

# Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God Vol 10 No 2 Winter 2010



Mary Cole

## Mary Who?

In our endless digging into the Church of God past, we happened upon a book published by the Gospel Trumpet Company in 1914. The title? *Trials and Triumphs of Faith*. And the author? Mary Cole. We didn't know a lot about Mary Cole and discovered not many others did either. She appears to have been one of a host of forgotten people from our past. This (and the fact that the book is quite highly touted on the internet as a fine example of Christian women's spirituality—but with no mention of her Church of God reformation roots) set us to reading and learning.

Mary Cole (1853-1940) was a staunch adherent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but like her two brothers, Jeremiah and George, and Daniel S. Warner, Joseph C. Fisher, G.T. Clayton, and others, became part of the Holiness Movement. Her elder brother, Jeremiah, was a holiness evangelist, preaching "two works of grace," divine healing, and the non-sectarian nature of God's "true church." Mary took up her brother's cause when she was twenty-two, becoming an Exhorter in the ME Church. Women preachers were few and far between in those days. Mary noted that when she began to preach as a Holiness evangelist, not only had she never heard a woman preach, but that she met "considerable opposition" even to the idea of a woman presuming to preach.

Mary and her brothers had very little education—a bare minimum, in fact. But Mary confesses to having read Phoebe Palmer's books (Palmer, a vocal and articulate advocate of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian 'perfection,' was one of the founders of the Holiness Movement in the US.) She also read the books of "Mrs. Eliza



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*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. D.E. Welch, Managing Editor and Publisher.

## 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.

Fletcher, a British 'evangelical,' abolitionist, and author), Hester Ann Rodgers (a noted Methodist woman who, while not herself a preacher, prayed publicly and led classes—activities frowned upon in the Church, especially after the death of John Wesley), and also the writings of John Wesley himself. Under her elder brother's tutelage, however, she, also, became a Holiness evangelist. The Coles believed most strongly that beyond a basic and limited education, they were fully equipped to preach the Gospel. "God himself was our teacher," she said.

Mary seems to have been a 'firebrand.' She preached "two works of grace" and "divine healing." To take any kind of medicine, she insisted, was to "lose faith for divine healing." Her convictions led her to "pour out all her medicines"—of which she seemed to have a considerable amount. As a child she was very "sickly" and was often confined to bed. She quite occasionally had what she called "spasms" (which, as we discovered, was actually epilepsy—an illness with which she struggled bravely all her life).

Her brother, Jeremiah, was an independent 'come-outer,' one who preached against sectism. He had concluded long before he met Warner that division was a sin and that no sect could be the church of God of the New Testament. He first met Warner at the Jacksonville, Illinois Holiness Association convention in 1880, was a subscriber to the *Pilgrim* (which, was combined with the *Herald of Gospel Freedom* and, in January 1881, was published as *Gospel Trumpet*), and later decided to join him in his "holiness work in the Midwest."

Mary, however, would have none of it. She was a life-long Methodist (the ME Church was "my mother," she insisted) and an ardent convert to the Holiness Movement. Her own view of the



Mary and George L. Cole (her brother)

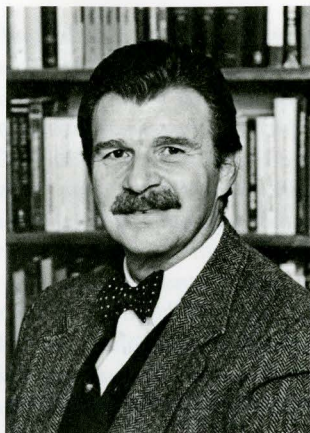
*Trumpet* was anything but flattering. She was upset by its constant fuming against "the licensing of preachers." She was opposed to "the spirit of the *Gospel Trumpet*" and wrote to Warner, telling him not to send another copy to the Cole household. "It's too radical," she said. "It will turn people against holiness."

In 1886 or 1887, however, she met Warner at the St. James, Missouri camp meeting and was won over by his charm and charisma. "Truly a man of God," she concluded, "meek [and] humble." She and younger brother George joined the 'reformation' as evangelists and were instrumental in the establishment of the Missionary Home and subsequent congregation in Chicago. (Her book describes the mission work there in some detail.)

Mary Cole's book strengthens our conviction that Allie R. Fisher was right in her conclusion that in the 1870s and 1880s, a number of radical holiness writers and preachers, including D.S. Warner, 'saw the church,' or, as Mary had it, "discerned the one body." Her brother, Jeremiah, in fact, appears to have come to these conclusions earlier than Warner did, and, like Joseph and Allie Fisher and others, joined with Warner, the owner and editor of an independent holiness paper, the *Gospel Trumpet*, in their common task of advocating holiness and denouncing the sin of division and 'sectism.'

— D.E. Welch and D.E. Stultz





## F. G. Smith and John Morrison, Fleshing out the Story

My next major research and writing project is a centennial history of Anderson University. A finished manuscript is not due for quite some time, but it is a large task that will require every bit of my free time. The story of Anderson University cannot properly be told apart from its relationship with the Church of God, which means the story of the movement must figure prominently in the University's history. The nature of that relationship has changed over the decades, but there is no denying the reciprocal influence Anderson and the movement have had on each other. This mutual relationship has often been happy, but at other times frayed. At no moment was this any more the case than the years from 1929 to 1934, a period I have elsewhere described as the "Anderson College Controversy."

Last summer I began my research by reading several years worth of John Morrison's correspondence and rather quickly found myself reading about this critical period in the life of the church and college. One of the wonderful things about fresh re-

search is that we find ourselves learning and rethinking events and personalities we thought we knew, only to see afresh in a new light. Until reading Morrison's letters, my understanding of the controversy had been framed largely by Robert Reardon's *The Early Morning Light*. While the main lines of Reardon's narrative remain, I am learning there is more to the story.

The controversy significantly involved Russell Olt, which is to say that it was much more than a conflict between Morrison and Smith. Late in 1932, Olt arranged a psychology experiment involving Anderson dentist Rollie Bennett and Mary Husted, a college student. She agreed to undergo hypnosis by Olt, and Bennett agreed to extract one of her teeth without anesthesia. The experiment was a success, but the local newspaper picked up the story. When it spread throughout the region a public relations nightmare was created with Olt squarely at the center. As ministers across the United States learned of his experiment they objected both individually and corporately. Ministerial assemblies in Kentucky, Ohio, and Western Washington each sent resolutions to the College expressing their disapproval. Washington ministers registered the strongest objections, going so far as to request "the removal from the school [of] those connected with such teaching, feeling it would be best for the work."

Some friends of the school feared Olt would need to step down. At the time of the Olt imbroglio, the widely-popular revival preacher, W. A. Monk, was living and serving in the Pacific Northwest as field secretary for the Board of Church Extension

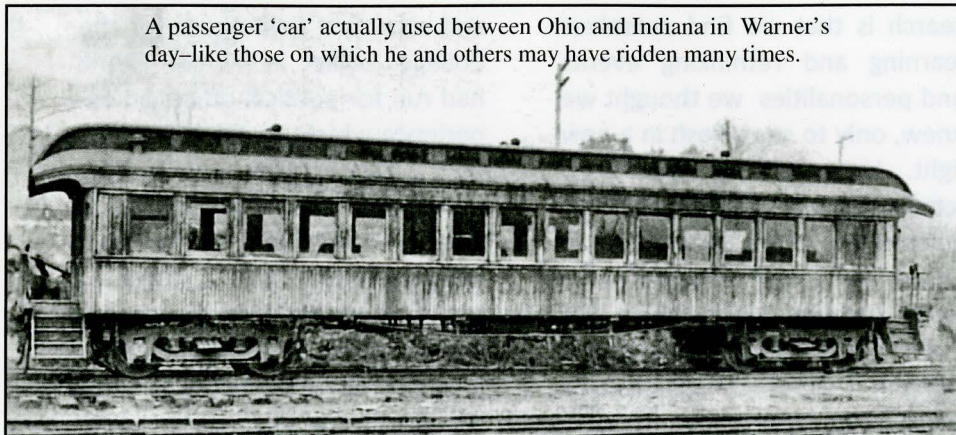
and also as a field agent for the College. Earlier in his life, Monk had run for political office, an experience which taught him to assess group reaction and feeling. In October 1933, he wrote Morrison to express the opinion that Olt would likely need to resign for the sake of the school's reputation in the church. Furthermore, Monk believed he would need to remain in the Pacific Northwest for some time in order to repair the damage done by Olt. Other friends of the college also criticized Olt and the college. Former student Lester Schrock wrote from New Springfield, Ohio, "The school is sure in the limelight as at any gathering of ministers where I have been since leaving school there is unfavorable discussion of it, and such *dumb tricks* [Schrock's emphasis] as the one Dean Olt did sure keep it in the limelight, and I think not for the good of the institution." Schrock added, "All things are lawful but not expedient."

Against Monk's advice, Morrison adamantly refused even to consider Olt's resignation. Perhaps Morrison had learned his lesson after accepting Russell Byrum's resignation in 1929. Perhaps Morrison believed that the college's future hinged on Olt's professional survival. The president's motives have yet to be uncovered, and they may never see the light of day. Two things we do know. In 1933 Olt wrote an open letter to the church in which he apologized. We also know that present day researchers will have to decide whether Olt's career was actually at stake or that, as Robert Reardon described the affair, it was a "tempest in a teapot."

—Merle D. Strege



A passenger 'car' actually used between Ohio and Indiana in Warner's day—like those on which he and others may have ridden many times.



## The 'Gospel Car'

In seeking to trace the movements of some of our first-generation Church of God forebears, we have been surprised, not by the fact they did so much of their traveling by train, but by the number of railways and trains there actually were. Railway maps of Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan in the latter part of the 19th century are heavily veined with railroads both large and small. For the first time, we have a visual record of travels by key people such as J.C. Fisher and D.S. Warner.

We knew, of course, that the primary means of public conveyance in the U.S. was the railroad. Small wonder, then, that to be excluded from the 'Clergy List' provided to the railway companies by the Gospel Trumpet Company also excluded them from much cheaper 'clergy fares.'

In 1881, D.S. Warner, still in Indianapolis, dreamed of building and outfitting a railway passenger car (such as that above) as a traveling publishing office for the *Gospel Trumpet* and a home for a rather large evangelistic team (both males and females), to be hauled all over the U.S. east of the Mississippi as a means of spreading the Evening Light gospel far and wide. His enthusiasm was almost contagious—but not, it seems, contagious enough.

Daniel himself longed to be 'on the road again.' His great love was holiness evangelism, but he also believed that God had appointed the *Gospel Trumpet* as his special 'latter-day prophet' in calling the true church of God out of Sect Babylon. He came to believe that he had been "led by the Spirit" to a solution that would enable him both to travel the holiness meeting circuit, establish new 'come-out' holiness bands—and publish the *Trumpet* at the same time: a "Gospel car." The September 1, 1881 issue of the *Trumpet* heralded in bold print: **"The Salvation Car, The Tabernacle of the Lord Moving South, The Gospel Trumpet Flying Through the Land."** Warner writes:

*"Behold I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth. ...I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ...I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself—they shall show forth my praise." Isaiah 43:19-21. Yes, the Lord is going to 'form' a band who will go forth to water the parched places of the wilderness, to show forth the praises of the Lord. For some time we have been receiving calls to come South and preach the Gospel of God.... When we met at Terre Haute last week, Bro. Pelton asked the question: 'Would you be willing to go South with a Tabernacle and spend the whole winter, if the Lord so directs?' ...The coincidence of this*

*question and our own calls, and moving Southward seemed to strike our mind at once as being of the Lord. A little further conversation and prayer seemed to clear up every doubt. To my surprise Bro. Pelton then presented the same idea that had occurred to our mind—i.e., that of taking a printing press along and publish our bills, tracts, and possibly a paper as we go. His mind had also conceived a plan by which it could be done, namely, by erecting a [railway] car for our use, a part partitioned off for an office, and the rest for the band and equipment. In the name of the Lord we believe this is all of God, and we expect He will carry it out. ...The band, we expect will consist of about four sisters and six brethren, whom the Spirit shall select, a few of the number seem already designated. ...These things were talked and prayed over Saturday, August 21. ...Glory to God as we turned it over a new baptism of glory flooded our soul, and has rested upon us ever since. The paper will continue [through] the Lord's hands, and our agency as heretofore."*

Warner, however, may not have been quite as confident as he sounded. He goes on to say:

*"Should we not be provided with a 'Salvation Car' we shall not be able to take the office, in which case it is possible we shall move to Ashland, Cass County, Ill., a small, but thriving town with two good railroads, where many advantages will be secured." [Ashland is in West Central Illinois, north and west of Springfield].*

However, Warner concludes, "the car is what is needed." Such a car would have many advantages, chief among them the ability to move south in the winter. "Once on the track for Jesus," he explains, "we shall continue to go on winter and summer, whithersoever the Lord will."

In the end it all came down to money. Unless 'Spirit-inspired saints' stepped forward to pay for Warner's dream it would not happen. He concluded the article by saying:



"Now who will honor God by saying 'I will furnish the means for this car? O, ye rich, how hardly shall ye enter the kingdom of heaven if ye will not give your hundreds to speed this last midnight cry; ... this final search for souls. O, in the name of the crucified and risen Saviour we ask you, will you 'lay up your treasures on earth' thereby to be 'pierced through with many sorrows.' Will you leave it to feed the worldliness of your own children, while the whole world is trembling under the near approach of an awful doom, and the long suffering of God is drawn out a little longer to enable you to direct your thousands, that will soon be burned up, to help save some poor souls from hell, before the door of mercy is forever closed."

Then comes the passionate climax, "Who will make haste to sell, if need be, the best land he has to send out this first salvation car, for the glory of God? Speak out quickly lest God pass you by and another take your crown."

Either Warner's readers did not have his passionate eschatological sense of urgency (he believed that Christ would come in his own lifetime—this had been "revealed" to him he said and that conviction came to motivate his entire ministry), or they thought the whole idea was too impractical. Or their children strongly opposed the selling off of the family's 'wealth' to finance such a scheme. (This happened on several occasions following Warner's time, with families protesting, even suing to recover property which had been deeded over to the Gospel Trumpet Company or sold and the proceeds given to the Company.)

In any event, the "Salvation Car" *did not* become a reality and is not thereafter mentioned in the *Trumpet*. This is not the first time, nor the last, that schemes 'ordered by the Lord' through direct and unmediated 'revelation' came to naught and were quietly abandoned as if they'd never occurred.

### Thomas Horton Property on 1874 Plat



When Thomas Horton and William and Jennie Smith, who were associates of J.C. and Allie Fisher, moved D.S. Warner, the virtually bankrupt owner-editor of the *Gospel Trumpet*, from Bucyrus, Ohio in the Spring of 1884, this is the town to which they moved. We are quite sure now that the arrow marks the actual *site* of the 'commodious' building owned by Horton. It was *that* building which became the first Gospel Trumpet 'Home.' We have not been able to establish that this present one is the actual building in which they set up 'shop' and resumed publication of the *Gospel Trumpet*. We know the building now standing in Williamston is an old building, but we do not know if it is the original building or not. Our investigations are still underway. Wayne Warner and others in Michigan are assisting us.

Warner and his associates often professed in both preaching and print to have experienced such "revelations." Such claims and the language in which they were couched were, as one soon discovers, common in the radical holiness movement of the day. Br. Warner believed that his preaching was inspired and controlled by the Holy Spirit, that his book, *Bible Proofs of a Second Work of Grace* was uniquely "given" under the "marvelous anointing of the Holy Spirit," and that his understanding of scripture came directly from the throne room of God via the Holy Spirit. Revelation was immediate and direct, opening one's heart and mind to

the 'true' meaning of the scriptures. Without the Holy Spirit in you, you could not even read other holiness papers "containing error without great danger to your soul."

In responding to a reader's question, Warner wrote: "Oh for the end of all questions and a ministry settled in God that need not 'run as uncertainly,' neither 'preach as the Pharisees, but as one having authority' by the revelation and power of the Holy Ghost" (*GT* September 15, 1984). Preachers, especially, should be that certain.

Could those making such claims ever be mistaken? Not if they recalled only those times when they weren't and forgot the numerous times when they were.





These two photographs were sent to us by Maurice Caldwell of Anderson IN. They are of the **Southern Bible Institute**. "The Institute was governed by the General Ministerial Assembly and operated under the sponsorship of Anderson Bible School and Seminary. Its aim was to train young African Americans for ministry and to encourage the use of Sunday School literature. It was formed in 1925 in Augusta, Georgia and closed at the end of the Fall 1928 term" (Church of God Archives Abstract). According to Maurice, these photographs were actually taken in Decatur, Alabama, where his father, Mack M. Caldwell was pastor of the congregation and Dean of the Institute. We have no further information. If readers know which of these two places was the actual site of the school or if you can identify any of the students in the photo below, please get in touch with us.





# Old People's Home

S. MICHELS, PROP.

SOUTH HAVEN, MICH.

Feb 16 1920

Dear Bro Byers

A.L. Byers

yours at hand

I first met Bro Warner Feb 1883  
he came to our home & assisted in  
a cottage meetings. I also Baptized  
him. I was also the means of  
getting the Gospel Trunked in Solice  
Hocking & Woodland Vt to Grand Junction  
Mich. if I could see you and  
talk to you you could gather a  
good deal of useful information  
that I cannot write but heard  
a very humble man of built & meek  
I dearly loved.

The first camp meeting of the Church  
of God at Bangor. I took him to the  
train & as he slept from the rig I  
banded him \$1.00 He raised both hands  
& Praise God as he had no money to pay  
Car fare with

# Old People's Home

S. MICHELS, PROP.

SOUTH HAVEN, MICH.

at another time at Beader Lane  
Ind. at the first assembly meeting  
Deep Impression came over me  
I must go to the meeting <sup>unhappily</sup>  
there. a great <sup>offense</sup> in arriving thro a  
very large man Love Low. Bro Warner took  
hold of him & put him out door. & Oppium  
ceased & meeting <sup>continued</sup> great good  
accomplished.

My first trip with him to Chicago  
in search of a Printing Press while  
sitting at a <sup>wretched</sup> Measles table he poured  
out his heart to God in deep earnest  
Prayer & thanked God for the food which  
drew the attention of many listeners  
at noon buying a buckshot so as to send  
the loads money. we found a dry goods  
Box in an alley just off a buting st-  
where he again lifted up his hand  
& in deep sense of gratitude thanked  
God for the dinner.

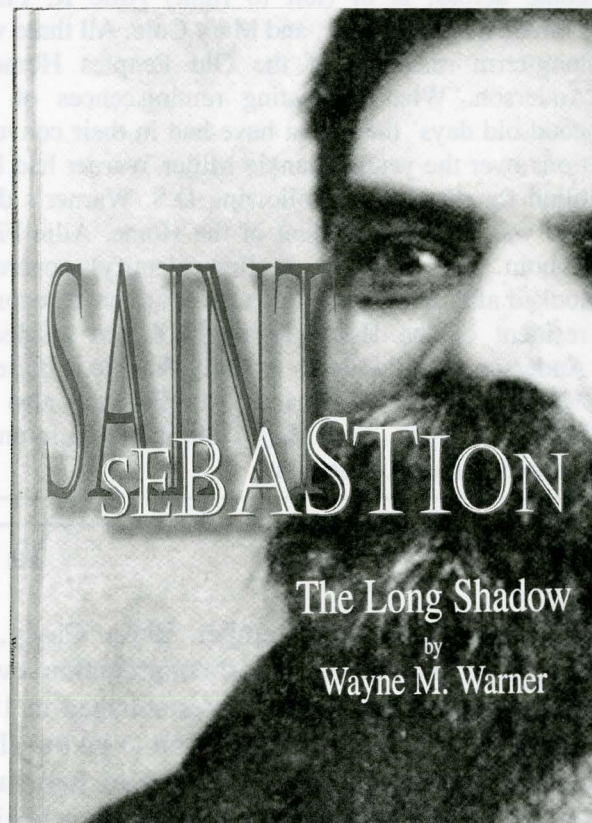
Yours in love S. Michels

## A LETTER OF GREAT HISTORICAL INTEREST

In our searching of documents and periodicals (and actually looking for something else—serendipity, I think it's called) we came across this letter from Sebastian Michels written in answer to a request from A.L. Byers for reminiscences about D.S. Warner. Michel's letter is a fascinating piece of our history. Old, yellow paper, faded ink, and scratchy handwriting make it difficult to read, but with a little digital 'boosting' it is legible.

We are very interested in the information that D.S. Warner (as a guest of the Fishers) held meetings in the Michel home in 1883 and was baptized by Michels (whether then or later is not clear—a lack of clarity about dates which vexes historians). Further, the "first camp meeting of the Church of God" was held in Bangor, which was then the 'center' of the Fisher movement.

Sebastian Michels, or "Saint Sebastian" as Wayne Warner calls him, was an important figure in our early history. A 'convert' of Joseph Fisher, he was one of D.S. Warner's great 'enablers.' (If you haven't read Wayne's book, you should. You may contact him or Reformation Publishers for a copy.)







The photo above, which we have just recently come across, is of (left to right) Allie R. Fisher, Frankie Miller Warner, and Mary Cole. All three were long-term residents of the Old Peoples Home in Anderson. What interesting reminiscences of 'the good old days' they must have had in their conversations over the years! Frankie Miller Warner had been blind for many years following D.S. Warner's death and was an early resident of the Home. Allie Fisher (whom we could not at first identify) apparently looked after her. Mary Cole appears to have become a resident of the Home about 1914 and resided in Anderson until her death in 1940. Frankie is buried in Michigan with her husband, Allie Fisher is also buried in Michigan, and Mary Cole is buried in an unmarked grave in Anderson.



The diminutive and frequently ill Mary Cole died in 1940. Her obituary, which appeared in the *Gospel Trumpet* in October 1940, was written by her pastor, E.A. Reardon. "Mary Cole was born in Decato, Iowa August 23, 1853, and died in Anderson Home, Anderson, Indiana August 27, 1940. With her passing, another brave pioneer and noble servant of the cross has gone to her reward. Sister Cole made a costly offering to her Lord. Afflicted from childhood and seriously handicapped, she struggled against great odds and much of her service to God was rendered in pain and great suffering. Many another under like circumstances would have been driven to silence and despair. She was a brave soldier, a trusted minister, a devout Christian, and a woman of faith. She faithfully served her generation and is worthy of a far greater tribute than we can pay her here."

*The photo above shows Dale Stultz beside the unmarked grave of Mary Cole in Memorial Park Cemetery in Anderson, right beside another 'pioneer,' Emma Palmer and not far from Noah and Isabel Byrum. Surely, we believe, she deserves a better memorial.*

### In the Spring Issue . . . .

Historical Society member, Bryce Casey, has alerted us to the fact that Edgewood Church of God, Ithaca, Michigan, may be our oldest congregation—even older than Praise Chapel in Randolph County, Indiana. It was, by Edgewood's own reckoning, established in 1882, which would make it four years older than Praise Chapel. But all we have so far is oral tradition to go on—although we have several lines of historical inquiry out at the moment and several persons in Michigan to help us with our search. We suspect it was part of the Joseph Fisher 'movement' in Michigan, but evidence is beginning to accumulate to take us beyond 'suspicion.' More next time.