

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God Vol 8 No 2 Winter 2008

EARLY CHURCH OF GOD SONG EVANGELIST

Charles Boyer was born in Clarion County, Pennsylvania in 1878. He grew up in the Evangelical Church, but in his late teens accepted the Church of God message. He was baptized by H.M. Riggle. He sold Gospel Trumpet literature, pray-

ed for the sick, and served as a "music minister" with Church of God evangelists, beginning his ministry about the turn of the twentieth century.

A few months ago, his grand-niece, Edie Brewer, gathered up photos and memoirs and sent



Charles Boyer, c.1915

them to the Historical Society. We have reproduced part of a memoir below. It speaks of the conversion of J.T. Wilson.

While there

a lady that knew of me came in and said," Mr. Boyer there is a lady in the kitchen that believes as you do. I said I would be pleased to meet her. The lady that came in was Mrs. J.T.Wilson she had got saved and her husband had sent her back to Rocky Grove to her folk's to get her away from them saints. Mr. Wilson was the Principal of the scho~~ol~~ at Emelton, Pa. She told me of the opposition she was meeting with, not only from her husband but also her Father. He was an Elder in the Prespyterian Church. I said that the best way I~~kw~~ew to help her would be to loan her books, I would leave them at my brother's who lived only a few ~~blo~~ blocks away and she could get them. But I decided to visit the Kiskaden family, on the second or third time i called, Mr Kiskaden met me on the porch and did'nt intend to let me enter. We talked for awhile and I explained that I had'nt accepted this Church of God doctrine hastily, of the books I had read and etc. Then he said "Mr. Boyer Llena is ill and won't take any medicine, if you think you can be of any help to her why step in. I went in and we had prayer and Lena said she was healed. I continued to visit the Kiskader and later the Mother and one daughter was saved, and some years later another daughter and son was saved. Mr Wilson continued to persecute Mrs. Wilson beat her up at times, hold her mouth shut if she went to pray audibly. But Mrs Wilson stood firm. Finally Mr. Wilson got saved and went to the Gospel Trumpet Co. He is the man that started the Bible School which is now called the Anderson College.

GEORGE BOYER PHOTOGRAPHS

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*Newsletter of the Historical
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(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*, Society President, at: mdstrege@anderson.edu.

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

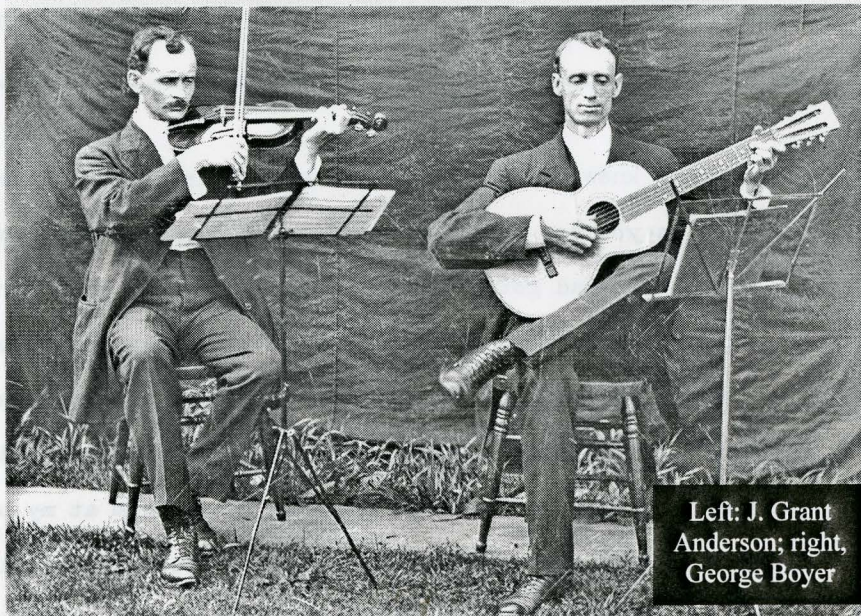
The Historical Society

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

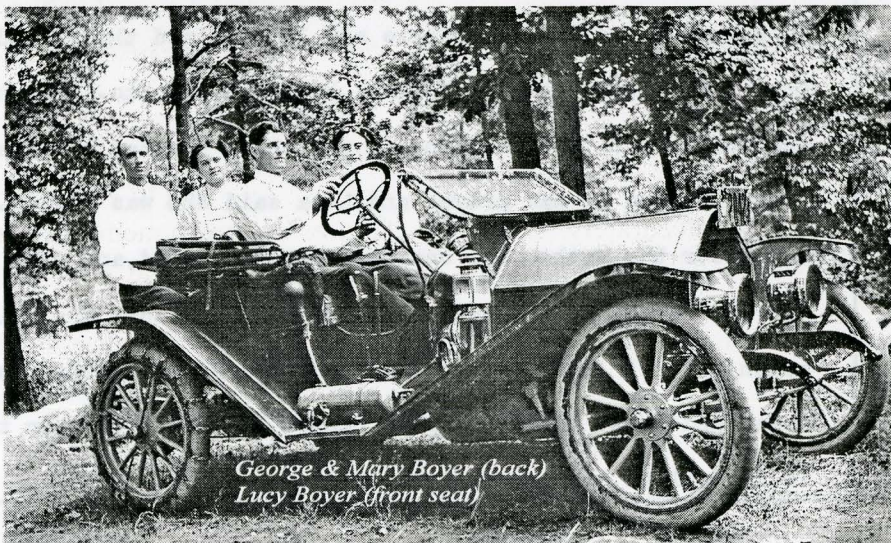
Membership is open to all who are vitally interested in what the Society desires to accomplish. Membership dues are \$15 per year (\$10 for students.) Checks should be made out to *Historical Society of the Church of God* and sent to Box 702, Anderson IN 46015.



George at the piano, mother Rachael, sister Lucy.



Left: J. Grant Anderson; right, George Boyer



George & Mary Boyer (back)
Lucy Boyer (front seat)

Emeline Pa. Aug. 20 - 1911

JOSEPH TURNER WILSON: A LARGELY-FORGOTTEN 'SHAKER AND MOVER'

The older I become the more convinced I am that many of the fundamental ideas about history I started out with over fifty-five years ago are wrong. In nearly a decade of intensive work with Church of God 'history,' I have learned that history is not what may actually have happened, but what someone or some group chose to make of it for some unstated ideological or political purpose.

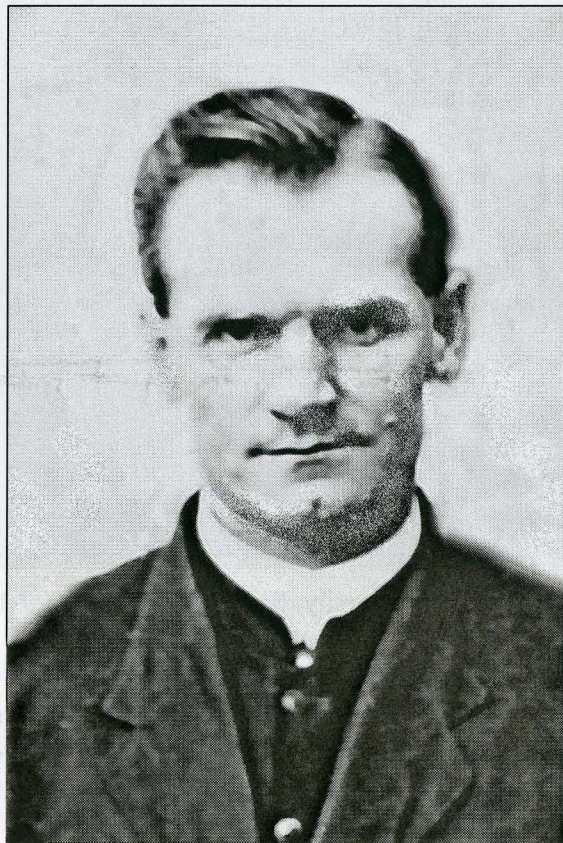
History is thus the interpretation of events or—to make matters even more difficult—what someone else has written about those events. And interpretation always takes place from where we sit, not from within the contexts in which those events are said to have occurred. What this means, I think, is that the interpretation of an event is seldom obvious or 'given.'

It is a consensus among cognitive psychologists that witnesses of an event do not necessarily all see the same thing. 'I was there' does not by any means guarantee that a witness saw either completely or accurately what may have occurred. Or heard fully and correctly what was said. Or remembered accurately what they may actually have heard correctly in the first place.

Interpretation is full of quite major pitfalls—especially in interpreting the words and writings of others. This is why we historical researchers have so much difficulty in discovering what

was said by whom under what circumstances. Or how it should then be understood.

But not only is remembering ('reconstruction' is, of course, the correct word) a problem for historical researchers such as we are, an equally frustrating



problem is the failure to remember, that is, *forgetting*. And here I am not referring to the normal failures of human memory. I am talking about the kind of failure to remember that is ideologically, politically, or personally motivated for whatever reason.

And my 'case in point' is the life and work of Joseph Turner Wilson in the Church of God in the first half of the 20th century.

We have been surprised in our recent research to find that very little has been written about him (other than the typical generalities)—and even less known about him, particularly in this generation.

Who gets written out of our history always raises 'red flags' for me. I want to know why. And, above all, I want to know if, in fact, it was justified on legitimate historical grounds (which it often is). Ignoring people because you don't agree with them or like them, or because they were a pain in the behind of the body politic, or because they were too challenging and uncontrollable probably should not count as justifiable historical reasons.

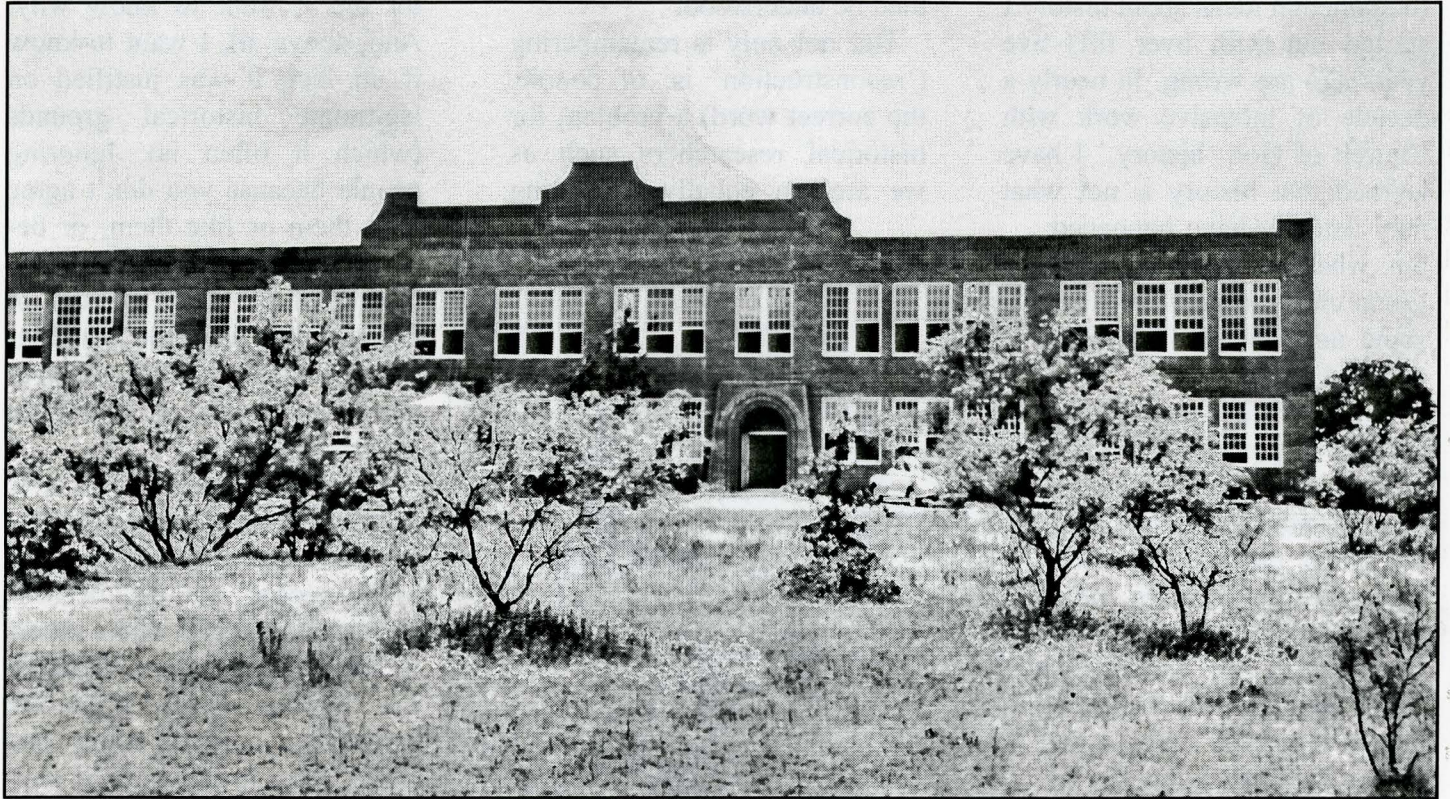
Everything we've been able to discover Wilson suggests that he irked and offended a good many people, not just because he got things done where others failed, but because of his manner in doing them. If he felt something needed doing and others were in the way, he simply brushed them aside and did it anyway.

He was certainly not lacking in self-confidence. He was well-educated for his time and place. He had attended Slippery Rock Normal College and then Grove City College in Pennsylvania and taught public school. In 1907, he and his wife, Lena, moved to Anderson to work as volunteers at the Gospel Trumpet Company, leaving after a year to work for the Standard Oil Company in Kansas and engage in evangelistic work for the next five years or so.

In 1914, he returned to the Trumpet Company to serve as 'Office Editor' of the *Gospel Trumpet* for almost a year, then

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WARNER MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY



Warner Memorial University, Eastland, Texas - 1929-1932

In 1924, the Board of Church Extension and Home Missions sent J.T. Wilson to Texas to start a congregation in Dallas. Those who knew Wilson knew him as an enthusiastic (sometimes heedless) promoter of those things in which he deeply believed—and he believed in the Church of God and its message. He was a ‘doer.’

But he was an educator at heart. Texas didn’t change that. In his private papers (now located in Church of God Archives), he asserts that the Church of God, in spite of appearances to the contrary, really

did believe in education, just not in *ministerial* education—something in which he did believe, otherwise the Spiritual Workers’ Training School *cum* Anderson Bible Training School might never have come into existence. He knew the General Ministerial Assembly would never approve of such a school, so bypassed them altogether, something for which he was bitterly criticized and thereafter held at arm’s length.

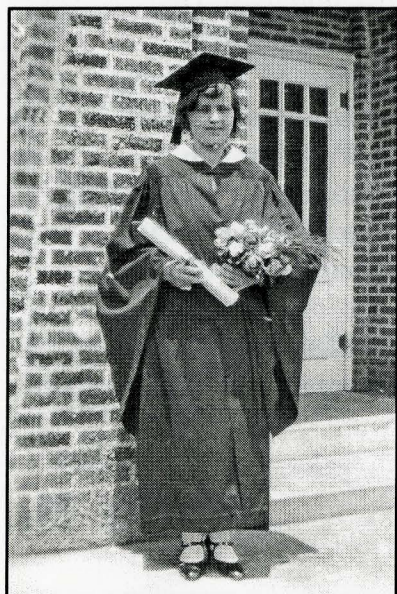
His dream was a liberal arts college, but that was not about to happen in Anderson. He knew this, so moved on.

In 1927, he found a receptive audience for his vision of a liberal arts school: the ministers of the Church of God in Texas. They not only approved the idea, but appointed Wilson to promote it. A bit later the Texas Assembly joined with the Assemblies in Louisiana and Oklahoma. It was decided to establish the school in Eastland, Texas, where the ‘city fathers’ had made a gift of about sixty acres (54, it turned out) for the proposed ‘university.’ (For further details see Barry Callen, *Enriching Mind and Spirit*, 2007, pages 181-191.)

JOSEPH T. WILSON'S FOLLY?

Wilson was able to borrow the money he needed to build the school (even talking the Board of Church extension out of fifteen thousand dollars). Then the Great Depression hit, following the stock market crash in 1929. No money was to be found anywhere. Faculty could not be paid; students often had very little to eat; and operating expenses dried up. In 1932 the school simply had to be closed.

J.T. Wilson was a dreamer of dreams and this one was a great one. But both the timing and the location were wrong. To be sure, no one could have predicted the Depression. Wilson



that. But the choice of location was another matter. It was a 'has-been' oil town and going downhill. And it was not centrally located (Moundsville again?). Even so, WMU might have survived had the depression not hit with such force.

Some faculty at WMU went on from there to become noted educators in the Church of God: Carl Kardatzke; Paul Breitweiser; and Irene Smith Caldwell. And some students later held prominent positions in the Church—such as Lester Crose, and his younger brother Kenneth (who attended the Preparatory Department there).

Only one student ever graduated from the University: Ms. Lucille Kardatzke. (She is pictured bottom left, holding her one-of-a-kind diploma.)

To have to close the school was a heavy blow for J.T. Wilson to bear. "He jumped too far too fast," as someone put it. But an even heavier blow was the fact that he could not repay the money he had borrowed. A number of people lost heavily. This grieved him and he did everything he could to pay outstanding debts. Sadly, it also cost him his position in Anderson as President of the Trumpet Co. Folly—or just bad timing?

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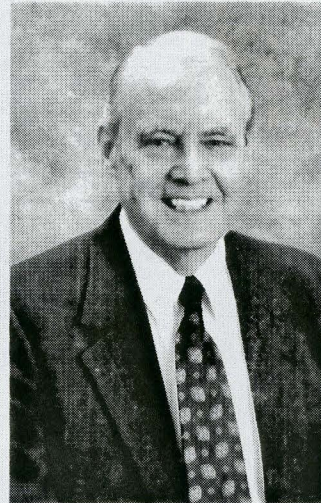
D.S. Warner

Overcomer of Adversity



Richard L. Rothman

About the Author...



Rev. Richard L. Rothman is the younger son of the late Robert R. Rothman and Zuda Chambers Rothman. His father, Robert R., wrote numerous articles for the Gospel Trumpet from 1898 until 1934, and was a part of the "Trumpet Family" in Moundsville, West Virginia. Richard's mother was a Church of God missionary who served five years in Japan. She was also a Church of God pastor in Nashville, Tennessee at her death. Richard L. Rothman earned a BA degree at Anderson College, BD/MDiv degree at Vanderbilt University, an MA degree at Western Reserve University, along with completing most requirements towards a PhD degree. He was ordained as a Church of God minister in 1955. He was an Assistant Minister in Tennessee, and has served as Senior Pastor in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. He has been and continues to serve as an interim pastor in Kentucky. He conducts Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) History seminars on week-ends and during the week. He is also available for revivals, fill-in speaking engagements, and Bible seminars. He and his wife, Shelby Jean, have 8 children and 14 grand-children.

The Historical Society of the Church of God encourages members to write and publish books on a wide variety of subjects relating to Church of God history. We do not 'advertise' books written by any member which do not deal with some facet of our history. The fact that a book is noted in the *Church of God Historian* should not be taken as a recommendation of that book by the editorial committee (although we reserve the right not to note books we consider to be historically inaccurate or unfair).

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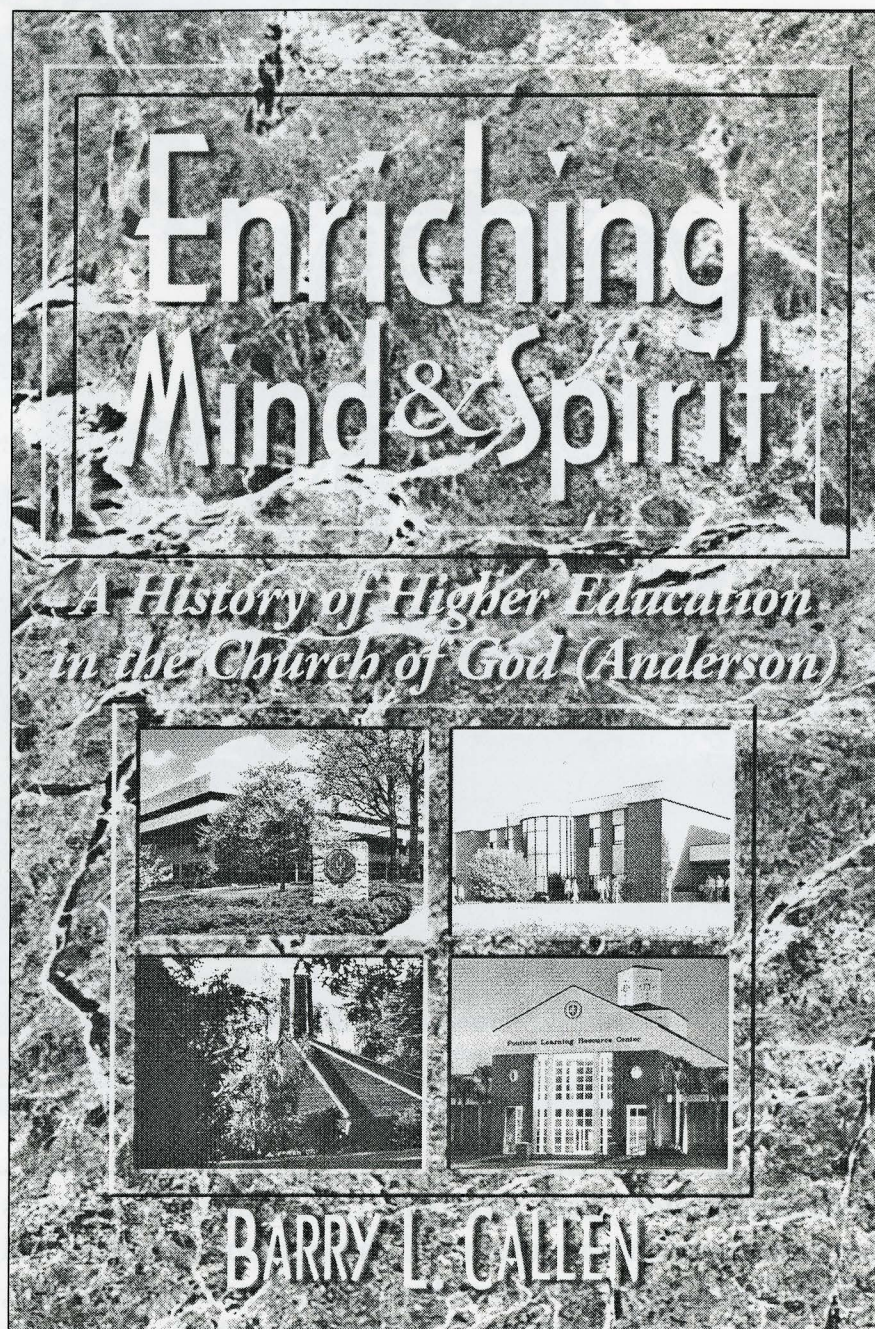
resigned to help establish the Church of God in the City of Anderson. He took charge of the Brown Street congregation after David and Mabel Hale returned to Kansas in 1914 and threw all of his rather awesome energy and drive into establishing congregations in South Anderson and West Anderson (including the construction of the first two church buildings in Anderson).

In addition, in 1917 he helped in getting the first Park Place Church underway and served as its first pastor. But only for a brief period. That same year, he was appointed General Manager of the Gospel Trumpet Company to replace D. Otis Teasley. A few months later, he resigned as pastor of Park Place.

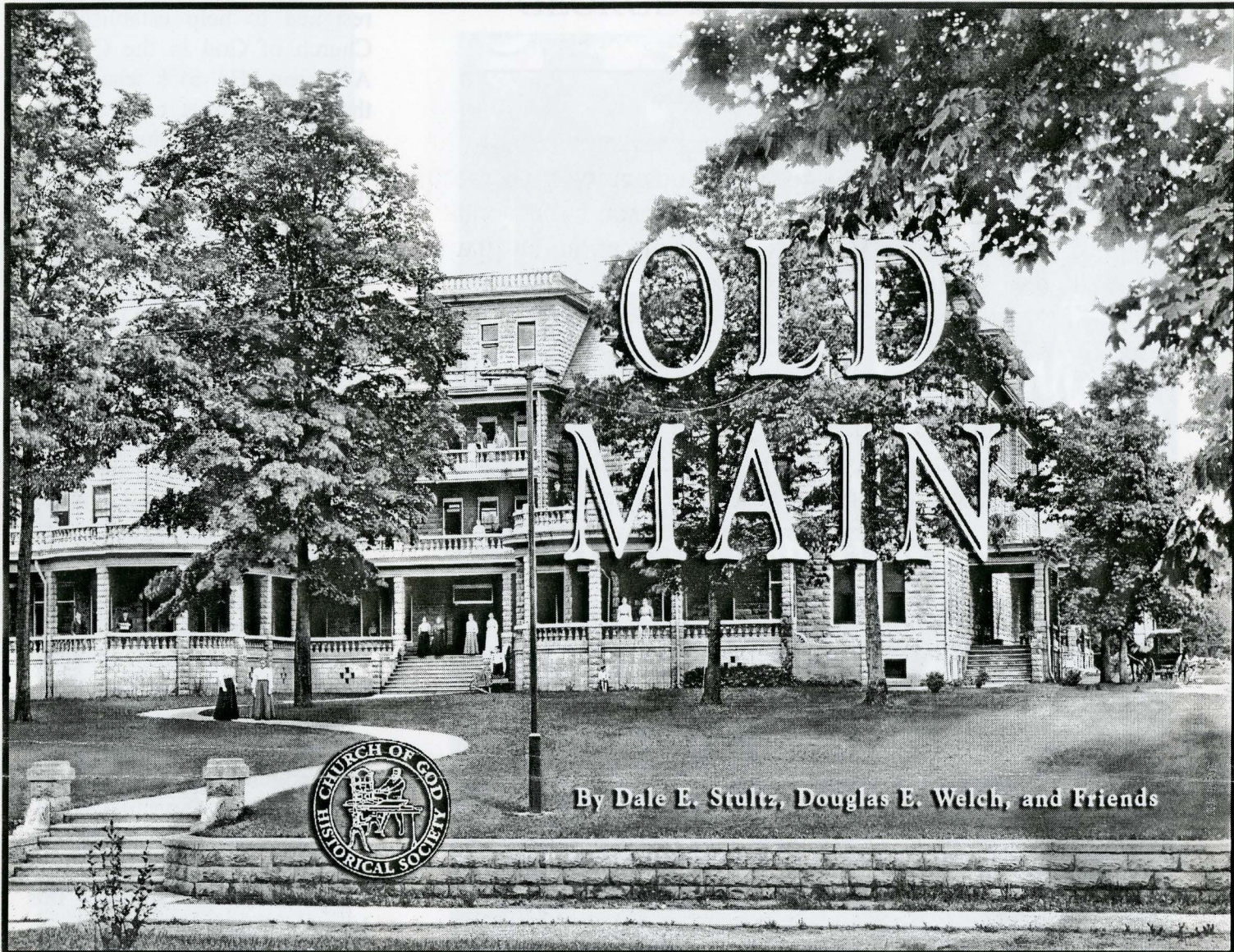
In 1917, the Company closed the Trumpet Home and began to pay employees. Wilson then established the "Spiritual Workers' Training School," which was located across the street in the former Home. In 1919, this became Anderson Bible Training School, of which he was the founding Principal, serving until 1923, when he was replaced at the Trumpet Company by D.W. Patterson, who the Directors hoped would be more conservative and responsible with the Company's finances.

J.T. Wilson was a major player in the establishment of the Church of God in Anderson; he was the founder and first Principal of ABTS, which became Anderson College; and he proposed and directed the organization of the Board of Church Extension and Home Missions. For all his 'warts,' he is much too important to be forgotten in the Church of God.

— D.E. Welch



Additional copies of this book may be secured from Warner Press, the distributor of Anderson University Press books. To order, call toll free: 1-877-346-3974 or email to wporders@warnerpress.org



Many of you may not know that Historical Society team members, Dale Stultz and Douglas Welch, are currently putting together a medium-format volume of photographs and historical reminiscences about "Old Main." This is not an institutional history of Anderson College, but a looking-back-and-remembering kind of book. Fifteen to twenty individuals across the life of 'Old Main' (1930-1968) are contributing memoirs, which, together with many photographs (some of which they are providing), will make up Part III of the volume. (Part I deals with the Gospel Trumpet Home; and Part II with Anderson Bible Training School.) This book of historical reminiscences will be unique in that it will contain hundreds of digitally-restored photographs, many of which have never before been published in any form. The Historical Society has joined forces with Anderson University to produce this volume, but Stultz, Welch, and Associates are fully responsible for the format and content of the book. It will be printed in landscape orientation and the size will be approximately 12 x 10 inches. The cover will be full color and the photographs sepia-tone. The book will be hard-cover. We expect to have it printed and available by mid-June, 2008.