

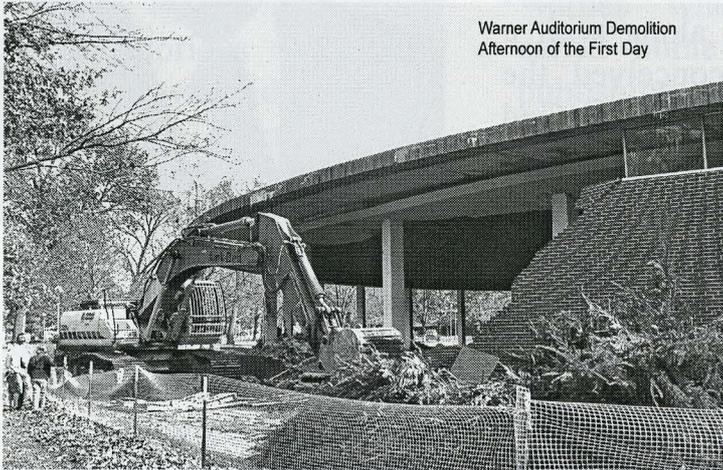
# Church of God Historian

Anderson IN - November 2006

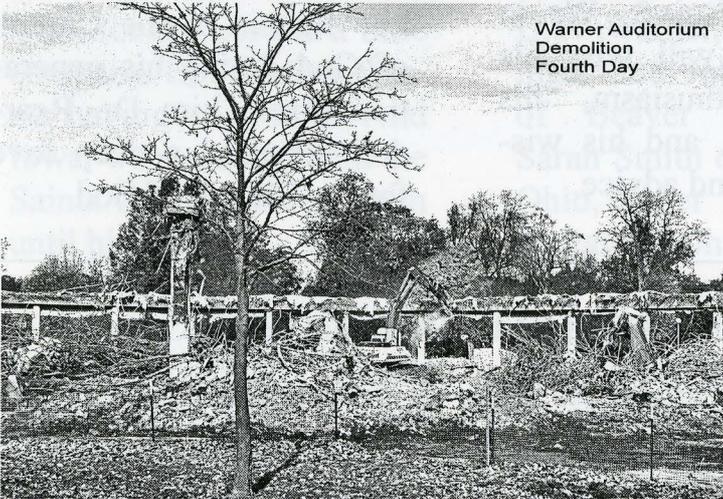
## WARNER AUDITORIUM DEMOLISHED AFTER 43 YEARS OF SERVICE

Demolition began early in the month this past November and was completed by the end of the month. The site is now bare.

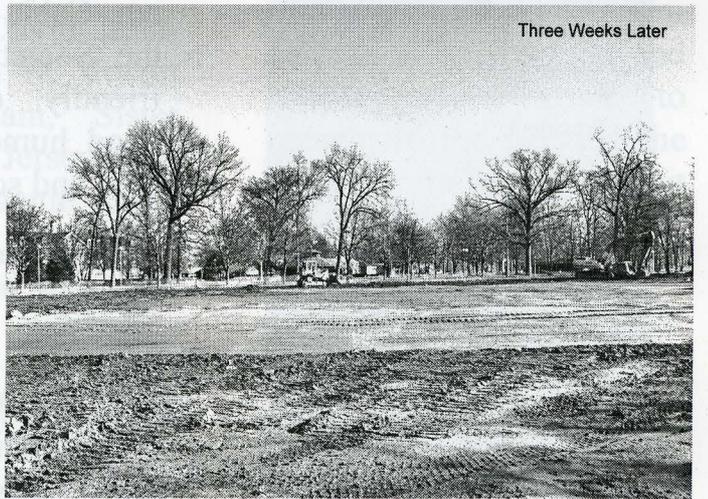
Historical Society of the Church of God Vol 7 No 2 Winter 2007



Warner Auditorium Demolition  
Afternoon of the First Day



Warner Auditorium  
Demolition  
Fourth Day



Three Weeks Later



**Church of God Historian**

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

**Vol 7 No 2 Winter 2007**

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*, President of the Society, at: [mdstrege@anderson.edu](mailto: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**

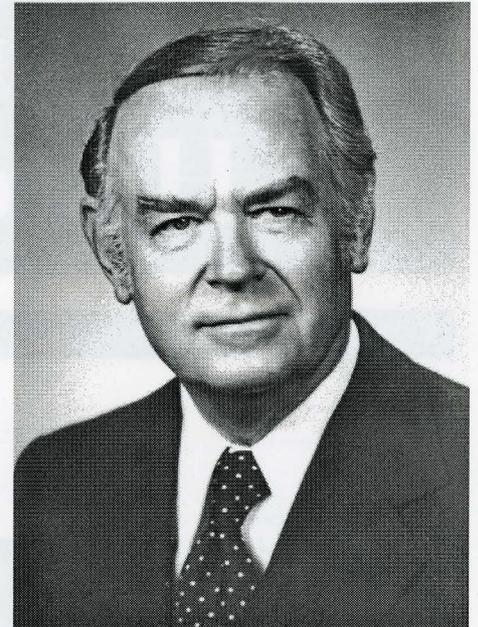
The Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) exists to encourage the collection and preservation of artifacts and documents relating to the history of the Church of God; to encourage historical research and the writing of Church of God history; and to provide a forum for like-minded people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

**FOUNDING MEMBER  
ROBERT REARDON  
DIES AT AGE 87**

With the death of Robert H. Reardon on February 10, 2007 after a brief illness, the Historical Society has lost an enthusiastic and active supporter. It was he, in fact, who along with a few others conceived the idea of a Church of God historical society in the first place and helped to launch the Society in 2000.

He worked devotedly behind the scenes to raise funds for the Naylor Memorial Project and, more recently, the Barney Warren Cabin Project. We in the Society will miss his friendly enthusiasm, his good humor, and his wisdom and sound advice.



Robert H. Reardon 1919-2007

Dr. Reardon was the son of a noted Church of God pastor and leader, Eugene A. Reardon—one of the key figures in the Church of God during his generation. From him Dr. Reardon inherited a deep love for the Church of God.

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**HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS**

\* Early in February we broke the ‘two-hundred barrier.’ Our membership now stands at 202, up from about 130 members a year ago. This is good, but we still have some distance to go to reach the goal of the 500 members Bob Reardon thought the Society should have.

\* Vice-President Dale Stultz has, in the past few months, made two important acquisitions for the Historical Society and Church of God Archives: (1) additional F.G. Smith private correspondence from Gerald Frederic; and (2) a set of diaries written by Bessie Byrum, wife of R.R. Byrum. The diaries are from 1934-1961. We will feature Bessie Byrum and these diaries in the Spring issue of the *Historian*.

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## EXCERPTS FROM A DIARY

Frances (Frankie) Miller Warner—January 1886

In the name of the Lord I went to the Assembly of the Saints of the most high God at Williamston, Mich., Sep. 24, 1885. The meeting was a glorious display of Divine power and grace.

After the meeting I accompanied a few of the saints to an assembly meeting at Beaver Dam, Kosciusko County., Ind. That was also a glorious meeting. While there, the will of God was clearly revealed to us all, that we should work for the Lord in a little company. But Brother Warner having a call to Ill. And Iowa, we remained with the Saints west of Beaver Dam until his return.

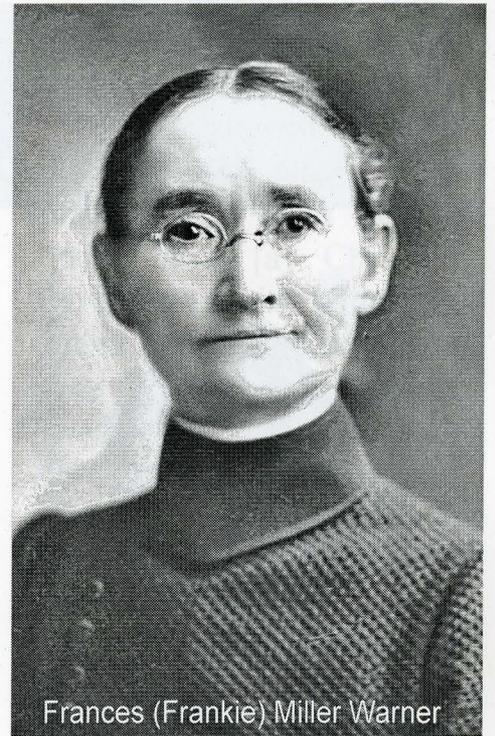
On our way from Mich. to Beaver Dam, on the train in Fort Wayne we first met Sister Sarah Smith on her way to the same meeting. Sister Smith being over 63 years of age, and filled with the love of God, has become by the rich grace of God in her heart, a blessed Mother to our happy little family.

She also went to the meetings in Ill. and Iowa, but returned in a few weeks. And early in the winter a glorious and ex-

tensive revival and harvest of souls took place in Hans School House. About 50 souls were saved....Bro. Warner who had been called home to assist in publishing the Songs of Victory arrived during this wondrous work of grace.

About the middle of January, 1886, the Captain of our Salvation made up his little company of workers to go forth withersoever He would have us. The company consisted of Bro. D.S. Warner, David Leinger and John W. Bryant of Beaver Dam, Sister Sarah Smith of Jersey City, Ohio, Sister Nannie Kigar of Payne, Ohio, who came with us from the Williamsston, Michigan Assembly, and myself.

Our first point was 2 1/2 miles south of Deerfield, Randolph Co., Ind., ... [On Sunday] morning a sectarian preacher had an appointment in the Union meeting house. We all went in good time and sang some of the glorious songs of victory. The Holy Spirit sounding out the heavenly music, so confounded the dead priest that he could not preach. After leaving



Frances (Frankie) Miller Warner

through his Bible for some time and even after going in the pulpit he was compelled to give up, and asked Bro. Warner to preach. In the evening the preacher took the pulpit again. . . . But Bro. Warner told the people that we were on the blood and fire line and could not yoke up with Babylon.

So a door being open at Prospect meeting house over in Jay Co., . . . Bro. Warner announced a meeting . . . resulting in the salvation of a number of souls among whom was Bro. H.C. Wickersham and companion, who was a U.B. preacher....At this meeting the sect wine foamed and the opposition to the truth was strong.

(Continued on Page 6)

## SEVENTH STREET SAINTS

By Sue Ellen Miller Spaulding



I grew up on East 7th Street in Anderson. Only a few yards divided my backdoor from the buildings, events, and people of the growing Church of God movement., “Old Main,” the “Campgrounds,” the *Gospel Trumpet* building, the old Park Place Church, and the “Missions Building” were all within a five-block radius.

My father [T. Franklin Miller], a Church of God executive, purposely selected a lot on which to build a home that would allow him to walk to work, a practice that was not unusual for Church of God executives at that time. In fact, 7th Street was given

some nicknames. “Heaven’s Hill” and “Preacher Row” were two of the most common terms of endearment for our street.

A place of intrigue for many of us children in the neighborhood was the tiny cemetery just up the street from our house. Identified officially in the Madison County records as ‘Summit View Cemetery,’ it provided an easy shortcut between our street and the then Anderson College playing fields.

As a child, I found the little cemetery fascinating. I even played there occasionally. While I did not understand its connections to my own rich Church of God heritage, it seemed romantic and mysterious. Eventually I came to appreciate Summit View Cemetery as the final resting place of many early Gospel Trumpet workers and many residents of the Church of God Old People’s Home, which stood just in front of the cemetery, facing 5th Street.

But a walk through the cemetery today is not, how-

ever, shrouded in the romance and mystery I experienced as a child. The tiny cemetery has become so much a part of 7th Street’s identity that it is now largely unnoticed. The tombstones have become chipped and damaged; some have been knocked or blown over; and a few are so worn with age and weather conditions that the names and dates are no longer visible.

The cemetery is accessible only through a narrow opening in an unattractive, even unwelcoming chain-link fence. Somewhat neglected and overgrown with brush, it is easy to walk right past Summit View and not truly ‘see’ its legacy and honorable place in our Church of God heritage. To many, it is invisible. There is neither a sign nor an entryway announcing the name of the cemetery nor of its connection the early Church of God story. In fact, though it is only a few paces from our Convention grounds, there are probably few Convention visitors even aware of its existence.

In the early days of the 20th century, the little cemetery was most probably viewed as a place for ‘paupers’ graves.’ The Gospel Trumpet Company over



**MEMORIES OF PIONEERS** — Henry Cortner reads the tombstone inscription of Eli and Elizabeth Byrum, grandparents of his wife. Two daughters of this couple, Rebecca Rather and Susan Shaw, served as missionaries...Brothers of Eli included E.E. Byrum..., Noah H. Byrum, father of Anderson artist, Ruthven Byrum, and Robert Byrum, father of Russell R. Byrum...who was a member of the faculty of the Bible School...(This photo and information were published in the Anderson Herald in 1973. The cemetery is located behind Church of God Ministries building.)

-saw the Church of God Old People's Home and established the burial plot, both for residents of the Home and for Gospel Trumpet workers. Most of the residents of the Home were charity members who had little or no funds to pay

their way. (If one wishes to spend an afternoon reading poignant correspondence that will often produce tears, this can easily be accomplished by spending a few hours in the Archives reading the application letters for entrance.)

The objective of those who initiated the Home, according to articles from the early issues of the *Gospel Trumpet*, was for "a place where aged people could have [a] Christian environment in which to spend their last days, where they could attend religious services, be cared for according to their needs, and when their days ended here on earth, be laid away in a respectful manner." (The widow of D.S. Warner resided in the home until her death in 1927. However, she was not buried in Summit View cemetery.)

Summit View also contains tombstones of early Gospel Trumpet Company workers mixed in with the graves of those from the Old People's Home. Since in the early days the 'G.T.' operated communally, with workers contributing services with no remuneration other than the barest of needs—such as room, board, and clothing—many burials of those who had been part of the Gospel Trumpet Family took place in Summit View.

The names now so difficult to read on the tombstones in Summit View were persons of great faithfulness to the Church of God movement. They may not be familiar 'Church of (Continued on Page 6)

Continued from Page 5)

God” names, but most of them humbly performed services or tasks that were crucial to the survival of the early Church of God ‘family.’ Thanks to Church of God Archives, the identities of those interred at Summit View have been preserved.

- The first burial, that of **John Menz**, was in **1908**. He was likely a resident of the Old People’s Home.

- **Anthony Bixler** was buried in **1909**; his wife, **Catherine Bixler**, was buried in **1924**. They were the parents of artist William Bixler.

- The tombstone of **Alfred Geisser**, **1911** reveals, with poignancy, that a number of burials were of infants, probably children of the Gospel Trumpet workers. Alfred Geissner is the only one of several infants who is identified by either name or date. Later records reveal that an “infant daughter” of J.A. Hardacre is buried at Summit View. She was a sister of E.C. Hardacre, founder of the Eastside Jersey Dairy, at that time located in the vicinity of Third Street and Nursery Road.

- The tombstones of **Eli Byrum**, **1913** and his wife, **Elizabeth Byrum**, **1923** are among those found at Summit View. Eli was the brother of E.E. Byrum [see photo and inset on page 5].

- **Rebecca Cole** was the mother of twelve children, including pioneer woman evangelist Mary Cole. Rebecca was buried there in **1914**, after residing in the Home for five years.

- **Christina Worden**, **1918** was one of the first residents to enter the Home. She had previously lived in Grand Junction MI, where her home was occupied by those who devoted their time to Gospel work.

- **Harriet Tyler’s** burial was in **1921** at age 95. She resided in the Old People’s Home and is the only African American buried in the cemetery. (Harriet is referenced by James Earl Massey in his recent book, *African Americans and the Church of God*.)

In all, there are 87 tombstones in Summit View. (The last burial there was that of **Annie Newson** in **1931**.) Each one of these represents a devoted servant of God who played a special part in the Church of God story.

I still visit the cemetery from time to time, but I am no longer charmed by unrealistic romance and mystery. Rather, I am awed by what I consider to be *sacred ground*. The remains of those resting eternally in that tiny piece of earth represent a time of great sacrifice. Without their devotion and sacrifice, the vital Church we all enjoy today would not exist.

It will soon be 100 years since John Menz’s burial at Summit View. I was very pleased to learn recently from Ron Duncan that some renovation of the cemetery will be complete in time for the 2007 Convention. With the Barney Warren Cabin located just north of Summit View, I believe an attractive ‘Memorial Garden’ linking the cabin and the cemetery would be quite appropriate.

Perhaps readers of this article and all those who cherish our unique Church of God legacy would like to share in a vision of making this area a true ‘outdoor museum,’ complete with attractive entrance, landscaping, and an area of beauty and meditation befitting those faithful servants who ‘paved the way’ before us. If so, would you please contact me through the Historical Society?

# MY AUNT BIRDIE

By A. Wayne Burch, Grandnephew

*This has been condensed from a much longer memoir submitted by Rev. Burch. We greatly appreciate learning of such family connections to our pioneers.*

Birdie Smith Warner, who I always refer to as "my Aunt Birdie," was the second of seven children in the John and Emma Mitchell family. She was born in 1879. The Mitchells lived on a small farm on the banks of 18-Mile Creek, near the mouth of what is locally known yet today at "Jakes' Branch," in the vicinity of Buffalo, West Virginia, in Putnam County.

Emma Mitchell died soon after the birth of her last child, perhaps due to the lingering complications of childbirth. Thus the burden of household responsibilities fell on Birdie and a younger sister, Leila, and their father, John.

During Emma's life, she brought her family up in the Church of Christ. Her husband, John, was not known to be active in the church.

When Birdie and Leila were in their early to mid-teens, two evangelists by the name of Drew and Boyer, came into the community and conducted a re-

vival meeting in the school house at Otter Branch. The two Mitchell girls decided to attend the meeting. During the meeting they went forward and were saved.

That very night the evangelists informed them that they were now members of the New Testament Church of God and would not need to attend the Church of Christ any longer. When the girls related this to their father he became quite furious. With the help of his eldest son, Fred (who was my grandfather), he made life quite miserable for his two daughters.

After several months, Birdie decided to leave home and get out from under her father's persecution. Birdie soon established communications with the Gospel Trumpet Company, then located in Moundsville, WV. She took a house cleaning job in Winfield to earn enough money for a train ticket to Moundsville, where she volunteered her services in the publishing ministry.



At Moundsville, my Aunt Birdie met the young man she would later marry, Frederick George Smith, who had come from Lacota MI. Smith was a gifted, self-taught and clerically able young man whose services were much welcomed in the Trumpet office. To this union were born two sons, Gerald [known professionally as Jerold Frederic] and Galen. Both are still living.

In the mid-1940s, F.G. Smith was asked to leave the McKinley Avenue congregation (the only church he ever pastored) and move to Anderson of become the President of the Gospel Trumpet Company. But after a little over a year in office he was stricken and died a short while later. His funeral was held in the old Park Place Church. Robert Nicholson led the singing and Pastor W. Dale Oldham preached.

(Cont'd on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Each year in the month of May the Smith's made an annual trip home to West Virginia for a time of vacation just before Anderson Camp Meeting. The visit was always a real treat for us. They would both speak for us at our little home congregation.

As a boy about 8 or 10 years old, on a visit with them at an uncle's place, I took along my fishing pole. I went down behind the house to the fishing hole. I was able to catch some nice eating-size bass, which the women prepared for the meal. Aunt Birdie could hardly believe that once again she was privileged to have a fish dinner, as she had so many times growing up on the banks of 18-Mile Creek. A rare, unexpected treat for her.

I recall during one of their annual trips home a

near tragedy with some strange twists happened in our community. What was then U.S. Route 35 went through our little town. In the middle of the town was a huge "S" curve where accidents occasionally happened. Dr. Dale Oldham and his wife and Herb Thompson were traveling through in two separate cars, when the Oldham's car was struck by a drunk driver. Mrs. Oldham was nearly killed.

While she was lying in a doctor's office waiting to be transported to a hospital in Charleston, Aunt Birdie came in. As she bent over her, Mrs. Oldham opened her eyes, amazed at seeing one of her most beloved parishioners so far from Anderson. She said to Aunt Birdie, "The Lord must have sent you here."

After F.G. Smith's death my Aunt Birdie married D.



Sidney Warner. She and Uncle Sidney continued the annual trek back to West Virginia before camp meeting. When they returned to Anderson, my mother let me go with them that year for the camp meeting.

On a later visit I was in a bedroom in the Warner home. I noticed a collection of F.G.'s sermons, all typed and numbered. My Aunt Birdie let me borrow some and copy them. She had a very loving, humble, warm, giving Christian spirit. She never veered from her path.

Historical Society of the Church of God  
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