

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God Vol 9 No 1 Fall 2008



Rupert's third gospel van, now stored inside a permanent building

THE STORY OF A GOSPEL VAN

In 1895, missionary evangelists, John H. and Hattie Rupert, had just returned to England after eight months of evangelistic work in Hamburg, Germany. They conceived of their first 'gospel van,' a horse-drawn 'gypsy caravan' home office on wheels in which they could live and from which they could distribute Gospel Trumpet literature to all who were interested.

For most of the next year, accompanied by evangelist Lena Shoffner, they traveled about

the Birkenhead-Liverpool area of England preaching 'the gospel of full salvation' and handing out literature.

After returning to the United States, the Ruperts eventually built a second horse-drawn gospel van. This one was equipped to serve as an outdoor 'chapel' as well as living quarters for the Ruperts as they traveled about in west central Pennsylvania.

Eventually, a third gospel van was constructed—this time on the back of truck, which, reportedly, was one of the first in Callensburg PA, where Rupert served as pastor. That van (pictured left) is now stored in a permanent building erected for that purpose at Burnside campgrounds in west central Pennsylvania. (The photo was taken by Dale Stultz.)

Pictured below is Elizabeth Rupert, J.H. and Eva Rupert's daughter. Now 90 years of age, she is the retired Dean of the College of Library Science of Clarion College in Pennsylvania. (Continued on Page 8)



Elizabeth Rupert, daughter of J.H. and Eva Rupert (whose portrait she holds)

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***Newsletter of the Historical
Society of the Church of God
(Anderson)***

Vol 9 No 1 Fall 2008

This newsletter is published three times a year: Fall; Winter; and Spring. It is published by the Society on behalf of its members. Printed in Anderson Indiana.

All correspondence should be addressed to: Historical Society of the Church of God, P.O. Box 702, Anderson, Indiana 46015. Email should be sent to *Merle D. Strege*, Society President, at: mdstrege@anderson.edu.

Church of God Historian is managed by the Executive Committee of the Society. Merle D. Strege, President, Dale E. Stultz, Vice-President, and Sadie B. Evans, Secretary-Treasurer. Others serve on the Committee as requested by the President.

The Historical Society

The Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) exists to encourage the collection and preservation of artifacts and documents relating to the history of the Church of God; to encourage historical research and the writing of Church of God history; and to provide a forum for like-minded people interested in participating in and furthering the study of Church of God history.

Membership is open to all who are vitally interested in what the Society desires to accomplish. Membership dues are \$15 per year (\$10 for students.) Checks should be made out to *Historical Society of the Church of God* and sent to Box 702, Anderson IN 46015.

Historical Society of the Church of God 2008 Treasurer's Report

Income

Balance Forward (June,2007):	\$ 3,688.82
Membership/Gifts:	\$ 4,647.06
Book Fund:	\$25,625.07
Total:	\$ 33,960.95

Expenditures:

B.E. Warren Cabin	\$ 158.27
Memberships/Gifts	\$ 2,251.92
Book Fund	\$20,886.54
Total:	\$23,296.73

Closing Bank Balance (as of the evening of June 30, 2008): \$ 9,894.62



The photo above was sent to us by Richard Swank. He discovered it among a number of old photographs which had belonged to his parents-in-law, Cuthbert and Joanna Youngblood (see story, pages 6-7). It is one of many old photos sent to us—or collected in one way or another—in the past several months. Elizabeth Rupert has provided us with a number of old photos of the J.H. Rupert family (missionaries to Birkenhead, England, Hamburg, Germany, and Pennsylvania) which we will be featuring in the *Church of God Historian* in the next issues. We suspect many old, historically-important photographs such as these are to be found in family albums, boxes, and envelopes left behind by parents and grandparents. We can either get them over to Church of God Archives or copy them digitally and send the originals back to you. Please look and ask around. Photos can be historically important!

WHY STUDY (AND KEEP) THE PAST?

Of the material that passed across my reading table and into my hands this Summer, a pair of items reminded me again of my vocation as a historian of Christianity and the importance of the work done by the Archives and the Historical Society. Rowan Williams, the current Archbishop of Canterbury calls to our attention once again that “history is a set of stories we tell in order to understand better who we are and the world we’re now inWe start telling the story to get a better definition of who we are or to what the subject is we’re describing: history thus helps us define things” (*Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church*, Eerdmans 2005, p.1).

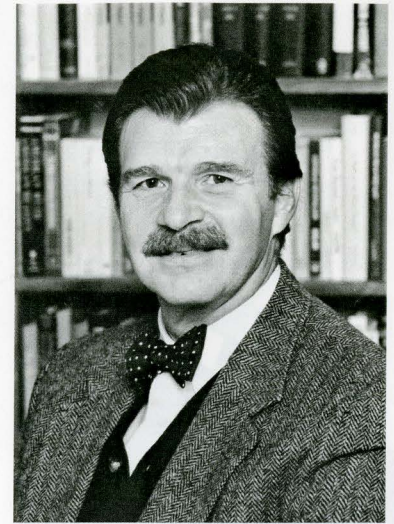
In other words, history is more the study of us than merely the study of long ago. If we want to understand ourselves and gain some perspective on us and our times, it turns out then, in the words of historian David McCullough, that we *need* history. In an article in *American Heritage* magazine, he observes that it does not bode well for America’s future that the rising generations are largely ignorant of the nation’s history. A people “cannot truly know who we are or where we are going unless we know where we have been” (“History and Knowing Who We Are,” *American Heritage*, Winter 2008, p.14).

McCullough’s caution about America’s future applies with equal force to the church, specifically the Church of God reformation movement. Thus, following the lead of the moral philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre, I have often observed that we cannot know what to do

unless we have first asked the question, “Who are we?” But we cannot answer that question until we have answered the prior question, “Of what stories are we a part?” To think thus is to consider church history a moral and political art (see the essay by that title in my *Tell Me the Tale: Historical Reflections on the Church of God*, Warner Press, 1991, pp.137-157).

Of course, one cannot study history or reflect on our common past without *places* designated to collect and preserve the materials, the artifacts and records, which historians study to assemble the elements of stories that help answer MacIntyre’s questions. People concerned about the future direction of the Church of God can be thankful that we live at a moment when church leaders and benefactors appreciate the importance and necessity of history as we seek answers to our present and guidance for the future.

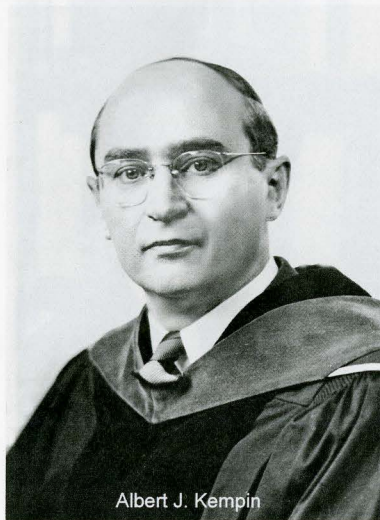
The Archives of the Church of God and the proposed Interpretive Center are two wonderful gifts, not only to people concerned about the preservation of the movement’s history, but also for those charged with responsibility of leading us into the future. Thanks to the generosity of many, the Archives has developed into a fine and usable research tool. Forty years ago, when I was a seminary student, the Archives was that in name only. In fact, it was the church’s ‘hall closet,’ with no finding aids or means even to know for certain its contents. Today, the Archives welcomes visitors and receives research requests that can be answered quickly, thanks to years of dedicated service



and a continual flow of materials and other gifts.

Today we are poised to begin work on another major contribution to the historical study of the Church of God. As the insert in this number of the *Historian* describes, plans are now well underway for the construction and development of the *Church of God Interpretive Center*. Space for the Center has been reserved in the Church of God Ministries building. Thanks to a generous gift, the services of a designer have been retained and a plan developed. When completed, the center will provide visitors with the opportunity to reflect on specific themes important to the movement’s history and identity: holiness; unity; the Bible; healing/wholeness; and evangelism/mission.

Much more than a museum, the interpretive center will be a place to reflect on the movement’s past in order to answer the question, “What kind of people is God calling us to be today and tomorrow?” I hope that each member of the Historical Society will make a generous contribution to the construction and development of



Albert J. Kempin

Why the Church of God Should Know

ALBERT J. KEMPIN

At first, I could not specify my reasoning, but deep within I knew the Church of God ought to know more than it does about Albert J. Kempin (1900-1974). Early searching disclosed that the century-old Naomi Kempin (Albert's widow) still operated her car and drove friends to Sunday School.

Eventually I was able to contact Naomi Kempin Wright, the daughter of Albert and Naomi. From my lengthy correspondence with her, I learned of the death of her mother and her mother's devotion to the father she had nursed at home until his death in 1974 from 'ALS' (Lou Gehrig Disease).

When Naomi Wright offered to send boxes of Kempin memorabilia to me, I was ecstatic. I had met the Kempins in January, 1974. After I became a pastor, I found one of his books in the local library. From those days until now, Albert Kempin has never been very far off my radar screen. Now, thanks to his daughter, and after months of

living with his writings, scrapbooks, photos, and memorabilia here are some of my thoughts about why we need to be better acquainted with the man I met as Pastor Albert Kempin.

Albert Kempin devoted his best years to pastoral ministry

Not only did he pastor among many of our early generations, he became a premier pastor in some of our earliest urban churches, areas we have generally failed to reach adequately. He became a pastoral leader in the classical meaning of the word 'pastor.' He was of sterling character, with a quality education; he was a cultured gentleman, comfortable with life in the city. Although he was urbane and at home with scholars, people found him comfortable and gentle—a real person, genuinely gregarious. People of all ages loved him, but he left an especially large legacy as 'a friend of youth.'

Pastor Kempin modeled good pastoral relations

His personal papers contain correspondence with an elderly couple in which they write their former pastor confessing their obstinate hostility toward him during his years with them. In spite of the difficulty of those years, Pastor Kempin revealed the true shepherd's heart. He graciously accepted their confession and gently led the process through true biblical reconciliation for all concerned, including the congregation. Having been in that congregation and knowing that couple, I knew nothing of the distant relationship until I read the letters.

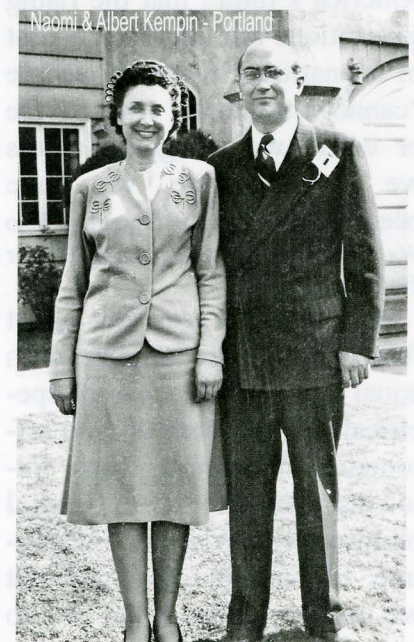
He was a true pastor with a true pastor's heart. He loved people.

A.J. Kempin was a writer

He wrote widely, including five books, numerous tracts, and public-relations articles. He was a Contributing Editor to the *Gospel Trumpet* from the 1920s to the 1960s. Throughout his ministry, he remained a popular and much-in-demand doctrinal writer, as well as a frequent contributor to Church of God curriculum materials.

Dr. Kempin pioneered in educational studies

Otto F. Linn was our first PhD in Biblical Studies, but Kempin joined Aubrey Forrest and other movement leaders in forging ahead educationally. He overcame his early educational shortfall, working his way through a Bachelors degree at Temple University and Taylor University, a Masters degree at the University of Southern California, and a doctoral degree from East Los Angeles Bible Seminary—where he taught for two years. He also taught part-



time at Pacific Bible College in Portland, Oregon and served on the team who established Arlington College (which later became part of Azusa Pacific University), serving as the founding Dean of Arlington.

A.J. Kempin exemplified the best in Church of God ministry throughout his life

Albert was one of the five surviving children born to Albert and Johanna Kempin. This German Lutheran family emigrated from Lithuania to Philadelphia when Albert was a small boy. One day, as his mother walked past a church building, she heard lovely music and went in. From then on, the family's life centered in the High Street Church of God (German). Early in life, Albert felt his call to preach. He began pastoral ministry in Camden, New Jersey in 1924. In 1927, he married Naomi and moved to Williamsburg (NYC). They later spent four years in Lansdale PA. Their move west in 1931 led to many years of ministry up and down the West Coast. Throughout his life, he was a man 'called to preach—passionately and purposefully.



Deeply in love with the Church of God, he nonetheless modeled a visible ecumenical ministry. He practiced what we pro-

claimed verbally, but often did not live up to. He modeled ministry for others. In San Diego First Church in 1931, he recruited a young Sunday School superintendant who helped him triple Sunday School attendance. That young man, Harold Phillips, later became Editor-in-Chief of the *Gospel Trumpet*. Kempin wrote: "If a person has grown mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and in experience, he can keep his feet on the ground while he towers above his fellows in service" (*Daniel For Today*: 47). He and Naomi illustrated this in their ministry.



—WAYNE M. WARNER



J.C. and Joanna Youngblood with Mary (Swank) 1919

They Met in a Missionary Training Home

John Cuthbert Youngblood was born October 28, 1888, in Pankey TX to Joseph and Martha Youngblood. The family, with twelve children, later homesteaded near Olathe CO, where Cuthbert helped with animals and crops and learned how to siphon water over a hill from the big irrigation ditch into the long furrows of the grain fields.

Cuthbert accepted the Lord as Savior when he was 12-years old and was asked to read from the family Bible for daily devotions. When he was 18-years of age, he went to Oakland CA, riding on a freight train with his father, who was shipping cattle to the West Coast. In Oakland, they attended the Church of God on Sunday. Just next door was the Missionary Training Home. Cuthbert wanted this education—to be part of this group. His father agreed to let him stay.

In 1908, Cuthbert and his roommate, John D. Crose, took the ferry across the bay to San Francisco to assist J.W. Byers in conducting meetings. The meetings were held in a large tent erected in Golden Gate Park, where there were still refugees from the devastating earthquake and fire of 1906.

In 1911, Cuthbert transferred to the Missionary Training Home in Kansas City MO, where he met Joanna Catherine Lively. Joanna had grown up in a homestead staked by her father when the Oklahoma Strip was opened on September 16, 1893. She had gone to the Missionary Training Home in 1910.

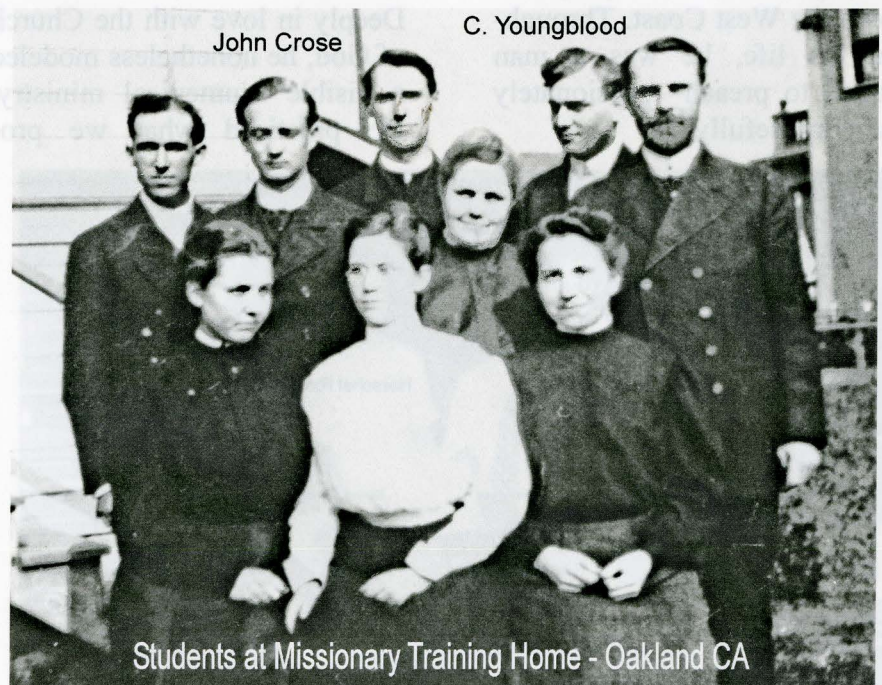
Brother and Sister Peterman, who were the directors of the Home, had established rigid rules of behavior. It was forbidden for couples to be alone together—even while eating at the table. Students had various responsibilities: cooking; cleaning; yard and maintenance work; assisting with daily devotionals; studying doctrinal books and the lives of great Christians. Two men or two

women served as teams for hospital visitation, knocking on doors, inviting people to church services, leaving books, and returning the following week to exchange books.

Both Cuthbert and Joanna were ordained at the Missionary Training Home and were married June 23, 1915. Neither of them had a salary of any kind. The Home was supported entirely by freewill offerings and the workers trusted the Lord completely for their support. There was no money for a honeymoon or elaborate festivities.

At their first pastorate, Anthony KS, their weekly salary was whatever was found in the offering box after church. One Sunday, the box yielded a sum of 25 cents. They had agreed to tithe their income and give 10 cents each for Sunday School offering, so the quarter was put into the little jar in the cupboard labeled "Lord's Fund." That was the week their firstborn, eleven-day-old daughter, hemorrhaged and died in Joanna's arms. It was December 5, 1916.

Neodesha KS was the next



Students at Missionary Training Home - Oakland CA



place Cuthbert and Joanna went to serve. He became a substitute mail carrier to supplement his church 'salary.' In 1918, 'flu' ravaged the country, taking thousands of lives. People came to church out of curiosity to hear their mail carrier preach.

After their daughter, Mary Martha (born September 10, 1918) was nine months old, the family moved by train to Minnesota to pastor two congregations, Hewitt and Bertha. Their first home in Bertha was a log house; then they moved to a 'tin' house before the parsonage was built.

Their last pastorate was a little country church, Hope Chapel, near Verndale, where he married their daughter to Richard Swank on August 30,



1947. Cuthbert and Joanna had four grandchildren: Sylvia; Sharon; Stanford; and Sheldon Swank. Following their retirement the Youngbloods enjoyed

their farm near Bertha, which provided them with a large garden, and orchard, and a few cattle, geese, and chickens.

Cuthbert died in 1963 and Joanna moved to Edmonds WA to live with Richard and Mary Swank. Joanna died in 1968. She and her husband are both buried in the Bertha Cemetery beside their daughter, Lillian.

— RICHARD L. SWANK



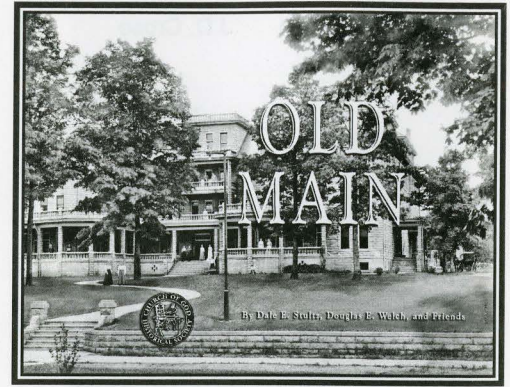
(Continued from Page 1)

How did we learn of Elizabeth Rupert? The way we learn about a good deal of Church of God history: by word of mouth. In this case from a Convention visitor who walked into the Barney Warren Cabin and said, "Did you know there's a Rupert gospel van on display up in the mountains of Pennsylvania?"

Dale then called Vern Allison, Ministries Director of Western Pennsylvania, who provided the initial information that led to Elizabeth Rupert and the gospel

van. In a subsequent telephone conversation with Elizabeth, Dale was invited to her home, where he was able to photograph digitally many photos and memorabilia from the years of the three gospel vans.

In the next two issues of *Church of God Historian*, we will feature the story of the van, beginning in Birkenhead, England in 1895. It is a fascinating story—one of the many in our history not widely known today. Birkenhead is another of those 'hinges' on small, but important, doors to our past.



NEW PUBLICATION BY THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AVAILABLE

Our new book, *Old Main*, an unusual collection of memoirs and photographs, was officially 'unveiled' at the eighth annual meeting of the Historical Society of the Church of God on June 21, 2008. Most of the twenty-two memoirists were present to receive their gift copies of this outstanding book.

The price of this large-format book is only \$28.95, plus \$5 for handling and mailing. To order your copy contact Sadie Evans, 765-643-3702, or mail your request to Box 702, Anderson IN 46012—or pick it up personally from Sadie.



Dale Stultz set up his Historical Society display in the gospel van building at Burnside camp meeting (above) and on the walls of the van itself (below).



Continued from Page 3

the Church of God Interpretive Center. It is our opportunity to contribute to the future of the Church of God. As McCullough wrote, whether or not they realize it, the future generation needs history. We must take all appropriate steps to make this history available to them.

— Merle D. Strege
*Historian of the
Church of God*