

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson IN) Vol 3 No 2 Winter 2003



Harriet Tyler, an early resident of the Old People's Home, born a slave in Kentucky c.1825.



OLD PEOPLE'S HOME

The Old People's Home, a secondary venture of the Gospel Trumpet Company, was constructed in 1907. Not yet completed by December of that year, it was gutted by fire of an unknown origin. Since it was uninsured, the cost to the Company was \$10,000. It was immediately rebuilt and occupied by elderly Company workers (or former workers) who were able to get together the \$500 charged for "lifetime care." Some non-workers were also admitted—and many charity cases. No firm date is given for its closure, but our best guess at the moment is sometime close to 1940.

Church of God Historian

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

Vol 3 No 2 Winter 2003

This newsletter is published three times a year: Fall; Winter; and Spring. It is published by the Society on behalf of its members and is printed at Anderson University, Anderson IN 46012.

All correspondence should be addressed to: The Editor, Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson), 1612 East 10th Street, Anderson IN 46012. Or email: wiljordan@msn.com.

Church of God Historian is managed by the Executive Committee of the Society: Merle Strege, President; David Markle, Vice-President; Douglas Welch, Secretary-Treasurer; and Wilfred Jordan, Editor.

The Historical Society . . .

The Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) exists: to encourage within the Church of God (Anderson) interest in Church of God history; to help facilitate the collection and preservation of Church of God books, historical documents (letters, diaries, journals, minutes, reports) and photographs; to assist members whenever and where ever possible with historical research and writing; and to provide for those concerned with Church of God history and heritage association with others of like mind.

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). The Society's "year" runs from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting (held at the Annual Convention of the Church of God in North America in Anderson, Indiana in the month of June). Checks should be mailed to:

Douglas E. Welch
Anderson University
Anderson IN 46012
Telephone 765-641-4285
Email: dewelch@anderson.edu

From the Editor

During the early years of the Church of God there was a great concern for the welfare and security of the older saints of the Movement. Yes, there were young folk, but it was, by definition, the senior citizens of that day who found it more difficult to take care of themselves. Because of, and out of this concern, a home for the *old people* came into being through the love and sacrifice of the "saints." It was called, *The Old Peoples Home Association*. The following material is taken from a Gospel Trumpet Company pamphlet describing the Home.

Officers

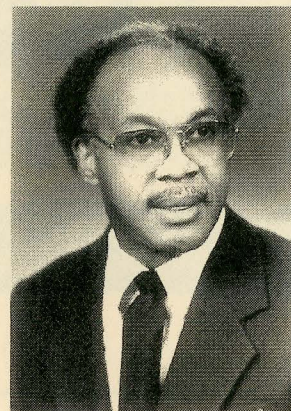
N.H. Byrum, President; W.E. Longbrake, Vice-President, F.W. Heinly, Secretary; J.E. Campbell, Treasurer; E.E. Byrum, Business Manager.

Trustees

N.H. Byrum, W.E. Longbrake, F.W. Heinly, J.E. Campbell, E.E. Byrum, H.M. Riggle, E.A. Reardon, A.B. Palmer, Cora M. Dean.

Stated Rationale

There was a time in the days of the Apostles that they were reminded of the necessity of caring for certain widows in the church. The twelve were unable to assume the responsibility; therefore they said: "Brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6). In these last days, for several years the ministers were reminded in a similar manner that there were



many aged people who were as fathers and mothers in Israel, and being worthy, were in need of the care of the church. The matter was receiving some consideration when an old lady who made no profession of religion, without solicitation offered to give ten thousand dollars toward building a home for the aged. About the same time a brother in the state of Ohio offered three thousand dollars. Within a few months these amounts were paid, and a building site was donated by way of a lease for ninety-nine years. The erection of the home was begun and donations came pouring in from every direction in amounts ranging from a few cents to several dollars.

A Board of Trustees was chosen by the church to look after the business affairs. The institution was incorporated under the Charitable Laws of the State of Indiana, bearing the name, "Anderson Old People's Home Association." At two o'clock in the morning of December 9, 1907, from an unknown cause, fire broke out and destroyed the building with the exception of the cement walls which stood intact with but little injury. At the time of the fire, the

(Continued, p. 6)

THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINE IN THE CHURCH OF GOD: PART I

Merle D. Strege

The late John W.V. Smith wrote, to the effect, that in the Church of God all theological writing is one person's voice.¹ He was making something of a disclaimer for his most recent and, as it happened, final book. He made no pretense of speaking for the entire Church of God movement in that or any other of his publications. He was far too well-versed in the movement's history to write under the illusion that he or any other writer could represent the theological diversity of the Church or God.

However, an important dimension of the movement's polity also gives force to Smith's disclaimer. Given the movement's congregationalist polity, all theological writing is necessarily one person's voice. If one accepts Jaroslav Pelikan's definition that doctrine is what the whole church believes, teaches, and confesses as the Word of God, then the determination of doctrine becomes a difficult undertaking for the Church of God.

Neither the General Assembly nor certainly state or regional assemblies are empowered to formally determine church doctrine. Although there have been attempts to use the Assembly as a means of establishing doctrine, it has wisely and consistently refused to do so. The Assembly has not taken it upon itself to write a confession of faith for the Church of God.

It took the Gospel Trumpet Company quite a while to get around to the task of publishing anything like a theological textbook. The first to be published was F.G. Smith's *What the Bible Teaches*.² This highly influential work is essentially a topically arranged theological manual. A little more than a decade later Russell R. Byrum published *Christian Theology*,³ a volume still recommended or even required reading by candidates for ordination in the Church of God. About twenty years after the publication of Byrum's work, A.F. Gray, President of Pacific Bible College and long-term Chairperson of the General Ministerial Assembly, brought out his own two-volume work

under the same title as Byrum's.⁴

Although smaller, more specialized theological studies continued to appear, some forty years passed before later generations of theological writers tried their hand a large, systematic theological work. Gilbert W. Stafford, Barry L. Callen, and the late Kenneth Jones each published theologies of this type. As with Byrum's work, some of these are used for the theological instruction of ministerial candidates.

But none is set forth as church doctrine. That this is so, and when coupled with the realization that the General Assembly has refused to make doctrine for the movement, leads to the question, "How does doctrine get formed in the Church of God?"

The late John W.V. Smith wrote that in the Church of God all theological writing is one person's voice. . . . Dr. Smith made no pretense of speaking for the entire Church of God movement in that or any other of his publications.

It would be foolish to assert that the Church of God movement had no doctrine. "Doctrinal preaching" was once the *forte* of some of our best and most beloved preachers. However, to my knowledge those preachers never gathered and determined together the doctrinal themes they preached.

So, once again, how did doctrine form, or, better, what form has doctrine taken in the Church of God movement? A plausible and indeed convincing answer to that question has been put forward by the late James McClendon, who taught at Fuller Theological Seminary. He argued that some church bodies have practiced doctrine more than they have written it or reduced it to confessional statement.

In his book *Systematic Theology: Ethics*⁵ he included the Church of God (Anderson) in a list of churches who have generally eschewed the tradition of systematic theology and confessions in favor of what might be termed "doctrinal practice." McClendon's pregnant suggestion provides us with a solution to our puzzle.

The Church of God movement has not adopted a formal confession of faith, nor has it turned any of its systematic theologies into doctrinal manuals. Instead, we might say that the movement has *practiced* doctrine. Historically, people in the Church of God learned doctrine by practice rather than by rote memorization of catechism or confession.

Thus far, all I have put forward is a question and an assertion in answer to it. Space will not permit the historical narrative that is necessary to turn the assertion into an argument. That narrative will need to wait until the Spring issue of *Church of God Historian*. However, if such an argument can be convincingly made, we will have advanced our understanding of the theological history of the Church of God movement.

¹ John W.V. Smith, *I Will Build My Church: Biblical Insights on Distinguishing Doctrines of the Church of God* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1985).

² (Anderson: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1914)

³ (Anderson: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1945).

⁴ *Christian Theology*, 2 vols, (Anderson: The Warner Press, 1944, 1946).

⁵ (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986).



Jottings

From the Archives

Douglas E. Welch

The Gospel Trumpet Family, The Canadian Connection, and Grandma O'Brien

In the past several months I have been working on the history of the Gospel Trumpet Family—a designation that was current from 1884 to 1917. When D.S. Warner, with the financial backing of William N. Smith, moved the Gospel Trumpet Company offices from Ohio to Michigan in 1884, more space and money enabled Warner to care for a few young volunteers who assisted in the struggling publishing venture.

This was the beginning of what came to be known as the Gospel Trumpet Family. However, it was not until the move two years later to Grand Junction, Michigan, that the Family became a normal way of life for those involved in the Gospel Trumpet Company. Those engaged in the production of literature lived on site. Their housing, food, clothing, and a few other very basic necessities were provided—but that was all.

Volunteers came and went, but a relatively stable core persisted, some for much of their adult lives. In 1890, the Family consisted of only 9 permanent members (although quite a bit of coming and going appears to have been the case). By 1898, about 85 men, women, and children were on site, straining the facilities beyond their actual capacity.

In June 1898, therefore, the Gospel Trumpet Company and the Family moved, lock, stock, and barrel (and the barrels were actually used as desks in the beginning) to Moundsville, West Virginia. Here the first Trumpet Family Home was built, a large, imposing structure that could house 200 people—and all built by volunteer labor from Church of God communities. Some of them stayed on, swelling the Family to more than a hundred men, women, and children.

Fewer than half of the workers

actually worked in the production and distribution of literature. A numerous volunteer force of cooks, laundry workers, housekeepers, teamsters, seamstresses, and general laborers were, by this time, a “permanent” part of the Family.

In 1906, the Family moved again, this time to Anderson, Indiana. For about 5 years, the *Gospel Trumpet* and Gospel Trumpet books, tracts, and pamphlets were published and distributed from leased facilities in downtown Anderson (the corner of 9th Street and Central Avenue). But an immediate order of business following the move was to build a new Family Home. It also was a roomy, attractive, and imposing structure.

This building was occupied about at the end of 1906, serving as the home and temporary stopping place of hundreds of Church of God people. In the Trumpet Family Registers (listing all of those actually working in the Company between 1906 and 1917) are hundreds of names. The first Register, 1906-1912, lists 427 names.

Many of these, as in Moundsville, were essential support staff, not publishing plant staff. They included builders, cooks, housekeepers, dairy-men, gardeners, seamstresses, general handymen and laborers—and even firefighters.

These all were volunteers, ordinary people who were inspired by a singular vision, who were willing to give up everything for the sake of a Cause greater than any of them. They worked very long days, leading a spartan existence in the simplest of surroundings and with the barest of amenities. What they accomplished simply staggers the imagination. The buildings, the many thousands of tons of literature, the provision for and care of so many people was indeed a herculean accomplishment.

The Trumpet Family was abolished in 1917 and the Home became Anderson Bible Training School. Now living in a wage economy, Family members had to build, buy, or rent their own homes and fend for themselves. Trumpet Company employees were

paid real wages, thus transforming both the Company and those they employed. Something was gained, to be sure, but something important was lost as well.

In reflecting on this central piece of our history, I have become convinced that without the Family, the Gospel Trumpet Company most likely would not have survived—nor the Church, at least as the growing and dynamic entity that it now is at the grassroots. And it unlikely that many of us would be here. Anderson University would not be here, as well as a great many other entities that are so integral to our current life. (Nor would I be here writing this—or watching the calendar in the hope that it will be published on schedule.)

Now, to backtrack. Since I am a Canadian, I have noted with special interest that even in Grand Junction, Canadians were significantly involved in the Trumpet Family. (Most, as far as I can determine, were from Eastern Canada.) The number of Canadians was never very great, but 12 were present in Moundsville and as many as 18 in Anderson. Some of the Canadians, such as G.P. Tasker, Josephine McCrie, and James Strawn, became quite well known as “foreign” missionaries (the Family was a nursery for overseas missionary endeavor as well).

For some (perhaps unfathomable) reason, one name and face stands out for me in this Canadian Connection. It is that of an elderly woman known only as “Grandma



O'Brien" (the spelling of her name is sometimes "O'Bryan). She appears first in Grand Junction in a photo of the "workers in the children's home." She most likely came from the Niagara Peninsula sometime around, or just later than, 1890 to volunteer her services to the Trumpet Family.

Was she a widow? We do not know. All we do know is what can be concluded from the photo evidence we have. Not much for one who helped make it possible for the Gospel Trumpet Company to succeed and for the Church of God to emerge. A poor widow in the Temple?

Grandma O'Brien moved to West Virginia with the Family in 1898. By then she seems to have become a permanent member. She is pictured

below with some Canadian workers (middle row, second from the left, sitting beside George P. Tasker). She appears again in photos from the Anderson years, engaged in work in the "sewing room" (seated by the window, front left).

She also appears in photos of the residents of the Old People's Home and may have been buried in the old cemetery behind and west of the Home (Summit-View Cemetery). That is, if she is the "Juliet O'Brien" in the cemetery list. Without many such volunteers we would not be here. Whatever her story was, she helped make our story possible. She and hundreds of other volunteers, most of them just as little known. So much for "Big Man" theories of history!



News and Notes

Naylor Memorial Fund

We are happy to report an outstanding response to the appeal for funds to construct a suitable memorial to honor one of our outstanding pioneer hymn writers, Charles W. Naylor. As of this moment, total gifts amount to \$4,370, only \$230 short of our goal. Construction of the memorial in Maplewood Cemetery will begin this Spring, with dedication during the Annual Convention in June.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) will take place during this year's Annual Convention as in years past. ***Please watch for complete details of the meeting in the Spring issue of Church of God Historian.***

Membership Dues

Many members have not sent in this year's membership dues which have now been set at \$15. The membership year runs from June to June. We will be happy to hear from you.

Archives Acquisitions

Recent Archives acquisitions include a complete set of Minutes of the General Ministerial Assembly, beginning in 1917. We have also archived the Minutes of the Executive Council. These materials are now available to those wanting to research our early structural development or other more specific questions.

(Continued from p. 2)

building was almost completed. The loss was about ten thousand dollars, with a debt of two thousand for building material.

The same day of the fire, while the smoke was still issuing from the smoking embers, a meeting was called to consider the matter of rebuilding. After earnest prayer for divine guidance, all felt clearly directed to advise the rebuilding at once, and like Job in the midst of reverses (Job 1:13-22) could say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." And as it is said that "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning" (Job 42:10-12), so it was in the rebuilding of the home. The people were ready to give "a piece of money," or a pledge, and when the building was finished and instead of being in debt for two thousand dollars as before, the debts were all paid and about two hundred dollars in the treasury which was sufficient to pay the expenses of keeping the old people for a few weeks.

The object in view was to have a place where the aged people could have (a) Christian environment in which to spend their last days . . . could attend religious services and be cared for according to their needs, and when they days are ended here on earth, be laid away in a respectful manner . . . take into consideration that sixteen of the inmates lived to be over eighty years of age, and one of the number was nearly 93 . . .

Following are photos of the residents of the Home, including individual photos taken from the larger group photo. While the quality is not so good, they do help us to individualize the residents in a more personal way. We are including some biographical information on these few elderly saints as well.

—Wilfred Jordan



Residents and Staff of Anderson Old Peoples Home, 1915

In the Gospel Trumpet pamphlet, part of which we reproduced, the list of first occupants contains forty three names. That was in 1908. Barely half that number are shown in this 1915 photo. In an earlier photo which is reproduced on page 8 of this newsletter, even fewer residents are present—and none of the volunteer staff who ran the Home, apart from the superintendents, a "Mr. and Mrs. Hall." Mr. Hall is standing in the center at the very back of this photo. His wife is in front of him. On either side of her are five women volunteers who worked in the Home. The photo "evidence" probably indicates only that a number of residents were not—or were not able to be—present for the photos.



Superintendents and Staff of the Anderson Old Peoples Home

This enlargement made from the larger group photo, while wanting in quality, is the only photographic record available in Church of God Archives. Nevertheless, it does give us faces, if few names, of those who voluntarily lived with and cared for the elderly saints resident in the Home. Without such self-giving it is quite likely that the Home could not have been kept open. It is almost certain that the Trumpet community could not have borne the financial burden of hiring staff for the Home. As it was, according to Harold L. Phillips, in *Miracle of Survival*, the Home was a constant drain on Gospel Trumpet Company funds. It became a "financial millstone" around the Company's neck. "(A)gain and again the publishing work picked up the deficits on these needed but non-publishing functions . . ." (Phillips 1979:108). It was expected that donations would cover costs, but beyond construction of the building itself, this was seldom the case.



Harriet (Thompson) Tyler

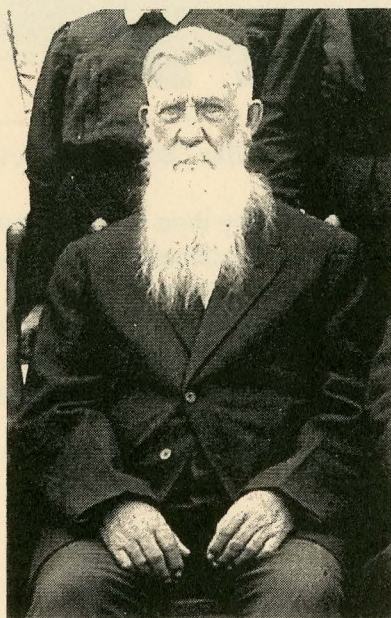
The Gospel Trumpet Company pamphlet describing the Home and the residents contains the following narrative:

"Among the inmates of the Home is Harriet Tyler, known as 'Aunt Harriet,' who has many thrilling experiences to tell of her past life. She was born a slave in Lexington, Ky. She is not sure of her exact age, but places the date of her birth 1825. She states that she had a good master as a slave-holder, but on account of a debt, he sold her at the auction block at the age of twelve. From there she was taken to Greenville, Miss., where she endured the hardships of slavery days at the hands of a cruel master. She was put to work on a farm At the age of sixteen, she was married." [Her husband escaped to Illinois. She escaped a year later and was soon, but quite accidentally, reunited with her husband, who died in 1901.] She was "converted" and came to the Home in August, 1908. She says, "I love this place. It is a good home. I am happy, am saved and satisfied." She died at well over 90 years of age and was buried in Row C, Lot 34 of Pleasant-View, the Trumpet Company's cemetery.

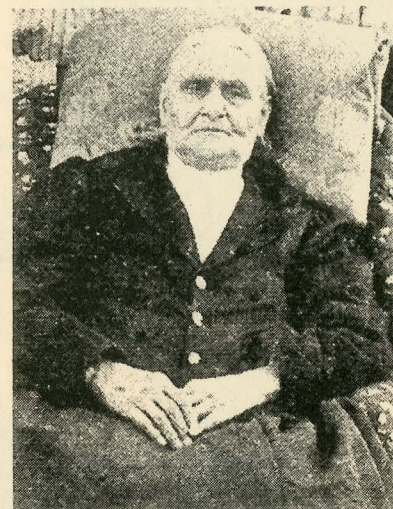
Robert J. Glassford

Robert J. Glassford, pictured below, was one of the younger of the residents. The Gospel Trumpet Company pamphlet contains the following paraphrase:

"His wife being an invalid for a number of years, Brother Glassford found it very difficult to properly care for her and also earn a sufficient amount to provide for them in their old age. Six years ago . . . they came from near Urbana, Ohio, at which time they were admitted into the Old Peoples Home. On December 19, 1910, his wife, Martha M. Glassford died, aged 73 years. Having been afflicted with dropsy and other chronic troubles, she required many months of nursing by the faithful attendants at the Home."



"In a recent interview with Brother Glassford, he said, 'Aside from a private home, I do not think there is a better home on earth than the Anderson Old Peoples Home. We are happy; no complaints to make. The superintendent, matron, helpers and Board of Trustees are all there to help us in our old days. I am saved and kept by the power of God.'"



Chastina M. Worden

The pamphlet also contains a brief narrative of a wheel-chair bound invalid, who undoubtedly needed a great deal of personal care, Chastina M. Worden.

"Among the first to enter the Old Peoples Home when it was finished was Sisten Worden, who was born in Lisbon, N.H., January 23, 1829. For a number of years she lived in Battle Creek, Mich., where her husband died in the year 1890. . . .

At one time she purchased a house in Grand Junction, Mich., which for a number of years was occupied by those who were devoting their time to the spread of the Gospel. She spent several years in the Old People's Home at South Haven, Mich., and came to Anderson in the year 1907.

For three years she has been an invalid caused by falling down a stairway. In expressing her appreciation of the Home, she says: "It is a good home. The best place this side of heaven. No one has even told me that I was too much trouble. All are very kind to me. . . and I receive all the attention and care that I need. I find it a glorious Christian home. . . . I have peace in my soul at all times and am happy in the Lord waiting for the summons to come higher."



Residents of the Old People's Home

This photo is not dated, so could be almost any time between 1908 and 1930. For that matter, it is not identified either. We have several means of identification in this case (that is where a general knowledge of the times, the buildings, and the people comes in handy), but in many cases undated and unidentified photos—of which we have a great many in the Archives—are quite without means of identification. Since photos are one of our primary historical sources this is quite frustrating. To be really useful historically, photos need to be identified and dated. A word to the wise is sufficient—for all of us..

RETURN TO:

Historical Society
Church of God
P.O. Box 702
Anderson IN 46015-0702

First Class Postage