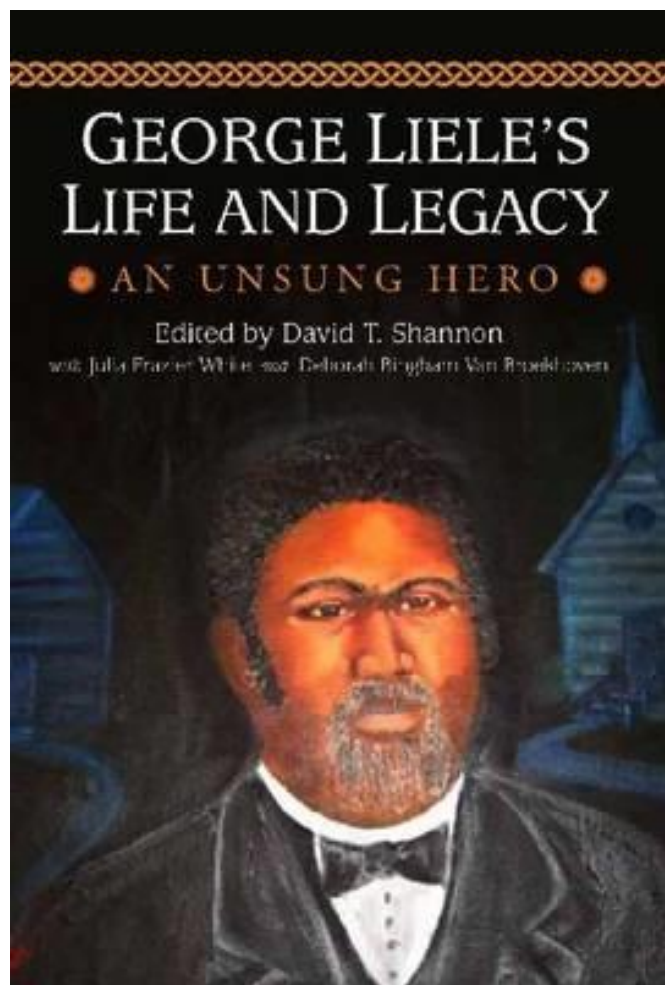
indentured servant to pay the passage for himself, his wife, and his four children on a ship bound for **Jamaica**.

Landing there in January 1783, he soon repaid the debt and secured permission to **preach to the slaves** on the island.

Thus by the time William Carey — often mistakenly perceived to be the first Baptist missionary — sailed for India in 1793, **Liele** had worked as a missionary for a decade, supporting himself and his family by farming and by transporting goods with a wagon and team.

Apparently, he never received or accepted remuneration for his ministry, most of which was directed to the slaves.

... He **preached, baptized hundreds,** and organized them





into  
**congregations**  
governed by a  
church covenant  
he adapted to the  
**Jamaican context.**

By 1814 his efforts  
had produced,  
either directly or  
indirectly, some  
**8,000 Baptists in  
Jamaica.**

At times he was  
harassed by the  
white colonists  
and by

government authorities for 'agitating the slaves' and was  
imprisoned, once for more than three years.

While he never openly challenged the system of slavery,  
he prepared the way for those who did; he well deserves  
the title '**Negro slavery's prophet of deliverance.**'

**George Liele died in Jamaica."**

Another **early  
black  
congregation**  
began in a building  
on the plantation  
of Colonel William  
Byrd III in 1774. It  
grew into the **First  
Baptist Church of  
Petersburg,**  
Virginia.

Andrew Bryant  
First African Baptist Church Savannah, GA

This small church inspired three noted ministers: David George, the first minister of the Silver Bluff Church and founder of the First Baptist Church in Shelburne, Canada; Jesse Peters (Galphin) assisting in the formation of the first black Baptist church in Savannah in 1798; and Henry Francis, the first pastor of Ogechoe Baptist Church in 1803.

1775  
In November, Liele was cut off from the Silver Bluff Church. The British set the plantation. They offered emancipation to all slaves who supported Great Britain during the war. The British occupied Savannah, and Liele moved there with George Galphin, a British loyalist.\*

1788  
Andrew Bryant reconstituted the congregation of Yama Crow as the First African Baptist Church of Savannah, GA. He was assisted by Jesse Peters. Bryant and the deacons were arrested by white lawmakers until the issue could be resolved. The British supported Liele's quest for freedom and released him.

Liele decided to leave Savannah with the British and immigrate to Jamaica. To pay for his passage, Liele endeavored himself to Colonel Kirkland for \$700 (He was the British officer who freed Liele from prison).

The ship leaving Savannah was delayed, providing an opportunity for him to baptize four people: Andrew Bryant, his wife Hannah, Kate Hogg, and Hagar Simpson.

1750  
George Liele was born to slave parents named Liele and Nancy in Virginia. His owner, Henry Sharpe, took him to Burke County, GA to the Galphin Plantation and Trading Post on the Savannah River not far from Augusta, GA. This move took place shortly before the American Revolution. Sharpe was a deacon in a Baptist church.

1772  
About three years after arriving in Burke County, Liele was converted and baptized by Matthew Moore, pastor of the Baptist church where Sharpe was a deacon. Liele's owner gave him permission to move up and down the Savannah River preaching to slaves. He traveled from Augusta to Savannah until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Liele thus became the first known black Baptist missionary.

1775  
Liele preached at Silver Bluff, near Beaufort Island, SC to a group of eight slaves, forming the first black Baptist church in the U.S.

\* Some sources acknowledge that the First Baptist Church was on the Beaufort Bay plantation near the Ogechoe River in Beaufort, SC in 1778.

In 1865, the church hosted **Virginia's first Republican convention.**



A prominent early black preacher was **Richard Allen**, born to slave parents in Philadelphia and sold with his family to a plantation in Dover, Delaware.

As a young man, **Richard's** master, Stokley Sturgis, gave him permission to attend Methodist religious meetings, where he learned to read.

In the year 1777, at the age of 17, **Richard Allen** was

converted and determined to work even harder to prove that Christianity did not make slaves slothful.



**Allen** invited a Methodist minister to visit his master





and preach to him.

Methodists were against slavery, as founder **John Wesley** had called it "that execrable sum of all villainies."

After **Allen's** master heard that on the Day of Judgment slaveholders would be "weighed in the balance and found wanting," he converted and made arrangements for Richard to become free.

**Richard Allen** became a licensed exhorter, and in 1783, set out preaching in Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland, walking so much that his feet became severely blistered.



**Richard Allen**, together with other black preachers from St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, began their own church.

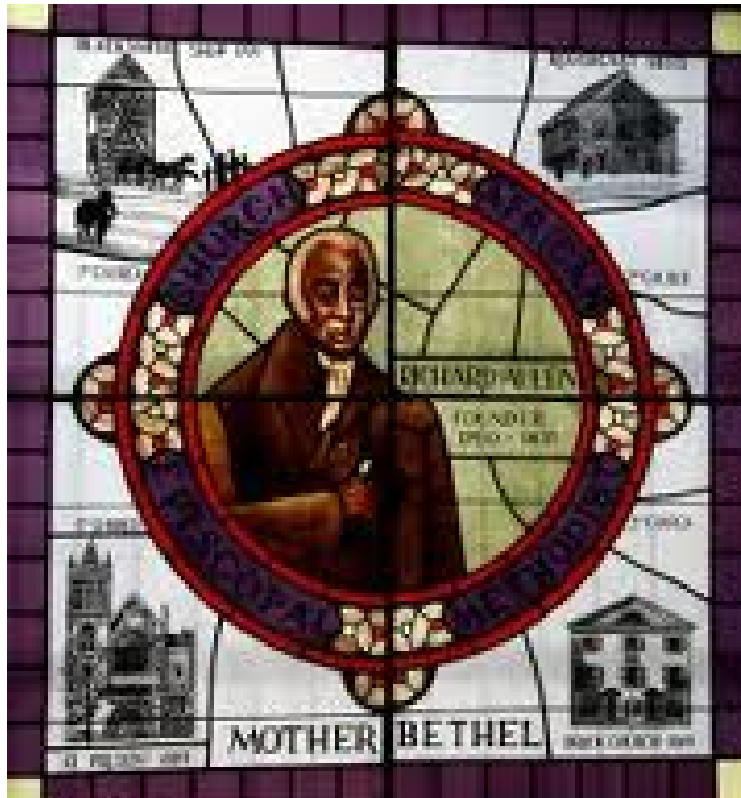
Their first church building was dedicated by **Bishop Francis Asbury** in 1794.

Dr. Benjamin Rush and George Washington contributed



to **Richard Allen's** church.

In 1816, **Allen** led in the forming of an entirely new denomination, the **African Methodist Episcopal Church**, which was the first African-American denomination organized in the United States.



The main building was in Philadelphia, named **Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church**. It is the oldest parcel of real estate in the United States owned continuously by African Americans.

**Jarena Lee** became the first woman to receive "authorization" to preach, with **Richard Allen** giving his approval.

**Allen** supported A.M.E. missionaries, including **Rev. Scipio Beanes**, who was sent to **Haiti** in 1827.



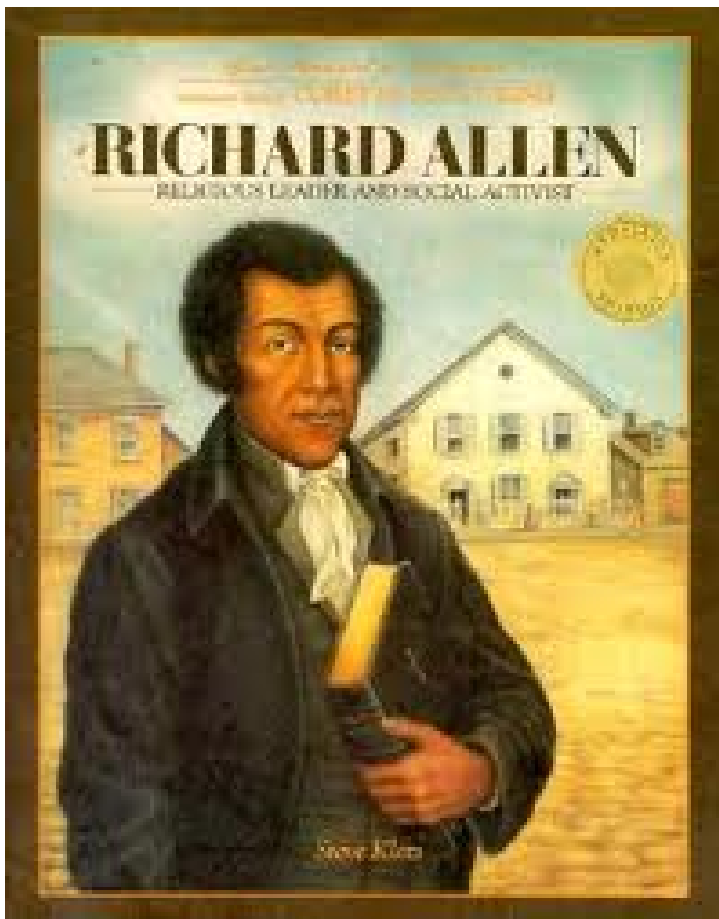
By the date of **Richard Allen's** death, **MARCH 26, 1831**, the **African Methodist Episcopal Church** had grown to over 10,000 members, and since then, to over **3 million**.

The motto of the **AME Church** is:

"God Our Father,  
Christ Our Redeemer,  
the Holy Spirit Our  
Comforter,  
Humankind Our Family."



"MOTHER" BETHEL A. M. E. CHURCH  
6th St. below Pine, Philadelphia, Pa.



**Richard Allen**  
wrote in his  
autobiography:

"I was born in the  
year of our Lord  
1760, on February  
14th, a slave to  
Benjamin Chew, of  
Philadelphia ...

My mother and  
father and four  
children of us were  
sold into Delaware  
State, near Dover,  
and I was a child  
and lived with him

until I was upwards of twenty years of age,



during which time I was awakened and brought to see myself poor, wretched and undone, and without the mercy of God must be lost ...

I went with my head bowed down for many days. My sins were a heavy burden. I was tempted to believe there was no mercy for me. I cried to the Lord both night and day.

One night I thought hell would be my portion. I cried unto Him who delighteth to hear the prayers of a poor sinner; and all of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and glory to God, I cried.

My soul was filled. I cried, enough, for me -- the Saviour died."

**Allen** stated:

"This land, which we have watered with our tears and our blood, is now our mother country, and we are well satisfied to stay where wisdom abounds and **Gospel is free.**"



In the winter of 1784, **Richard Allen**, and another black freedman, **Harry Hosier**, attended the Methodists "Christmas Conference," where the **Methodist**



**Church** officially separated from the Church of England to form its own denomination.

**Richard Allen** was invited, but declined, to preach in Southern States with the circuit-riding preacher **Francis Asbury** -- America's first Methodist Bishop.

Instead, **Harry Hosier** accompanied **Rev. Francis Asbury**.

**Hosier** later accompanied other Methodist Bishops: **Rev. Richard Whatcoat**, **Rev. Freeborn Garretson**, and **Rev. Thomas Coke**.



*Harry Hosier (1750?-1806).*

**Bishop Thomas Coke** described **Harry Hosier**:

"I really believe he



is one of the best preachers in the world.

There is such an amazing power that attends his preaching ... and he is one of the humblest creatures I ever saw."

Born in North Carolina, **Harry Hosier** was illiterate. Nevertheless, he memorized verbatim entire sermons and long passages of Scripture, resulting in the Methodist bishops letting him preach at their meetings with great effect.



Rev. Henry Boehm wrote (*The Wallbuilder Report*, 2005):



# THE WallBuilder Report

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY ISSUE 2005



## Honoring Godly Heroes

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

"**Harry** was so illiterate ... that he could not read a word but he could repeat the hymn as if reading it, and quote his text with great accuracy.

His voice was musical, his tongue as the pen of a ready writer. He was unboundedly popular, and **many would rather hear him than the bishop.**"

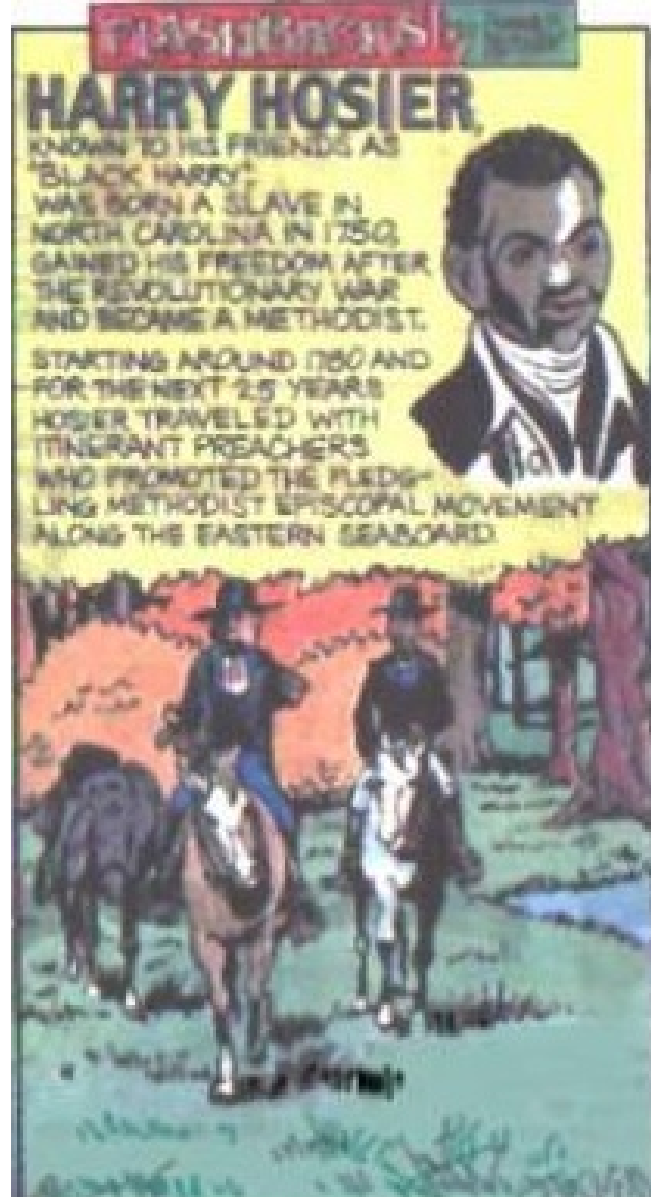
**Hosier's** sermon "The Barren Fig Tree," preached in 1781, was the first sermon by a black preacher that was copied down and printed.

**Dr. Benjamin Rush**, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, exclaimed that **Harry Hosier** preached the greatest sermon he had ever heard.

It being too dangerous to preach in the pro-slavery Democrat South, **Hosier**

preached camp meeting revivals along America's western frontier of that era, the territories of Ohio and Indiana. He was described by historians (*The Wallbuilder Report*, 2005):

"... a renowned camp meeting exhorter, the most widely known black preacher of his time, and arguably **the greatest circuit rider of his day.**"



Professor William Pierson of Fisk University explained how the term "**Hoosier**" could have originated as a derogatory label for those attending these rural camp meetings (*The Wallbuilder Report*, 2005):

"Such an etymology would



offer Indiana a plausible and worthy first Hoosier - **'Black Harry' Hoosier** - the **greatest preacher of his day**, a man who rejected slavery and stood up for morality and the common man."

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