

The YMCA Spiritual Legacy

Seven Great YMCA Leaders and the YMCA Logo



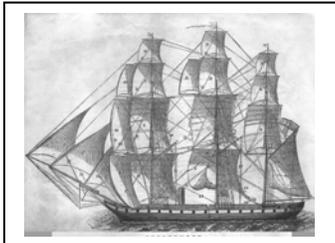
George Williams was born in a farmhouse in southern England in 1821. When he arrived in London in 1840 to become a drapers apprentice, his faith was challenged by the worldliness of the city. He managed to find a few young workers who by their example, encouraged him to give his own life more completely to Jesus Christ. On June 6, 1844, twelve men, led by

George Williams, who was 22, founded the Young Men's Christian Association, and thus the YMCA was born. The original mission read:

"I cannot describe to you the joy and peace that flowed into my soul when I first saw that the Lord Jesus had died for my sins, and that they were all forgiven."

"The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) seeks to unite those young men, who regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men."

For his service to the well-being of the nation, Queen Victoria knighted him. He has been commemorated by a stained glass window in Westminster Abbey and is buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, both among the highest honors given to English national heroes.



Thomas Sullivan

Around 1850, Thomas Sullivan of Boston was organizing groups to pass out pamphlets that explained the message of God's love in Jesus Christ. Sullivan, a retired Canadian sea-whaling captain and lay missionary for the

Baptist Church, also worried about the temptations facing young men in large cities. He sought to provide a "home away from home" for young sailors on shore leave. From his journal in 1851 we read this,

"In October of 1851, I read this newspaper account of this new organization in London that had been formed for young men who had pledged their lives to Jesus Christ and needed a wholesome alternative to life on the street. I thought this would fit my young men just fine. So I traveled to London to visit the YMCA, and upon my return summoned together other concerned Christian leaders to consider establishing a YMCA in order that these young men be nurtured in their Christian faith. We agreed to start the first YMCA in the United States."

On December 15, Sullivan and six others drafted a constitution that was reviewed at a second meeting a week later. On December 29, in the chapel of the Old South Church in Spring Lane, they approved the constitution and began their work to improve "the spiritual and mental condition of young men." Thus, the YMCA in America began at the Old South Church in Boston.

lectures series, evening classes, social gatherings, excursions, a gymnasium, an employment department, and a register of respectable boarding houses. In addition, numerous religious activities, including bible classes and prayer meetings, were offered for young men and boys.

By 1853, the Boston YMCA had 1,500 members, most of whom were merchants and artisans. Members paid an annual membership fee to use the facilities and services of the association.

By 1855, there were 24 YMCAs across the United States from New York to San Francisco and from New Orleans to Detroit and Washington DC. The first national meeting was held in New York, forming a voluntary association of YMCA's in the U.S. and Canada.

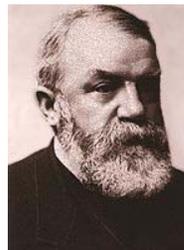


Anthony Bowen. The first YMCA in the world established to serve African American people came into being in 1853, seven years before the Civil War and ten years before slavery was officially ended in the United States. The principal founder was a former slave, Anthony Bowen, who, with a group of friends, organized the "YMCA for Colored Men and Boys" in Washington, D.C., just nine years after the world's first

YMCA was founded in London, England and less than two years after the first North American YMCAs were organized in Boston and Montreal

Anthony Bowen was an unusual man. Born a slave in 1809 in nearby Prince George's County, Maryland, Bowen moved to Washington in 1826 and became legally free within four years. Remarkably, given the times in which he lived, Bowen was the first black man to become a clerk in the U.S. Patent Office. Bowen first heard of the YMCA from a white co-worker, William Chauncy Langdon, a member of the board of the year-old Washington YMCA for white men and boys. With black people barred from membership in any organizations of the day, Bowen decided that a "Black YMCA" was needed.

The YMCA was not the first institution Bowen founded. Mr. Bowen served as a local preacher for forty years, and under his guidance the St. Paul AME Church was founded in 1856. Bowen also established a Sunday Evening School for children and adults. Both met in his home in the 900 block of E Street.



D.L. Moody. Active in the 1859 prayer revival in Chicago, Moody helped establish Chicago's YMCA and became its first full-time employee. In 1861 Moody became a city missionary for the YMCA. Moody rose to its presidency from 1866 to 1869. He had a part in erecting the first Y.M.C.A. building in

America when he supervised the erection of Farwell Hall in 1867, seating 3,000.

It was during this first visit to Britain that Moody heard the words which set him hungering and thirsting after a deeper Christian experience and which marked a new era in his life. The words were spoken to him by Mr. Henry Varley, the well known evangelist, as they sat together on a seat in

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a public park in Dublin. The words were these: *"The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully consecrated to Him."* "He said 'a man'" thought Moody, "he did not say, a great man, nor a learned man, nor a 'smart' man, but simply 'a man.' I am a man, and it lies with the man himself whether he will or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man."



James Naismith, originator of basketball. When James Naismith applied on May 27, 1889, to be a student at the YMCA Training School, he answered this question among others: "What is the work of a YMCA Physical Director?" He answered, "To win men for the Master through the gym." His job at Springfield was to

train men for ministry in the growing Sunday school movement and the similarly expanding YMCA.



Oswald Chambers – Chaplain and Author Oswald was born on July 24, 1874 in Aberdeen Scotland, where he became a Christian during his teen years under the ministry of Charles Spurgeon.

God used many things to shape and mold Chambers. One of which was his acceptance into the University of

Edinburgh. Rapid spiritual development followed as Chambers became intently interested in the things of God. From 1906-10, he conducted itinerant Bible-teaching ministries in the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan.

In 1915, Chambers was commissioned by YMCA to go to Zeitoun, Egypt, where he ministered to Australian and New Zealand troops during World War I.

Many of Chambers' devotional lectures make up a large portion of *My Utmost For His Highest*, now considered a classic and his best-known book. His death, the result of a ruptured appendix in 1917, came as a shock to all who knew him. He had often told friends: "I feel I shall be buried for a time, hidden away in obscurity; then suddenly I shall flame out, do my work, and be gone."

After his death, a fellow worker remarked: "It is a mighty thing to see even once in a lifetime a man the self-expression of whose being is the Redemption of Jesus Christ manifested in daily hourly living. He would have [simply] called himself 'A believer in Jesus.'" The fact is, God made this man "a refuge from the storm" for many downcast souls. Through his written words, God continues to touch and change lives for Christ's sake.



John R. Mott. From 1915 to 1928, Mott was general-secretary of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A. and from 1926 to 1937 president of the Y.M.C.A.'s World Committee. During World War I, when the Y.M.C.A. offered its services to **President Wilson**, Mott became general secretary of the National War Work

Council, receiving the Distinguished Service Medal for his work. At 81, the Nobel committee awarded him one of the highest honors given on earth--the Nobel Peace Prize. In his own words:

"If the Young Men's Christian Association is to increase its spiritual vitality and fruitfulness, it must maintain at all costs its distinctively Christian Character.... This is tantamount to saying that it must preserve its clear Christian aim, its unshakable Christian foundation...."

The Association must steadfastly resist the danger of becoming a mere human institution ...

This essential must never be compromised, obscured, or abandoned for the sake of any plausible outward success or worldly advantage for such a course would mark the beginning of the end. Wherever an Association lacks world-conquering power, it is because it has to some extent been conquered by the world."



The YMCA Logo. Inside the circle are the first two letters of the word Christ. The Greek letters Chi and Rho (XP) form the ancient symbol that early Christians painted on the walls of the catacombs. It was used by the YMCA to remind all that Christ was at the center of the movement.

Finally an open Bible was added "both because this divine book is the weapon of warfare which St. John gives to young men, and because it's the distinguishing mark of the great Reformation. The Bible opens on the Savior's High Priestly prayer, from which we have especially chosen the 21st verse: 'That they all may be one...as We are one' - John 17:21." This remains the YMCA's official emblem.

*Rev. Tom Welch
Central Florida YMCA
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"It is our duty to evangelize the world because we owe all men the gospel. To have a knowledge of Christ is to incur a responsibility to every man who has it not..."