

The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury

The Journal - 1771 to 1816

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March 1785

Thursday, 10 March 1785. ...We reached Georgetown time enough to give notice for preaching in the evening.

Sunday, 13 March 1785. The people generally attended and were serious. We found Mrs. Wayne under deep distress of soul.

From Georgetown¹ we came by Kingstree² [Kingston] and got to Mr. Durant's,³ who, I had heard, was a Methodist: we found him, in sentiment, one of Mr. Hervey's⁴ disciples, but not in the enjoyment of religion: I delivered my own soul before I took my leave of him.

Hearing of brother Daniel at Town Creek,⁵ I resolved to make a push for his house; it was forty miles distant, and I did not start until nine o'clock. I dined at Lockwood's Folly,⁶ and got in about seven o'clock. O, how happy was I to be received, and my dear friends to receive me! I have been out for six weeks, and ridden near five hundred miles among strangers to me, to God, and to the power of religion. How could I live in the world if there were no Christians in it!

Saturday, 19 March 1785. After preaching at Town Creek, I rode in the evening to Wilmington;⁷ night came on before we reached there, and from the badness of the causeway, I ran some risk; we went to __, but he was not prepared to receive us; afterward to __, where we had merry, singing, drunken raftsmen; to their merriment I soon put a stop. I felt the power of the devil here.

¹ Woolman Hickson was doubtless left in Georgetown since he was appointed to that circuit the following April. It became the Pee Dee Circuit a year later.

² This was doubtless Kingston instead of Kingstree, since a visit to the latter would have involved a wide detour without apparent reason. Chreitzberg (*op. cit.*, 42) noted and queried the contradiction, and Betts agrees in thus correcting the *Journal*. Asbury went via the Yuahannah Ferry to Kingston, the present Conway in Horry County.

³ Durant lived forty-five miles northeast of Georgetown and six or seven miles beyond Kingston (now Conway) where Durant's Church now stands. Several Durant families are indicated on old maps of the region. (Henry Mougou's [Mouzon's] map, 1773, published by Robt. Sayer and J. Bennett, London; Series of County Maps by Robert Mills, 1825.) There were meetinghouses in Horry County and the lower neck of Marion County near Bradley's Ferry where Asbury probably crossed the Great Pee Dee. (*Geographical, Statistical and Historical Map of South Carolina*, 1823, by J. Wilson, reduced by J. Drayton.)

⁴ James Hervey was one of the original Oxford Methodists who broke with the Wesleys and became a Calvinist.

⁵ Town Creek is in North Carolina about ten miles south of Wilmington, near the South Carolina line.

⁶ Lockwood's Folly was the present Supply, North Carolina, thirty-seven miles below Wilmington on Lockwood's Folly River. The settlement was established by and named for a Mr. Lockwood from Barbados, who was driven away by the Indians. (*A New Voyage to Georgia*, in Georgia Historical Society Publication, Vol. II, quoted in the *Wilmington Messenger*, August 22, 1897, 16.)

⁷ The Methodists had difficulty in establishing a permanent society in Wilmington, North Carolina....

February 1791

Monday, 7 February 1791. Rode to Lockwood's Folly,⁸ and preached at Charlotte River to not less than one hundred people; a vast congregation for so lonely a part of the world. The soil is very barren, and the country, consequently, but thinly settled. We were recommended, for lodging, to a certain squire's; but Providence so ordered it, that we came to a simple-hearted brother S _____'s, where we were kindly received, and abundantly supplied with everything necessary for man and horse. As our time would admit, I was disposed to indulge a desire I had of going by Pyraway, about twelve miles distant. We crossed Wacamaw River: it is about one hundred and fifty yards wide: our horses ferried themselves over by swimming. I preached in the evening on "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Tuesday, 8 February 1791. We came a long, dreary way, missed our road, and at last reached brother Session's; a distance of twenty-five miles, which our wandering made thirty miles.⁹ I rejoice to find that this desert country has gracious souls in it. O how great the change in the flight of six years! We have now many friends, and some precious souls converted to God. Glory be to the Lord most high! I feel power to bear all things, and leave events to God. The misconduct of other men is my grief, but not my sin; so I will trust God with his own cause.

Friday, 11 February 1791. We set out for Black River, from about six miles above Kingston,¹⁰ having Bull Run, Bramble Island, and great Pee Dee to cross.¹¹ Reaching Black River, we were compelled to turn aside to Mr. S _____'s rice plantation, where we procured provender for our horses, and breakfasted on our own tea.

Saturday, 12 February 1791. Came to Georgetown, through the rain-felt myself unwell and very low in spirits.¹²

Sunday, 13 February 1791. I preached a plain, searching sermon; and some felt the word: but it is a day of small things. In the afternoon I enlarged on, "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim?" The wicked youths were playing without and inattention prevailed amongst those within. I was, and continued to be, under great dejection during my stay.

December 1795

Monday, 21 December 1795. We set out by sunrise, and had to work our way through the swamps, where I feared being plunged in headforemost. I have lately been much tried several ways; and much comforted. We came down Brunswick county, North Carolina,

⁸ Lockwood's Folly was the present Supply in Brunswick County. (See note under March 13, 1785.)

⁹ Asbury entered South Carolina from Lockwood's Folly in North Carolina and passed through Horry County.

¹⁰ He stopped at Durant's, six miles from Kingston, the present Conway.

¹¹ He crossed at the Yauhannah Ferry, then called Bull Creek Ferry.

¹² See letter to Coke, February 12, 1791.

twenty miles to Norman's, within the line of South Carolina. Cross where you will between the States, and it is a miserable pass for one hundred miles west. I was much led out on Rev. [?]. This country abounds with bays, swamps, and drains; if there were here no sinners, I would not go along these roads. I am in want of rest, and should be glad of better fare. O, for patience, faith, courage, and every grace! Sometimes I feel as though I could rejoice to die and go home: but at other times the work of God is in my way, and sometimes my own unworthiness.

Thursday, 24 December 1795. We came to Kingston,¹³ where I preached in an old Presbyterian meeting house, now repaired for the use of the Methodists. I spent the evening with W. Rogers, formerly of Bristol, where our wants were richly supplied: thus, sometimes we abound and at other times suffer want; and we may balance the one with the other.

Christmas day, 25 December 1795. We set out at six o'clock for Georgetown, and came to Yauhannah ferry, which we crossed and came to Wacamaw River: we were detained at the two ferries about three hours, and rested one, and came to Georgetown¹⁴ about four o'clock in the evening; having ridden thirty-seven miles without eating or drinking, except a lowland hard apple, which I found in my pocket. The vanity of dancing in this place is in a good degree done away, and they have no play-house, and the people are very attentive: I trust that time and patience will bring all things about; that we shall not ride so many hundred miles in vain, and that so many prayers offered up, and tears shed for their welfare, will not be lost...

December 1796

Friday, 23 December 1796.We passed Lockwood's Folly and Shallot River, and came up to father Gause's, where we met with friendship, fellowship and love, and held meeting on Christmas day, it being Sabbath.

Monday, 26 December 1796. We came to Little River, and thence to Kingston,¹⁵ where we lodged with our Mr. W. Rogers, after riding about forty-five miles.

Tuesday, 27 December 1796. I gave a sermon in the chapel, and on Wednesday, 28, rode thirty-seven or forty miles to Georgetown.¹⁶ Here we have nearly one hundred Africans in society, while we have only seven or eight whites, our doctrine being too close, and our discipline too strict. After riding the above distance in the cold, without any regular meal, I was hardly fit for the pulpit at night; however I gave them a talk on "Glory to God in the highest, and on the earth peace, good will towards men."

¹³ Asbury entered Horry County, South Carolina, from Brunswick County, North Carolina, about where the present Long's community is situated.

¹⁴ The Yauhannah Ferry was crossed just below the junction of the two Pee Dee rivers. The second ferry referred to was over Black River near Georgetown.

¹⁵ Kingston was the present Conway, South Carolina.

¹⁶ As previously Asbury went to Georgetown via the Yauhannah Ferry.

February 1799

Tuesday, 5 February 1799. We crossed Black River, at Gadsby's ferry: the bridge over one of the natural canals was broken; we had presence of mind to loose the long reins of the bridle: brother Lee put the horse through the ford, and I met him on the other side, and guided him out safe. This day we made it nearly forty miles to W. Rogers's, near Kingston.

Wednesday, 6 February 1799. We rode in a cold day, thirty miles, to dear brother Hawkins's, upon Little River, crossing Wacawman at Star Bluff.

Thursday, 7 February 1799. I preached at the meeting house, from Luke iv, 18, 19; and came the same evening to father William Gause's,¹⁷ where I preached, on *Friday*, 8, upon Rom. v, 1-5, we had a living season here. I paid a visit to the sea, and saw the breakers-awfully tremendous sight and sound ! but how curious to see the sea gull take the clams out of the sand and bear them up into the air, and drop them down to break them, and then eat the flesh! This I saw demonstrated; and if they fail once in breaking the shell, they will take it up again, and bear it higher, and cast it down upon a hard spot of ground, until they effect their purpose.

We are now in Bladen circuit, Brunswick county, North Carolina. I have traveled nearly four hundred miles in the Southern States, and spent three months therein.

January 1801

Saturday, 31 January 1801. We rested: wrote,¹⁸ and read, upon the solitary unhealthy banks of Pee Dee, in sight of the lofty moss-grown cypress trees and swamps. My soul is in peace; Jesus, Jesus is my all: my soul is love to God, to Christ, his Church, and all souls.

February 1801

Sabbath day, 1 February 1801. We rode six miles to Brittons Neck meeting house,¹⁹ where I preached on Luke xix, 10: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." What characters were lost-not in a state of salvation: open, profane sinners; those who had sinned away conviction; backsliders; such as were seeking salvation by works; avowed infidels. It was observed that many were lost to men and means; occasioned hindrances themselves, and were prevented by others.

We came to William Williams's, near Little Pee Dee. On *Monday* we were housed by the rain in the forepart of the day: in the afternoon we visited Richard Woodbury, a great man, weighing upwards of three hundred pounds, and as kind as weighty.

¹⁷ Gause lived in the southern part of Brunswick County, North Carolina, near the South Carolina line. [He lived adjacent to Ocean Isle]

¹⁸ See letter to Daniel Hitt, January 30, 1801.

¹⁹ Britton's Neck Church was in the lower part of Marion (then Liberty) County.

Tuesday, 3 February 1801. We had preaching at William Williams's: there were few people.

Wednesday, 4 February 1801. We crossed Little Pee Dee at the Potato Bed ferry. Beautiful deep sands, live oaks, lofty pines, palmetto swamps, with intermingled gums and cypresses, variegated by evergreens of bay and laurel, and twining jessamine flinging its odours far and wide around; lawns and savannahs: such is the country, and such the charming scenes through which we have frequently passed in our late rides. We brought up at Richard Green's, near Kingston.²⁰

Letter from Francis Asbury dated "Kingston, S.C. February 4, 1801" and addressed to George Roberts. [Pastor of Light Street Church in Baltimore, Maryland]

"My most dearly beloved Brother:

What so long expected came at last from you and Brother Morrell.²¹ We came along west of Charleston and sent a messenger to bring our letters to Kingston 100 miles on this side Charleston. We mark the pillar and the flame of fire that are the Providence and work of God....."

Thursday, 5 February 1801. Counsel and conversation with the presiding elders, several long letters to the north and south, and reading, furnished occupation for the day. I received the compilation of Nicholas Snethen, intended as an answer to James O'Kelly: it is well done, and very correctly done, except in a few cases. There was no sharpness at all upon my side with Doctor Coke at Charleston respecting the proposed general conference, which was afterward held (in 1792):²² I was fully convinced that nothing *else* would finish the unhappy business with O'Kelly; and that did finish it.

Friday, 6 February 1801. Occupied in reading and writing.²³ The preachers had not yet made out our plan for a forward move. One Sabbath day yet at Kingston, and then we keep along towards the lovely north.

Letter from Francis Asbury dated "Kingston, S.C. February 6, 1801" and addressed to Thomas Morrell. [Pastor in New York]

"My very dear and loved Brother:

Grace, mercy and peace be abundantly multiplied to thee now and ever. Your letter came late to hand, by our sending a messenger to Charleston, after conference. We happily received them at Kingston, on our way to Wilmington....."

Saturday, 7 February 1801. I rode to Robert Anderson's²⁴ in the Swamps, and met about thirty souls, to whom I spoke on Ephes. ii, 8-10. Returned to Richard Green's.

²⁰ Kingston was the present Conway, South Carolina. (See letter to George Roberts, February 4, 1801.)

²¹ Pastor in New York.

²² See note under March 23, 1791.

²³ See letter to Thomas Morrell, February 6, 1801.

²⁴ Robert Anderson lived seven miles north of Kingston, the present Conway, near the present Poplar Methodist Church.

Sabbath day, 8 February 1801. At Kingston. A lovely day; but few people-perhaps not more than one hundred, including the coloured folks. My subject was Luke ix, 24. Brother Whatcoat spoke on John iii, 16. It is now sixteen years since I rode, anxious and solitary, through this part of the land; there was scarcely a house to receive me, and no Methodist to bid me welcome; but God hath given us many friends, of some of those whose houses I lodged in; witness the children of Mr. Clark, and of Durant-and their widows also.

We have been obliged to rest on *Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sabbath day*, and *Monday*, 9th, with Richard Green. Mr. Rogers will not give us an invitation: his kindness towards the Methodists is at an end.²⁵

Tuesday, 10 February 1801. We rode sixteen miles to Kullum's meeting house:²⁶ it was a cold day, and coming after such warm weather, its severity was the more sensibly felt; about midday it rained powerfully. My subject was Heb. ii, 1. After meeting we rode to father Kullum's, an old Maryland man, from Dorset county. Here I met Benjamin Sellers, a local preacher, and a faithful servant of God.

Wednesday, 11 February 1801. We went forward to William Norton's,²⁷ at the Iron Run; a distance of twelve miles, through swampy ground. Brother Whatcoat peached, and ordained brother Sellers a deacon. I spoke from Gal. iv, 19. It was a disagreeable time, the people were trembling with cold.

Thursday, 12 February 1801. We rode twenty miles to Frinke's.²⁸

Friday, 13 February 1801.-At Ebenezer:-the house was unfinished and the day windy and uncomfortable. Brother Whatcoat and myself held the people nearly three hours. My text was Gal. vi, 14-16.

A Solomon Reeves let me know that he had seen the *Address*, signed by me; and was quite confident there were no arguments to prove that slavery was repugnant to the spirit of the Gospel: what absurdities will not men defend! If the Gospel will tolerate slavery, what will it not authorize? I am strangely mistaken if this said Mr. Reeves has more grace than is necessary, or more of *Solomon* than the name. We lodged for the night at William Gores's.

From this neighbourhood we came to Abraham Bepent's, Brunswick county, North Carolina, fording the Seven-mile Creek, and crossing the Wacamaw River at Loftus's Flat.

We have ridden at least five hundred and fifty, if not six hundred miles, over the hills, barrens, swamps, savannahs, rivers, and creeks of South Carolina.

²⁵ W. Rogers lived a short distance south of Kingston, the present Conway. He came from Bristol, England. He had entertained Asbury on December 24, 1795, December 26, 1796, and February 5, 1797 (?). The cause of his coldness in 1801 is not known, but it was a temporary matter since he entertained Asbury again on January 11, 1802.

²⁶ Kullum and Kullum meetinghouse are unidentified.

²⁷ Mr. Norton lived near the present Loris in Horry County near the North Carolina line.

²⁸ Asbury must have entered North Carolina in the present Columbus County, then a part of Brunswick County. [I believe this note is in the wrong place, I think Asbury was still in SC until the next day. Frink, Reeves and Gore are all Horry County, SC names. (See the next day's entry)]

At Gause's Manor, or more properly *town*, we were pleasantly situated. I had a most solemn visit to the sea beach, which to me was a most instructive sight: the sea reminded me of its great Maker, "who stayeth the proud waves thereof"; its innumerable productions; the diversified features of its shores-the sandhills; the marsh; the palmetto, tall and slender; the sheep and goats frisking in the shade or browsing in the sun: or the eye, directed to the waters, beholds the rolling porpoise; the seagulls lifting and letting fall from high the clam, which, breaking, furnishes them with food; the eagles with hovering wings watching for their prey; the white sail of the solitary vessel tossed upon the distant wave-how interesting a picture do all these objects make!

We preached at William Gause's, the patriarch of the place: his son stood for scribe, and assisted me in making extracts of letters to add to my manuscript.

We visited Charlotte meeting house, named after the river, vulgarly and improperly called *Shalotte*. On our return, I prepared a few long letters for the north. My mind is in great peace. I lament that I have no access to the poor: our way is strangely closed up at present in consequence of the *Address*. I made my last visit to the sea. I thought upon my friends on the other side the great waters; my voyage to this country; the little probability there was of my ever again seeing my dear mother, or my native land.

We have had preaching in three or four places: to wit, at Bepent's, in Brunswick county, and at the Manor.

January 1802

Sabbath, 10 January 1802. At Georgetown Nicholas Snethen spoke upon Philippians ii, 1, 2; in the afternoon I spoke upon Galatians vi, 9; at night, Nicholas Snethen again held forth upon "O that they were wise," &c.

Monday, 11 January 1802. We took the path; dined on the fare we brought with us; and lodged with Mr. Rogers, in Kingston;²⁹ having made the distance forty-two miles by going somewhat out of the way.

Tuesday, 12 January 1802. We had between forty and fifty people to hear us in an open house. We lodged at Mr. Wilson's. Next day we crossed Wacamaw at Kingston, came on to Little River,³⁰ fed at M. Hankin's, and reached Abraham Bessant's, where we housed for the night.

Thursday, 14 January 1802. Nicholas Snethen came forward in the name of his Master: I followed upon "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." After preaching, we rode on to the house of my once dear friend William Gause, senior; but death had stolen a march upon me-the body of my friend was in the dust, his soul is, I hope and trust, with God.

Friday, 15 January 1802. I visited old Ocean: upon my return I made out a plan for fourteen months' traveling.

²⁹ Kingston was the present Conway.

³⁰ Little River is in the eastern part of Horry County, two miles from the North Carolina line.

Saturday, 16 January 1802. We attended a meeting at Charlotteville³¹ meeting house: Nicholas Snethen spoke upon “Faith, hope, and charity”; I followed on “Let us come therefore boldly, to the throne of grace.” We have ridden a solitary, sandy way, about a hundred and ten miles; and in three meetings there were not many more than one hundred souls. O Lord, can these dry bones live? I have been kept in a dependent, praying state of soul. We have the most delightful weather, kind friends, and good entertainment for man and beast. I trust the seed sown in the hearts of some will live and grow to the glory of God, and the good of generations to come to the end of time. I have now filled up two thousand miles of the three thousand I had calculated to be the distance from and back again to Philadelphia; hitherto I have been mightily helped. Glory, glory, glory to the Eternal Trinity in Eternal Unity! We lodged at John Gause’s:³² our host is a local minister, and, I trust, a dear child of God; I hope he never may entail the system of slaveholding upon his posterity.

December 1810

Wednesday, 5 December 1810. We are not, nor have we been lately, much amongst our own people; but it has made little difference in the article of expense—the generous Carolinians are polite and kind, and will not take our money. [written while in Fairfield County, South Carolina]

January 1811

Sabbath, 6 January 1811. ...*Friday*, we crossed Lenud’s ferry, and made a ride of twenty-five miles. *Saturday* reached Georgetown. I am always in fetters in this place; and were they to offer me twenty such towns as a bribe I would not visit it again; but I must do my duty without a bribe.

January 1815

Tuesday, 17 January 1815. We started away in company with William M. Kennedy, and James Norton,³³ with the last of whom we parted at the ferry over Black River. Lodged with Mr. Rogers³⁴—his father has gone to rest. On our route we visited Bethel Durant, and saw his brethren, John and Henry: their simple-hearted, kind father entertained me thirty years ago on my returning from my visit to Charleston.

³¹ Charlotteville was the present Shallotte, North Carolina.

³² There were six branches of the Gause family in Brunswick County, North Carolina—Benjamin, Charles, Susanna, Bryant, John, Nedam, and William. All of them owned slave. (Heads of Families, N.C., 1790, 189.)

³³ William M. Kennedy and James Norton were young preachers who became leaders in the South Carolina Conference. Kennedy had just been appointed presiding elder of the Pee Dee District, and Norton was on his way to the Sandy River Circuit in North Carolina.

³⁴ Rogers lived at Kingston. He was the son of Asbury’s former host at that place.

Wednesday, 18 January 1815. Crossed the lakes and Waccamaw³⁵ and got in after eight o'clock to brother Frink's. At William Guse's, I saw my kind mothers in Israel, Guse and Rogers. I continue to expectorate blood. Is it possible that the children of the French Protestant martyrs to the tyranny of Louis XIV, and his bloody priesthood, can ever forget the God of their fathers? Noble, holy men, may God gather in your children to the latest generations!

Friday, 20 January 1815. A dash of rain stopped us awhile, but we went forward thirty miles to Wilmington. I feel the effect of the damps.

Sabbath, 22 January 1815. I preached in the chapel. O, wretched appearance of broken windows! It was a sacramental day. Were I a young man, I should not wish to be stationed in Wilmington. Our funds are low here, and our house a wreck.

The last entry in Asbury's journal was from Granby, South Carolina and dated Thursday, 7 December 1815. Asbury preached his last sermon on March 24, 1816, in the old Methodist church in Richmond, Virginia. He died on Sunday, 31 March 1816 in Spottsylvania, Virginia, in the home of his old friend George Arnold. Asbury was 71 years old. His body was first laid to rest in the Arnold family burying grounds. It was later moved to a vault in the Eutaw Street Methodist Church in Baltimore, Maryland and in June, 1854 transferred to its final resting place in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Baltimore, Maryland.

³⁵ After crossing Waccamaw Lake the bishop proceeded by way of Little River to Wilmington, North Carolina.