

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God

Volume 13 Number 2 Winter 2013



KEMPIN ARCHIVES

We have recently acquired the personal archives of Albert J. Kempin, longtime pastor, evangelist, and educator in the Pacific Northwest from Kempin's daughter, Naomi Wright. These documents and photographs greatly increase our knowledge of the Church of God in California and the Pacific Northwest. Albert J. Kempin was the subject of an article by Wayne Warner and contains other biographical information. It was published in the *Church of God Historian*, Fall, 2008.

Collecting such material is one of the concerns of this Society. If you know of other archives such as these which are available, please contact us.

In the photo above, Dale Stultz (standing left) with Wayne Warner looking on, unpacks the A.J. Kempin archives, which were sent to Wayne from the Northwest by Kempin's daughter. Dale is shown holding a scrap-book filled with historical treasures.

In the photo to the right, Wayne (left) and Dale closely examine some of the numerous historical photographs included in the collection. Many of these are new to us. All, eventually, will be placed in Church of God Archives.



Church of God Historian

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

Vol 13 No 2 Winter 2013

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*, Historical 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, Sadie B. Evans, Secretary-Treasurer, D.E. Welch, Publisher and Managing Editor.

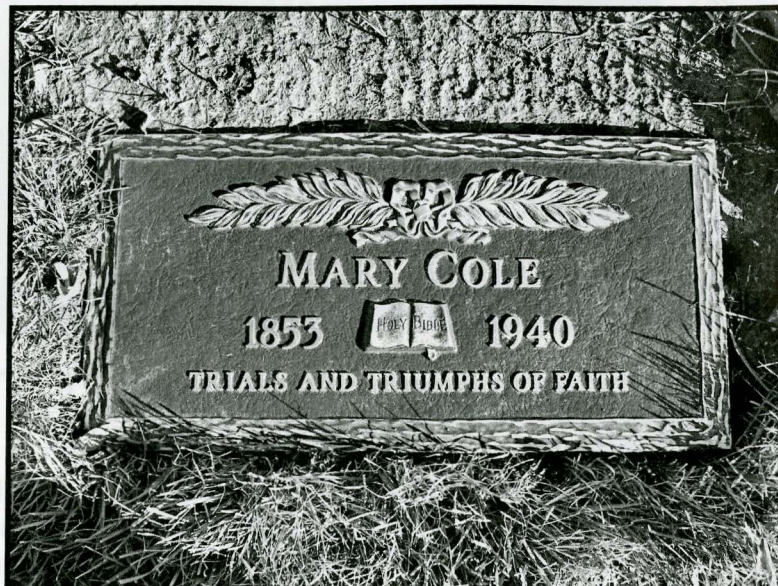
The Historical Society

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.

Website:

www.choghistoricalsociety.org



COLE MEMORIAL

We are pleased indeed to inform you that the grave marker for Mary Cole has now been appropriately installed in Anderson Memorial Park Cemetery. Members of the Historical Society gathered at the unmarked grave site in June, 2012 to remember one of the important pioneers of the Church of God.

Mary, a Methodist Exhorter, along with her brothers, Jeremiah and George, joined

the Holiness Movement and began preaching holiness and Christian unity well before meeting D.S. Warner. Even though she was very anti-Warner at first, she later joined forces with him, becoming a noted preacher and writer in 'the movement.' "Trials and Triumphs of Faith" was published by the Gospel Trumpet Company in 1915.

When this 'project' was announced in 2012, many of you responded generously indeed, enabling us to pay the 'bill' in full. Thank you!!



Dale Stultz reading the bronze marker at Mary Cole's grave

The Dragon and the Dome

I recently shared a conversation with a friend who teaches at the University of Indianapolis. Through a variety of channels he has become relatively well-acquainted with the Church of God and, more specifically, Anderson University. In the course of our conversation he commented on the fact that he and his ideas have been received better at AU than at some other nearby Christian colleges. He also noted the presence of Roman Catholics on the AU faculty where none would be found on those same nearby campuses.

The conversation reminds me of a profound moment in the history of the Church of God: the 1970 commencement exercises at then Anderson College. Earlier that spring President Robert Reardon had announced that he had invited Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, president of the University of Notre Dame, to deliver the commencement address. Reardon's announcement sent shockwaves through the Church of God. A sizeable number of ministers retained much of the anti-Catholic spirit that imbued the early movement. F. G. Smith's books were a principal source of this spirit, but he was by no means alone in this attitude.

Although not as virulent, John Morrison shared

much of Smith's antipathy toward Catholicism. From several corners of the movement, then, objections poured into Reardon's office. Many demanded that he withdraw his invitation.

Robert Reardon remained steadfast. Hesburgh was a distinguished American with a long record of public service. Moreover, the invitation to a sitting Notre Dame president was Reardon's way of acknowledging the debt owed by Anderson for the assistance Notre Dame officials had generously provided during AC's drive to accreditation. So Commencement exercises would be conducted as planned.

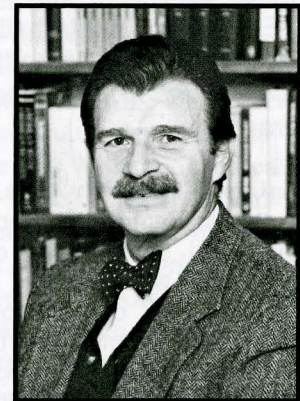
Inside a packed Warner Auditorium, the evening of June 15, 1970 was one of those warm, humid Hoosier nights when, in the words of Neil Diamond, "You'd almost bet you could hear yourself sweat." The charge in the atmosphere intensified as the academic procession entered, first the graduating class, followed by the faculty and then trustees.

At last, in walked Reardon and Hesburgh, the latter wearing not an academic's mortarboard cap but his biretta, the four-cornered cap of a Catholic priest. Hesburgh began his address with the customary acknowledgments and then paused. As he looked out over 7,500 souls he added, "And my brothers and sisters." His greeting did not win over the hearts of all in attendance that night.

For many weeks following the 1970 Commencement Robert Reardon received dozens of letters in reaction to Father Hesburgh's appearance. Some expressed appreciation, even pride, in Reardon's act; others were sharply critical. A few days after commencement Reardon also had to eat some humble pie in the General Assembly. (That, however, is another story.)

Then or now, Theodore Hesburgh's commencement address in 1970 marked a turning point in the life of Anderson College. It was a significant step toward the kind of institution described in the opening paragraph of this column.

Merle D. Strege
Historian of the
Church of God



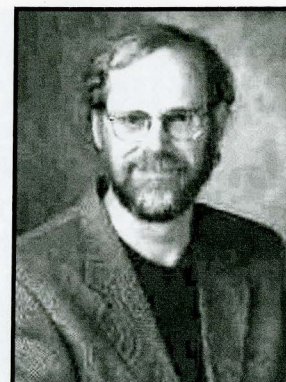
We will be happy to receive 2012-23 dues from those of you who have not sent them in. And, since we will not have an annual meeting this year, you may send us your dues for 2013-2014 as well. Thank you for your support!

Box 702 Anderson IN 46015

The Rope Incident at Hartselle: A Personal Reexamination

by

Donald Boggs, Chairman, Communication Department,
Anderson University
April 21, 2003



In preparation this past fall for the production of a video for the Women in Ministry Task Force of the Church of God, I heard again the story of a segregated Southern camp meeting where a woman preached a sermon that resulted in the removal of a rope which had divided the congregation. This seemed to me like an ideal example of the importance of women in ministry, so I sought to research this further and if possible, find a quotation from the woman preacher which could be used in the production.

C.E. Brown related the incident in his book *When the Trumpet Sounded*, in a short paragraph:

Late in the nineteenth century (1897) the Alabama state camp meeting, held some miles out from Hartselle, was attended by both races, with only a rope stretched down the middle of the tent as a recognition of segregation. One day Lena Shoffner preached a sermon about tearing down the middle wall of partition. Someone took the rope down and whites and blacks knelt at the same altar together. That night a mob came in wild fury. They threw dynamite under the boardinghouse and the camp houses and ferreted out the preachers like hounds hunting rabbits.

Brown unfortunately did not cite sources for this account. I

researched further, seeking details about the event so that I could stage a recreation for the screen and also find a statement from Shoffner that could be used in the piece. After days of research I found myself empty-handed and beginning to doubt the incident had happened as Brown had described it. I found no written record of it, other than many other authors' repetitions of Brown's description.

For example, John W. V. Smith in *The Quest for Holiness and Unity* tells the story essentially verbatim from Brown's account. The story is frequently quoted and has appeared in dissertations, articles and even websites. I have been unable to find any other clear documentation of this event, but several persons in Alabama have assured me that it happened.

Of course, this event may not have been as significant at the time as it now seems to us today. Or it may be that the event was a controversial one, left best unsaid. I had expected to discover some report of this in the News from the Field section of the Gospel Trumpet, but found none. A review of issues from 1890 to 1905 though did yield some interesting tidbits of information about the Hartselle camp meeting.

C.E. Brown's tale has several essential elements to it.

The event took place in 1887, the preacher was Lena Shoffner; someone took the rope down; and the townspeople reacted violently. In 1897, the Hartselle Camp Meeting was held from September 3-13th and featured the preaching of J.F. Lundy. In late September of that year, an interesting letter appears from William G. Schell, who reported that

The camp meeting at Hartselle was one continuous victory from beginning to end. A great many saints were present from different parts of Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama, most of whom seemed to make real spiritual advancement; also a goodly number of sinners were converted to the Lord. Sister Lena Cooper, a colored minister from Atlanta, was present. Her presence caused the color line to become a subject of great agitation. This made it our duty to set forth the word of God upon this subject. The holy people were enabled to see that God had placed no color lines in the Bible.

To complicate matters further, a second report from the field in the same issue of the Gospel Trumpet is dated September 16th and posted from Racine, Wisconsin, where Mr. and Mrs. Otto Bolds and Lena Shoffner had been holding meetings in Wisconsin since July. It seems extremely unlikely that Shoffner made her way

from Wisconsin to Alabama and back again in this narrow time frame. Is it possible that C.E. Brown in his account of the event confused Lena Cooper with Lena Shoffner? It seems more likely that his 1897 date, a less significant element of the story, is in error.

In July of the following year, Lena Shoffner reported her intention to speak at the Hartselle camp meeting. But the only report of the camp in a report from R.J. Smith in which the meeting receives one short sentence: From there we went to the Hartselle, Ala. camp meeting. One would think that the meeting was uneventful.

But, in 1899, J. L. Pike and Noah Duncan reported on the Hartselle camp meeting that Shoffner did attend and made a mysterious reference to that 1898 meeting.

The Hartselle, Ala. C.M. was a grand success for the Lord. Perhaps some know of the trouble here last year. In order to overcome this it took much watching and praying this year, but God who is able to give us the victory, had the meeting in his own hands and did run it to his honor

hands and did run it to his honor and glory, to the salvation of precious souls and the sanctifying of believers, for which we give him all the glory. Although some threats were made, God overruled all things, and a ten days meeting was held.

To my knowledge, these are the only references made to Lena Shoffner and the Hartselle camp meeting. I was able to find a photograph of Shoffner and others, ostensibly taken at the Hartselle camp meeting, the year the rope came down (Figure 1). I've also been told that it was Shoffner herself who took the rope down, although in my reenactment it is unclear who first touches the rope. After considering the evidence these few months, I think it is likely the event happened much as C.E. Brown described it, although in the year 1898 and that the event itself didn't seem extraordinary at the time.

I am also told that there is further documentation of this event at the Alabama Church of God archives in Chula Vista, although I will leave it to others to discover.

(Original footnotes omitted.)

NOTE: As you will notice, this is the reprint of an article by Don Boggs originally published in the *Church of God Historian* in the Spring of 2003—perhaps a few years before many of you became members of the Society. The reason for this reprint is to be found on Page 7 of this newsletter under the heading, "Interpretive Center." The Hartselle 'rope incident' is a part of one of the displays of which the article speaks.

It is recognized that the story of Lena Shoffner's participation as 'chief actor' in the event may be largely apocryphal. We simply do not know what may have happened and who may have done what. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that we do not have documentary 'proof' one way or the other and must rely largely on an oral tradition of uncertain provenance. Oral traditions are often wrong—but certainly not in all cases. Don Boggs chooses in this instance to accept the tradition even though he has not been able to find the 'proof' he has diligently sought.

Church of God writers and preachers of the first generation were quite clear on 'the color line' (as William Schell calls it). A 'rope' (which would have been stretched *across* the tent, not *down its length*) would have prevented African American seekers from kneeling at the 'altar' along with European Americans to receive 'full salvation.' Someone would have removed the offending rope—and indeed should have—in order that those coming to a 'color-blind' Savior could kneel together.

This is the Church of God at its best. Separation of the basis of sex, skin color, or culture rightly had no place among us in the beginning—and should not now. Remember that as you visit the new display.



Lena Shoffner at Hartselle Camp Meeting (center, front row)



Dr. Bakyrmen Nongpluh

New Book Provides Invaluable Research on the Church of God in India

*"The story of how native indigenous leaders responded to Christianity is no doubt interesting (to the overall history of India), but Dr. Nongpluh was successful in providing almost complete narration on how through their humble efforts many people in Eastern India, Kerala, Bangladesh and more important in Meghalaya and Assam have become Christ's followers.... Given the importance of Christian indigenous study in India and South Asia, Dr. Nongpluh's book is worth publishing."*¹

So opens this new book by Rev. Dr. Bakyrmen Nongpluh (AU SOT DMin '11) on the lives of John A.D. Khan and James Joy Mohon Nichols-Roy, the pioneering indigenous leaders of the Church of God in India.

These two names for many in the Church of God (USA) are not widely known. But to the Church of God internationally, Khan and Nichols-Roy were key national

leaders in India who responded to Christ's invitation to accept him as Lord and thereafter worked diligently to connect the growing Christian movement in India to the Church of God (Anderson). The work of these pioneer preachers that began in the late 1890s has now become nearly 125,000 believers in approximately 900 congregations throughout India.²

Nongpluh, a Church of God pastor from Meghalaya, India and teacher at Nichols-Roy Bible College, spent four years researching the lives of these two pioneers for his doctoral work at Anderson University School of Theology. His work is significant because many of the source documents about these men are no longer available in India. Through his work with original documents housed in the archives of the Church of God at Anderson University, Nongpluh was able to piece together these leaders' work and spread of the gospel in India. During his research, Nongpluh would often comment, "My heart leaps to know I am doing something important in chronicling the lives of these important men when I see the handwriting of Nichols-Roy in letters contained in the archives. The story of their leadership, service and the growth of the Church of God in India must be told."³

Nongpluh not only outlines the history of Khan and Nichols-Roy, but his work places both men in their Indian context. This is significant as their leadership must be understood from the cultural context of India with specific reference to the tribal peoples (Khasi) of Meghalaya. Nongpluh provides a background and assessment of these leaders that is important for understanding the Church of God in the subcontinent. An essential part of this book is the political work of Nichols-Roy on behalf of all tribal people of India during the writing of the constitution of India at the time the British turned over the country in 1947.⁴

The book may be purchased from ISPCK (Delhi, India) at <http://ispck.org.in/book.ph>⁵

Dr. Nongpluh plans to attend the Global Gathering in June 2013 and make his book available at that time as well.

¹ Dr. O.L. Snaitang, Former President Church History Association of India, Church Historian of Asia-Pacific Church of God Conference, pg xx. Foreword.

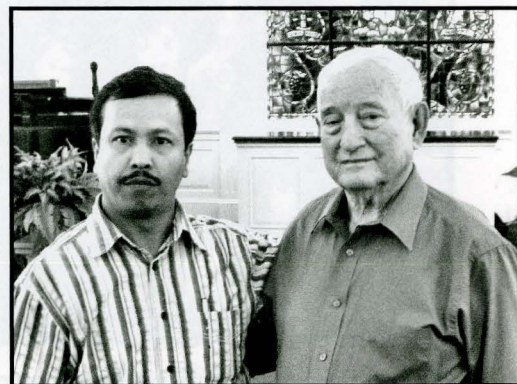
² 2013 Church of God Yearbook. Note that the number is fewer in the Church Yearbook, but Nongpluh's book chronicles a division that took place in the church. Both groups today have their roots and affinity with the Church of God (Anderson).

³ Nongpluh and the author of this article are friends, often sharing thoughts about the research findings and how they tell a significant story of the Church of God in India.

⁴ It is the recommendation of this author that a person read Nongpluh's book along with the book by Douglas E. Welch, *Ahead Of His Times: A Life Of George P. Tasker*, Anderson University Press (2001). Together these books will provide those interested with the complexity of the pioneering work in India for the Church of God.

⁵ The book's full title is *Pioneering Indigenous Leadership: A Study of the Contributions of John Alla-Ud-Din Khan and James Joy Mohon Nichols-Roy in Establishing the Church of God in India, with Special Reference to Meghalaya*. ISBN 9788184652581. The US price is \$16 plus shipping from India.

— David L. Neidert



Dr. Nongpluh with Sidney 'Mac' Johnson

A NECESSARY CORRECTION

In the most recent issue of *the Church of God Historian* (Vol. 13 No.1) a note was added to a photograph of the Old Wooden Tabernacle about the cancellation of Camp Meeting in 1960 due to the collapse of that building. The statement indicating that 1960 was the only year that Camp Meeting was not held in Anderson was not correct, however. There were two additional years when Camp Meeting was not held because of wartime regulations.

In the Gospel Trumpet of April 10, 1943 the following notice was printed:

Due to the acute food shortage we have been forced, much against our wishes, to cancel the International Camp Meeting which was to have been held at Anderson, Indiana, June 11-20, 1943. There will be no service of any kind on the Anderson campground this year...pray that God will in His own good way take care of the entire situation.

This notice is issued on behalf of a group of representative ministers called together to consider every aspect of the emergency situation, and who made this decision only when it was evident that no possible way was open to hold the meeting.

(FOR THE COMMITTEE, A.T. Rowe Adam W. Miller E.F. Adcock)

By the May 22, 1943 issue of the *Trumpet* a decision had been made to "**Turn Disappointment into Success**" by holding the Christ's World Service Day by mail. A full page article written by C.E. Byers, appeared in *The Gospel Trumpet* outlining the process to be followed and ad-

vocating for the largest offering ever since the money not expended traveling to the Annual Camp Meeting could be added to the regular offerings. This idea worked extremely well. With a goal of \$30,000, \$52,000 in total was collected that year. (The overwhelming success of this campaign led to the Quarter Million Dollar campaign which was held the next year.)

In 1944, the Camp Meeting was held as usual and remarks printed in the July 29th Gospel Trumpet note that the services were very well attended, even more so than usual, likely due to the previous year's cancellation. (The Quarter Million Dollar Christ's World Service 'Year' raised \$258,000.00 in total!)

However, in 1945 a meeting permit was not obtained from the Government though much effort was expended in the attempt to gain permission. The Office of Defense Transportation refused to permit the gathering because it would, so they said, unduly tax the railroad system. Again, the Camp Meeting and the General Ministerial Assembly had to be cancelled (*Gospel Trumpet* May 26, 1945). The fact that the Office of Defense Transportation would not allow us to meet, with approximately 15,000 people gathering, on June 17th but did allow the Kentucky Derby event on June 9th, with 65,000 people gathering, was noted in a full page article by Harold Phillips titled "**It Doesn't Make Sense**" (*Gospel Trumpet* on July 21, 1945).

— Vivian H. Nieman, Archivist

Thank you, Vivian, for this important correction and the research needed to back it up.

INTERPRETIVE CENTER

A decade or more after the initial idea was broached, in late Spring 2013 the Church of God Interpretive Center will open. Construction is now underway for the 2,200 square foot facility, which will be housed in the Church of God Ministries building in Anderson.

The plan of the center is structured around six displays, each highlighting a key element in the life of the Church of God movement. The six themes are: holiness, Christian unity, the Bible, missions and evangelism, the church (polity and membership), and healing/wholeness. Each display will make use of historical objects, photographs, video, quotations and narrative, but the center is not simply a museum.

It is designed with the intention that visitors will catch something of the spirit and identity of the Church of God movement. That intention is in keeping with a charge to General Director of Church of God Ministries Ron Duncan to attend to the formation of a clearer sense of identity for the movement. That charge provided the initial impetus to the center's conceptualization and subsequent development.

Along with Arlo Newell, Robert Reardon, Gene Newberry, Harold Phillips, and T. Franklin Miller (the latter four now deceased) were original consultants on the project. They determined the six major themes. A team of three individuals, Anderson University Professors Don Boggs of Covenant Productions, Brad McKinney, and Merle Strege have been responsible for the overall design as well as displays. The Center will open during the Church of God Global Gathering in June.

— Merle D. Strege

BULLETIN BOARD

Annual Meeting 2013

Please be advised there will be no Annual Meeting this year. Because of the International Gathering, all annual meetings, conferences, and other special events will be cancelled. We will insert this notice again in the Spring issue of *Church of God Historian*.

Death of Jerold Frederic

We have this news note from Dale Stultz: "We have been informed of the passing of Jerold Frederic on November 28, 2012. Jerold was about 106 years of age (his exact age is unknown). The service was held at Fluehr Funeral Home in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 27, 2012. Reverend Mitchell W. Burch, Church of God pastor in Middletown, Ohio officiated. Reverend Burch is a grandnephew of Jerold's mother, Birdie Smith. We in the Historical Society deeply appreciate Jerold's contribution to our work. He enabled us to fill in many gaps in our historical knowledge, especially as it related to his father, F.G. Smith. Without Jerold's help, these gaps could not have been filled."

From Sadie Evans

Sadie Evans, our Secretary-Treasurer, has been on extended medical leave. We are very thankful she is recovering well and should be able to return 'to work' "in the Spring." We have missed her and the important work she does for the Society. She extends her thanks to all who have prayed for her and written notes of encouragement.

Joseph C. Fisher

Dale Stultz and Douglas Welch have spent much of the Winter (one of Indiana's less-popular times of the year) doing historical and genealogical research. As a result, they have been able to 'track' Joseph C. Fisher, second Editor of *The Gospel Trumpet*, after his rift with D.S. Warner, who was in position to step in and take over much of the Fisher 'movement.' As far as any historical records are concerned, Fisher simply faded into the night and was not heard from again. Research in records not previously available has revealed a very interesting sequel to the story. It is apparent that Fisher's *Gospel Sword* and Warner's *Gospel Trumpet* spent considerable time during Warner's later years squabbling—as children of the same family occasionally do.

Stultz (who spent many long hours surfing the web) and Welch believe you will be as interested in this story as they are. The full research file, unedited apart from conversion to JPEG, will appear on the Historical Society website: www.choghistoricalsociety.org.