



Global Ministries

Celebrating 200 Years in Mission

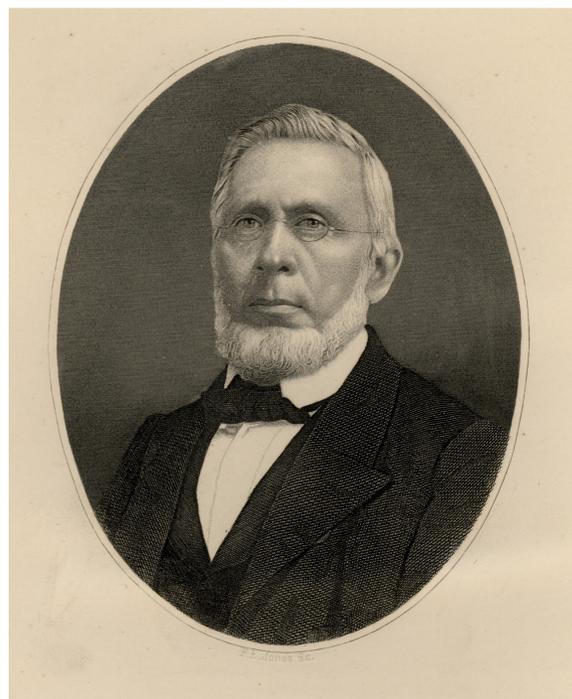


Photo: General Commission on Archives and History

WILHELM NAST

The First German Methodist Missionary

Wilhelm Nast was born in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1807. After attending seminary, Nast declined to take a pastoral appointment in the state-supported Lutheran Church to follow his desire to teach. Instead, he emigrated to the United States where he taught, most notably, as a German teacher at West Point.

Nast became attracted to the pietistic elements in Methodism. With a theological education already in hand, Nast answered Bishop Emory's call for German-speaking Methodist preachers. Nast became the founder of the German-speaking Methodist movement in 1835, when he was sent by the Ohio Conference to be a German missionary in Cincinnati.

Nast gathered German immigrants into classes, which formed the basis of the German Districts of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Nast's work at the General Conference of 1848 gave the German Districts their legal standing to become integrated, but separate annual conferences in American Methodism.

Nast provided the first German translations of foundational Methodist documents such as the *Book of Discipline*, Articles of Religion, and General Rules. He translated a collection of Wesley's standard sermons and a collection of German hymns. Nast also published and edited the influential German-language Methodist weekly *Der Christliche Apologete*. Nast's German catechisms were widely read by German-speaking Methodists in America and in Germany.

Nast's German-American missions prospered so quickly that the Methodist Episcopal General Conference explored a mission back to Germany. Accordingly, Nast embarked on a tour of Germany in 1844. Nast's protégé, L. S. Jacoby, was sent to Bremen in December 1849 to found work in that city, and it soon spread onward. By the 1890s German Methodism had become so vigorous and self-supporting that it mounted further missions into Switzerland, Austro-Hungary and Russia.

Adapted from W. Harrison Daniel, "Wilhelm Nast (1807-1899): Founder of German-Speaking Methodism in America and Architect of the Methodist Episcopal Church Mission in Europe," *Methodist History* 39:3 (April 2001): 154-166.