

# Church of God Historian

Volume 12, Number 1 Fall 2011



## AT LAST!

In the first photo above, Dale Stultz is seen holding a copy of the book we've been waiting for since mid-August. In the second, he and Sadie Evans examine a copy. For the past six or eight weeks, we've been telling you by one medium or another (including our new website) that we would soon receive it, only to be disappointed by another setback. We apologize for the long delay—although, in the main, it has been beyond our control.

In general, this book takes a very new and different look at our past as a Church. Eight years in the making, we have

tried to examine every document, follow every lead, and face as honestly as we could every piece of evidence—even if it was not what we had hoped for. Knowing how powerful 'folk tradition' is and how much of a hold conventional language has on us, we have dared to challenge both where we thought that crucial.

Now, *we need your help*. This is an expensive book and has to be paid for—quickly. We can offer a \$10 per book discount to those who take a case at a time—or two—for resale. Call us either at 765-621-3161, (for Dale), or 765-643-3702 (for Sadie).

## We Don't Recommend It!

Bob Hazen

Sometime between 1953 and 1959 Dorothy and I were holding a Revival Meeting for Pastor Harold Conrad in Akron, Indiana. Harold was very aware and appreciative of the history of the beginning of the Church of God movement that situated with and surrounded his church and town.

Both of Dorothy's grandparents were knowledgeable about the pioneer days of the Church of God in North Central Indiana, so we were all eyes and ears to see the location of the first Church of God congregation and to learn their stories, aware that a few miles north of Akron was the location of the historic separation with the Winebrennerian Group and the purchase of their own building south in the country side.

The school house turned church had sat at an intersection of two country roads. The north west corner to be exact. This was the very location of the First Church of God congregation which later joined with worshippers in Akron.

Examining the location revealed only the foundation of the school - church remained, and a few bricks from what must have been from the chimney. I retrieved a number of bricks and when the Bloomington church where I pastored built the registration building for Camp Challenge in southern Indiana, I had the bricks imbedded over the fireplace to form a cross.

I asked Pastor Harold Conrad to take me to visit the farmer who owned the field that cornered where the church had been. He was a very friendly individual and realized he owned a historical spot for the Church of God. After visiting he promised he would dedicate a small portion of the ground if we wanted to erect some type of memorial.

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## *Church of God Historian*

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

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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](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, Sadie B. Evans, Secretary-Treasurer, D.E. Welch, Publisher and Managing Editor.

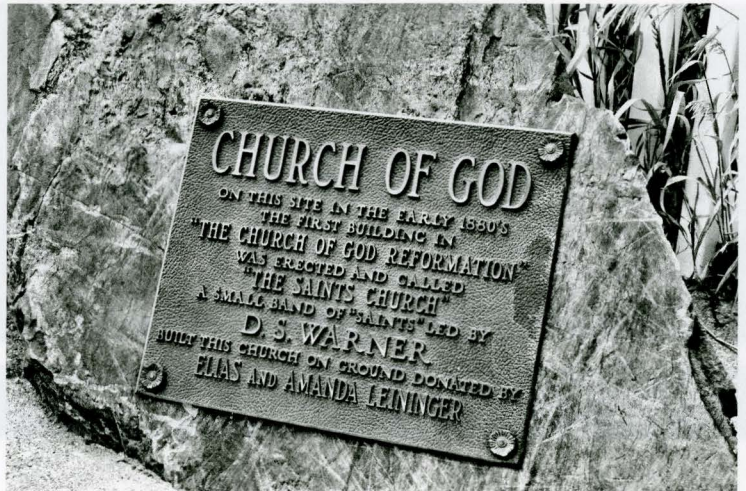
### **The Historical Society**

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](http://www.choghistoricalsociety.org)



### **(Continued from Page 1)**

This started the imagination and creative wheels turning and when I returned to Bloomington I spoke to Mr. Bennett and his sons about a monument. The Bennetts owned a large Indiana limestone quarry out of which giant lime stones had been cut for buildings in Washington, D.C. They were salvaging stones left in the quarry to provide material for their split faced building stone.

The idea excited them and they were willing to donate a block of lime stone four foot square and six feet long and even transport it to the site. I contacted Pastor Conrad again and he assured me the men in the Akron church would gladly pour the foundation and together we would raise money for a cast iron fence and a proper plaque.

Having done all this it struck me that I ought to contact Anderson in case they already had something in their plans, and to get their blessing. At that time I was a contributing editor for *The Gospel Trumpet/Vital Christianity* magazine, so it was natural for me to contact the editor, Harold Phillips. He assured me very quickly and quite curtly, "We do not want to erect anything anywhere that in anyway might become a Church of God Shrine!"

I sure wish I'd had sense enough to have kept that correspondence. It goes without saying

ing that everything ground to a standstill and I have no idea if the spot on the north east corner of the rural intersection is identifiable today. **[Editorial Note: It is indeed identifiable as seen above, but may not be in the right spot after all.]**

**A footnote:** At that time a lot of my experiences with second and third generation Church of God people and preachers had left me with the conviction that we as a movement had a lot of strict and narrow ideas and life style practices. However, the privilege at that time to really get to know a generation that overlapped with the actual very first generation was a treat and a revelation. Those people were loving and kind. No strictness of dress and conduct. I could understand how and why God blessed those early pioneers.



Robert J. Hazen



## Russell Olt and the Church's 'Big Principles'

The first day of my course on the history of Christianity I explain that the study of history helps us gain a critical understanding of both past and present. History, after all, is the study of us—how we have come to be a particular kind of people or community. The study of history can free us from the tyranny of the past, but also the tyranny of the present.

I believe the present American church—not only the Church of God, but all Christian bodies—is increasingly captive to the polarities of American public life. The stated mission of the Church of God is to transform the culture by being the body of Christ, but when it comes to socio-economic and political views it almost seems as if transformation is operating in reverse; the political and economic views of the culture threaten to transform the one body of Christ into two 'churches,' one with a so-called *Red State* agenda and the other formed by a *Blue State* mentality. As I reflect on this growing polarization, I find myself wondering how the independent-minded minister and college administrator, Russell Olt, would fare in today's church.

From 1925 until his death in 1958, Russell Olt served Anderson College as its first academic dean. A native of Dayton, Ohio, he was converted and affiliated

with the Church of God through the ministry of a bi-vocational pastor who owned the factory where Olt worked part-time as a high school student.

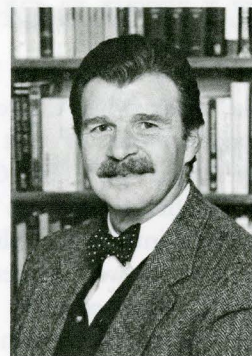
Olt went on to study at Wilmington College and then earned a Master's degree at the University of Cincinnati in the early 1920s. He was a faculty member and dean at Wilmington when John Morrison persuaded him to join the fledgling Anderson Bible School and Seminary. An ordained minister, he also pastored the Walnut Hills Church of God in Cincinnati while teaching at Wilmington College.

Olt liked to refer to what he called the "big principles" of the Church of God. These could be summarized as the virtues of hospitality, generosity, and openness to Truth. In Russell Olt's life they translated into three long-term commitments: (1) improve the status of African-Americans in American society, (2) economic justice for blue-collar American workers, and (3) world peace.

Before Anderson was chartered as a college he had appointed the first person of color to the faculty, the Jamaican *Amy Lopez*. He took students to Harlan County, Kentucky for a first-hand view of the inequities of the 'company store' system and marched shoulder to shoulder in the streets of Anderson with the General Motors rank-and-file trying to organize the United Auto Workers.

Olt also was a founding member of the *Peace Fellowship of the Church of God*. For such activities, a 1943 FBI investigation labeled him the "leader of the Anderson socialist movement."

Thus described, Olt seems a typical 'Blue State' resident of today. But this remarkable man possessed another side, one that demonstrated his abiding loyalty to the to pastor the Walnut Hills



church and its Lord. After he moved to Anderson, Olt continued for more than twenty years to pastor the Walnut Hills congregation driving back and forth weekends on old US 52.

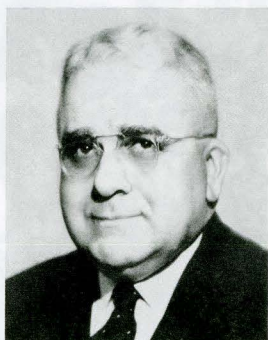
He regularly contributed to the movement through his articles in *The Gospel Trumpet*. He was a dedicated worker in the emerging youth conventions of the Church of God. He fervently believed in and practiced divine healing, holding out the hope of his own healing from cancer until the last days of his life. At campus religious services one could routinely find Olt offering spiritual counsel to a student praying at an altar. In other words, Russell Olt also possessed legitimate 'Red State' credentials.

What word shall we use to describe the relationship between these two dimensions of Russell Olt's life? Academics might employ a favorite phrase and say that Olt held them in 'creative tension,' thus importing today's ideological opposition into the Dean's soul.

The same general conclusion would apply were we to write that Olt 'countered' his social commitments with vital piety. I think a better choice would be to write that his social commitments and piety *complemented* each other, for in Russell Olt's mind either aspect alone would leave discipleship incomplete.

Could such a person find a home in today's society?

- Merle D. Stregge  
Historian of the Church of God





## THE LITTLE CHURCH THAT COULDN'T

The Church of God in Willshire, like many other Church of God congregations of that era, probably began with *The Gospel Trumpet*. The first letter from Willshire to "the saints" was published July 1, 1888. It was written by Belle Stetler, who seems to have been the 'contact' person in that area. It is likely that she was a farmer's wife in the Willshire area.

The last letter from her to appear in the *GT* was published on October 3, 1893. She writes: "I have had many calls for meetings in the last year that I could not respond to on account of my home....I feel a great desire to work this winter for the Lord, and can, if the Lord provides someone to keep house for me. Is there not some dear sister who wants a home for this winter or longer?"

We do not know if this letter was answered positively or not, but a letter written by F. Husted in February, 1895, speaks of "the ministry of Sister Stetler." Whether she was full-time or only part-time, as another 'farm wife,' Leona Troutner was (who served as 'pastor' of Willshire for twenty-three years), we do not know.

The first extended meetings we know of in Willshire were held

by Barney and Nancy Warren in December, 1891. Writing to the *GT* in January, 1892 Warren says: "Bro. A.J. Kilpatrick and ourselves went to Willshire, Ohio where we commenced meeting December 16. Bro. Kilpatrick remained with us over sabbath after which he went to assist Bro. J.N. Howard in a revival meeting in Southern Indiana. Bro. G. Greely from Wis., also joined us in Willshire, and has been with us ever since. He has been a good helper in the work....having just recently come out of Babylon. During the meeting at Willshire, a number of backsliders were reclaimed and much good was effected in the way of establishing and teaching the church..." (Jan. 7, 1892).

Since Warren could speak of "the church" in Willshire at that point, it seems a congregation existed there even though no building was erected until 1916. A year later, "Otto Bolds and Co." joined J.N. Howard "in the battle at Willshire" (*GT* Dec. 1, 1892). Who did they "battle?" Satan? The religiously opposed? The disinterested? Many found the Church of God message strange and radical. Exorcisms? Healings? Sect bashing? Nonsense to most

of the stolid, conservative Lutheran farmers of the area. (A large and stately Lutheran Church had been part of the Willshire area for nearly two generations. In August, 1912, J.F. Carter, who spent ten days in Willshire in "meetings," found the "prejudice and indifference" very "intense." See *GT* Aug. 22, 1912).

Several first-generation preachers of the Church of God were quite regular visiting preachers in Willshire: B.E. Warren; J.N. Howard; A.J. Kilpatrick; Otto Bolds; J.N. Worden; B.N. Longerbone; I.S. McCoy; N.S. Duncan; and other participants in 'the flying ministry' practiced by 'the saints' in those days.

In 1912, Reuben A. Walling went to Willshire "especially to encourage the saints" (*GT* Aug 22, 1912). Late in 1913, he confessed still to be "in the battle against sin, deception, and the devil." Early in December, he notes, he is to begin a meeting in Willshire, "to continue indefinitely." (He writes later that "nine were saved in our December revival." See *GT* April 9, 1914).

On August 5, 1915 Walling writes: "In this part of God's great harvest field the Lord has been adding a soul now and then to his church, until there are now quite a



Earliest photo of Willshire congregation.  
Taken in year 1918. Rev. R. A. Walling, Pastor.



First Willshire church building



Remodeled Church Building - 1967

number saved in and around Willshire....We are going to build a meeting house in Willshire that latter part of this summer. I have solicited in my spare time and have \$1500 on my subscription paper....I expect to be at the Payne (Ohio) campmeeting. Let all the nearby congregations attend" (GT Aug 5, 1915).

In 1918, Reuben Walling became the first pastor of the Willshire congregation. In 1917, he was "given the general oversight of the work...with Leona B. Troutner as his "assistant." In March, 1918, he was elected as "pastor," serving until 1922. He was succeeded by Leona B. Troutner, who served the congregation until 1945—in the beginning, at least, in a part-time capacity.

Under Troutner's leadership, membership in the congregation remained in the forties, but the Sunday School grew to as many as a hundred children. By 1945, as she approached retirement age, her health began to deteriorate

quite rapidly and she spent the last years of her life as an invalid, dying in 1953 at seventy-one years of age.

Ironically, the health of the church declined as well. Willshire Church of God, small and wedded to a farm economy, was unable to support a pastoral family adequately and thus it fell into the dreaded 'revolving-door' pattern of pastoral ministry. At least ten pastors came and went in the next forty years.

In 1967, under the leadership of T. Everett Hogue, the Willshire church remodeled and added to the existing church building, not once, but apparently over the next few years. The Willshire newspaper, *The Photo Star*, notes: "On Sunday, December 12 [1976]...the Willshire Church of God will participate in a mortgage burning service....In November, 1965, ground was broken for a \$50,000 remodeling and addition project, which was dedicated in May, 1967....In the past two years the

members of the congregation have added 1200 square feet of additional Sunday School rooms. Plans are now being considered for expansion of the present sanctuary."

But this did not save the life of the congregation. Willshire itself declined. Children grew up and moved away. The Country Seat was moved to Van Wert. After the War, roads were improved and automobiles made travel safe and easy. Fort Wayne, Indiana offered jobs and the Church of God congregation in nearby Decatur, Indiana drew in a number of former Willshire attendees—as did Van Wert. Internal problems hastened the exodus and by the end of the 20th century, Willshire was hanging on by its fingernails.

Its last listing in *The Yearbook of the Church of God* was in 2003. By then it had declined to only 8 'members' and an a.m. attendance of 17. When the Ohio Ministries of the Church of God sold the property after 2003 a private residence was built on the site.

This, it seems, is the story of scores, if not hundreds, of small, struggling Church of God congregations. Willshire was just one of many little churches that couldn't make it—and one of the many farming towns which declined.

But such congregations must not be defined by their death, for, during their life, they were beacons of light and life for many people. Like those who have given their lives for less noble causes, they should be honored and remembered as the 'corns of wheat' they were. - D.E. Welch



W.E. Reed, Board of Church Extension, speaks at dedication of the new Willshire church building in 1967





## COLLECTING LOCAL CHURCH HISTORIES

Sadie Evans (who is Secretary-Treasurer of the Historical Society) and Doug Welch look over a collection sent in recently by Rex and Arlene Raudenbush. It is all that remains of the Church of God congregation in Willshire, Ohio—apart from a host of memories and scores of changed lives.

The 'history,' which includes many photos, old newspaper clippings, Minutes, and other memorabilia, was apparently collected and put together by Rex Raudenbush's aunt, Mary Ellen Doran Raudenbush (Mrs. Harry Raudenbush). It is very well done—a model for others, in fact.

The founding of the congregation is chronicled in *The Gospel Trumpet* (in actual typed copy) and its numerical record, including pastoral changes, is traced in *The Yearbook of the Church of God*. All of this is a special delight to the archivist and researcher.

From our own research and gathering of material, we know many small churches are teetering on the brink of closure. Not many of them are as old as the Church of God in Willshire (almost 110 years as far as we can tell since first-generation Church of God evangelists began preaching in the Willshire area—in 1892, it seems),

but many have been the church home of at least two generations of Church of God believers. Much of their historical documentation is being lost or destroyed as being of 'no use to anyone.' This is unfortunate.

If one spends a few minutes with the current *Yearbook of the Church of God* it is quickly evident that within the Church of God (Anderson) constituency is to be found a large number of small, struggling congregations. The State of Ohio alone lists fifty-three congregations which number fifty attendees or fewer. It is likely that many of them will never grow much larger and will, in the end, go the way of Willshire—particularly those in small town or rural areas.

One of the major concerns of the Historical Society is that such congregational records and histories be preserved. Documents are of particular importance. We have found that many later histories are, in effect, *oral* histories. Those of us who have worked in this field for long know that human memory is simply not to be trusted implicitly. To ask the oldest person in the congregation what happened is not enough. We must search for documents.

## WILLSHIRE REMEMBERED An Oral History

I remember Helen Nye Howard when she was a little girl. Her father and mother stayed at our house when they were holding meetings....The church met in the homes of the saints, store buildings, and old school houses. You know, they were so fanatical about dress. I loved to look nice. No lacy or tucked blouses were allowed. Everything was severe.

One person said that the first meeting was held in the home of Sarah Fairchild, sister of Dora Nye and mother of Leona Troutner. The homes of Dora and Bud Nye, William and Ardilla Raudenbush, Brother and Sister Roop, were included in the early meeting places. Later they met in the old United Brethren Church and any old country school they could rent or get free....

Grandmother Ardilla Raudenbush is the only charter member left. She will be 99 years old this year (1965). She assumed complete financial responsibility for a camp meeting held in her son's, Rolla Raudenbush's, woods. The woods were located by Blue Creek in Adams County, Indiana....

The Church of God people were called "saints," "comeouters," which they did not mind because biblically and spiritually they believed they had "come out of Babylon."

— By Golda Shosenberg, (daughter of Dora and Bud Nye), as told to Mary Ellen Doran Raudenbush, 1965.





# A SCHOOL IS BORN

*The following excerpts are taken from the personal journal of Dr. Mack M. Caldwell, sent to us by his son, Maurice Caldwell. We are indebted for this courtesy. For those of us who knew Dr. Caldwell personally, it is a rare treat to read what he wrote over eighty-five years ago. 'They being dead still speak,' inspiring our faith and enlightening our ignorance.*

**June 14, 1925** - Today was the first day of the [Anderson] camp meeting proper. It has been a great day....Riggle and Sherwood spoke with power. Bro. Wilson made a good talk on the church in action at 10:30. He did not talk long because there was so much good singing. Brother Riggle preached on the Reformation and I never heard so much shouting. Brother Anderson preached a highly intellectual sermon at 7:30. This has been a great day.

**June 16, 1924** -- I am in suspense about the school proposition [Southern Bible Institute]. I expect to take it, and the task seems too big! ...Needless debate hindered the adoption of a Constitution for the Ministerial Assembly. This hindered the Augusta school from being taken up. It will be decided tomorrow. I am anxious to know something about it....

**June 17, 1925** - ....The school business went through today. I was called to the tower [of the Gospel Trumpet building] and elected Dean of "The Southern Bible Institute." Also I am chairman of the managing committee of five. This marks the beginning of a new epoch in my life's history....When [Dr. A.T.] Rowe [General Manager of the Gospel Trumpet Company] called me to meet all of the colored ministers on the grounds I felt a little peculiar when I found myself within a circle of about 30 colored men all smiling and extending their hand to me. One (S.P. Dunn) said, "I did not know I was that close to a Georgian. Praise the Lord!"

**June 18, 1925** - We had another great day in the camp. Shouts and songs of victory were heard all day....My election as Dean was ratified today. I met the committee today at 5:00 and we made some plans. I am to go to Augusta July 13....I got a good letter from Byrde [his wife] today. She sent me \$20. I surely needed it. I had borrowed money three times [for food]. Bro. Kent gave me a dollar and a half while shaking hands with me. I surely did appreciate it.

**June 19, 1925** - ....Went to a missionary meeting. Heard Bro. Dimba and [Samuel] Joiner. Heard Senator Shafer of Ohio speak on blind work. Wrote wife a card and looked up train. I am anxious to get home and Southern Bible Institute.

**June 21, 1925** - I met the Taskers [George and Minnie] this morning, but did not talk with them much. Tonight Aunt Minnie told me the brethren held them sanctified but differing in policy....The crowds were not as good as last Sunday. This has been a wonderful meeting. The general order is bad and I hope to see it improved within the next few years. More constructive work has been done this year than in any previous one.

**June 22, 1925** - ...I had a little visit with R.R. Byrum at the office. He encouraged me to continue the S.S. writing for the Trumpet. It is a great opportunity and I shall keep it up for a while—six months or a year. The journey home was a pleasant one. Had plenty of company. I read some and visited some. I got off the train at Decatur and Byrde met me at Albany. I was surely glad to see her....



Mack M. Caldwell

**July 5, 1925** - Farewell Sunday [Albany, Georgia]. I preached on "Faithfulness" at eleven. I had only a few minutes because much time was taken up making a picture. 108 were in the picture. I used Acts 18:18 as a text for the sermon....

**July 11, 1925** - Drove from Lafayette to Atlanta....Rowe and I worked 'til bedtime planning for the school....

**July 12, 1925** - In order to be on time tomorrow for the Managing Committee it was necessary for me to go from Atlanta to Augusta on Sunday. On the way, most of the towns "had the lid on" in regard to Sunday selling....Even gasoline [was] not for sale. One place, a dose of medicine could not be bought without the signature of the Mayor and Chief of Police!

**July 13, 1925** - The Managing Committee met and discussed the whole situation: buildings; finances; teachers; courses; etc. The colored brethren wanted a school for children and they seemed very much disappointed at 16 years being the age limit....

**July 14, 1925** - Another Committee meeting. Rowe left at 3:00 p.m....

**July 20, 1925** - Drew my first weekly play check from S.B.I. Wrote field report....

— Mack M. Caldwell



## GOING! GOING! (GONE?)

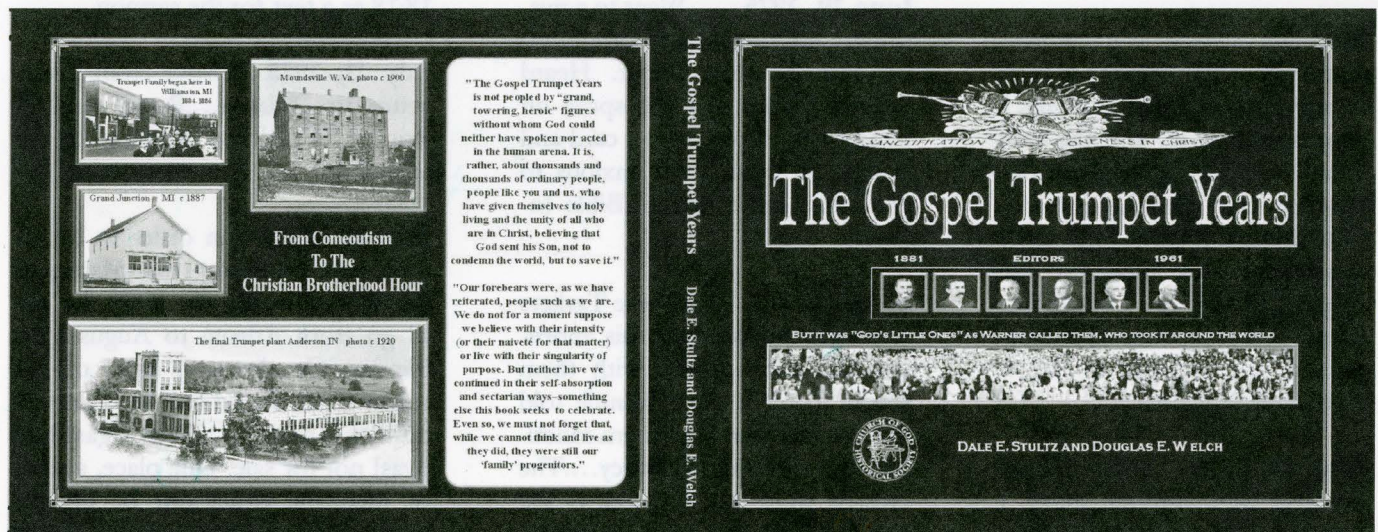
The home of D.S. Warner, located on the grounds of historical Warner Memorial Camp near Grand Junction, Michigan, is facing demolition unless we, with roots in the Church of God Reformation Movement, come to the rescue. The Board of Directors of Warner Camp must soon decide this fate.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

This important piece of our church history is a gem of a little two bedroom Queen Anne house built and lived in by Daniel and Francis Warner until he died in 1895. It was restored and redecorated for the centennial of the campground in 1992 and is once more in need of restoration and redecorating if we are to preserve it for posterity.

This time it needs professional contractors—carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, as well as those who can paint and someone who has knowledge of the historical period interior décor. It will cost an estimated \$30,000 to \$50,000, and a foundation fund will be needed for perpetual care. Funding has been sought from our State and national agencies, but it is not available. Warner Camp cannot carry the financial burden of the home any longer without help. [If you can help, contact 'Doc' Stevens, Program Director, Phone 264-434-6844, Email: [warnercamp@ymail.com](mailto:warnercamp@ymail.com), Website [www.warnercamp.com](http://www.warnercamp.com).]

## Remember This?



## We Said

*The Gospel Trumpet Years* will be at the printers' very soon now and should be released by about the end of July this year. The book is 264 large-format pages and contains many new photographs, as well as a new Time-Line, maps, and other charts. Watch our website ([www.choghistoricalsociety.org](http://www.choghistoricalsociety.org)) for further announcements. Pre-publication price will be \$31.50. The Society is setting up a PayPal account for your convenience. Visit our website to learn of special prices for books published by the Society—as well as contact addresses.

Well...we were wrong! Judging by the production schedule of our other books, we should have been on target. But things happen—even in the best of presses. Nonetheless, we trust our new history will prove better than our prognostication. We believe it will. See Page 1 of this issue.