

Assemblies of God HERITAGE

THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD ARCHIVES

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The Men Who Have Led the A/G

9 General Superintendents in 67-year History

Compared to other religious organizations, the Assemblies of God is still in its youth — even though it has been in existence for over 67 years.

This youthfulness can be better understood when one realizes that the organization has yet to elect a General Superintendent who was born after the organizational meeting in 1914.

Nine superintendents have served the organization since delegates voted the Assemblies of God into existence at Hot Springs, Arkansas.¹

This issue of *Heritage* will look at the first five superintendents: E. N. Bell, A. P. Collins, J. W. Welch, W. T. Gaston, and E. S. Williams. Sketches on W. R. Steelberg, G. F. Lewis, R. M. Riggs, and T. F. Zimmerman will be published in the next issue.

Eudorus N. Bell (1914; 1920-23)

When E. N. Bell was attending the University of Chicago in 1902, he wrote to the president of his alma mater, Stetson University, and inquired concerning a possible scholarship to Oxford University. "I feel that a few years abroad would not hurt me a bit."²

The scholarship never materialized. A disappointment to Bell, no doubt, but most certainly a blessing for the Assemblies of God which would be formed 12 years later.

Eudorus and his twin brother Endorus were born on June 27, 1866 — just a year after the Civil War ended. When the boys were only two years old, their

father died, leaving the family in poverty.

At an early age Eudorus was converted and felt a call into the ministry. After studying at Stetson he went on to the Southern Baptist Seminary at Louisville in 1900.

Following additional studies at the University of Chicago Divinity School,

Facts of Interest

*Five of the nine leaders attended the 1st General Council in 1914: E. N. Bell, A. P. Collins, J. W. Welch, W. T. Gaston, and R. M. Riggs.

*Two served for 20 years or more: E. S. Williams (20) and T. F. Zimmerman (22).

*E. S. Williams holds the record for most times elected (10).

*The youngest man to ever hold the office was W. T. Gaston who was elected at age 39. R. M. Riggs, at age 58, was oldest superintendent to be elected for the first time.

*Two superintendents died in office: E. N. Bell (June 15, 1923) and Wesley R. Steelberg (July 8, 1952).

*Longevity. Williams (96), Welch and Lewis (80), Riggs (75), Gaston (70), Collins (59), Bell (57), and Steelberg (50). Average is "three score and ten."

Bell ministered in the South and then pastored the North Fort Worth Baptist Church in 1905 and 1906. But in 1907, Bell received the baptism in the Holy Spirit at Chicago's North Avenue Mission, which was pastored by William

Durham.

When Pentecostals began to talk about an organization a few years later, Bell was one of the signers of the "call" to Hot Springs, and it was his paper, *The Word and Witness*, which published the invitation.

Bell served two non-successive terms as Chairman (title of Chairman was changed to General Superintendent in 1925.) At the organizational meeting he was elected, but then at the next Council held in the fall of 1914, A. P. Collins replaced him. In 1920 Bell was again elected to fill the position and remained as Chairman until his death, June 15, 1923.

Had he gone to Oxford, Bell would perhaps have been a seminary professor or president; had he remained in the Baptist church, perhaps he would have pastored one of the great Southern Baptist churches. But he chose to align himself with Pentecostals in 1907, an association which brought him into the leadership of the Assemblies of God.

Arch P. Collins (1914-15)

Like his predecessor E. N. Bell, Arch P. Collins was a Baptist pastor in Fort Worth. Baptist records show that he pastored three churches in Tarrant County during 1905-06: Pleasant Ridge, Riverside, and Handley.

Collins was called "the saintly peacemaker" by his peers. In recalling the second General Council, Bell — who

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Nine superintendents who have served the Assemblies of God. From the left are E. N. Bell (1914; 1920-23), A. P. Collins (1914-15), J. W. Welch (1915-20; 1923-25), W. T. Gaston (1925-29), E. S. Williams (1929-49), W. R. Steelberg

(1949-52), G. F. Lewis (1952-53), R. M. Riggs (1953-59), and T. F. Zimmerman (1959-). The first three leaders were called Chairmen; the title was changed to General Superintendent in 1925.



When Pentecost Came to Los Angeles

75th Anniversary of the Azusa Street Revival: 1906-1981

By Vinson Synan

Few events have affected modern church history as greatly as the famous Azusa Street revival of 1906-1909, which ushered into being the worldwide twentieth-century Pentecostal renewal. From this single revival has issued a movement which by 1980 numbers over 50,000,000 classical Pentecostals in uncounted churches and missions in practically every nation of the world. In addition to these Pentecostals, there are untold numbers of charismatics in every denomination who can trace at least part of their spiritual heritage to the Azusa Street meeting.

On a short two-block street in downtown Los Angeles, 312 Azusa Street is the most famous address in Pentecostal-charismatic history.

Without a question, William J. Seymour was the central figure of the Azusa Street revival and will always be remembered as the vessel chosen of the Lord to spark the worldwide Pentecostal revival. Yet, little that he wrote has been preserved for posterity.

It was Bartleman's diary and reports in the holiness press that constituted the most complete and reliable record of what occurred at Azusa Street. In later years Bartleman gathered together his diary entries and articles written to various periodicals and published them in book form.

In this book, entitled *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles*, one feels the excitement of the events at the Old Azusa Mission. From the beginning, Bartleman seemed to sense the historic significance of the Los Angeles Pentecost. From the first meeting he attended in April 1906, he felt that a "world wide revival" would be the result.

In 1906 Seymour had been invited to preach in a black Nazarene church in Los Angeles pastored by a "Mrs. Hutchinson." When Seymour preached his first sermon, proclaiming the "initial evidence" theory of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, he was locked out of the Nazarene church. The stranded preacher was then invited to stay in the home of Richard Asbury on Bonnie Brae Street until he could arrange his return to Houston. But Seymour was destined to spend the rest of his life in Los Angeles due to the tremendous revival that began shortly thereafter.

*Editor's note: 1981 marks the 75th anniversary of the Azusa Street revival. This article is abridged from Dr. Vinson Synan's introduction of a new edition of Frank Bartleman's eyewitness account. Dr. Synan is an assistant superintendent of the Pentecostal Holiness Church. The new edition is titled **Azusa Street** and is published by Logos, International. © 1980 by Logos. Used by permission.*

E. S. Williams Was Eyewitness in 1906

"The front of the mission was packed with seekers and persons trying to assist them... My heart was hungry for God... I began to seek the baptism with the Spirit and on October 2, I received."



Although he had not yet spoken in tongues at the time he was locked out of the Nazarene church, Seymour did soon thereafter in the Asbury home. Home prayer meetings soon gave way to front-porch street meetings which drew hundreds of eager listeners to hear Seymour and his tongue-speaking followers. Soon the crowds became so large that larger quarters were needed for the fast-growing group.

A search of the downtown Los Angeles area turned up an abandoned old building on Azusa Street that had been used variously as a Methodist church, a stable, and a warehouse. In 1906 it was a shambles, but adequate for the band of Pentecostals who began holding services there in April of 1906.

Bartleman first attended services while the group was on Bonnie Brae Street. The *Los Angeles Times* first reported the Azusa story in April of 1906. Calling tongues a "weird babel" and Seymour's

College Yearbooks Available

Are you looking for a copy of your college yearbook?

The Assemblies of God Archives has a miscellaneous collection of college yearbooks which it no longer needs. A list of the yearbooks and prices is available by writing to the Archives.

followers a "sect of fanatics," the front-page *Times* article created curiosity and bigger crowds for the meeting.

As the revival continued for three and one-half years at Azusa, services were held three times a day — morning, afternoon, and night. Tongues-speaking was the central attraction, but healing of the sick was not far behind. ... As time passed Seymour and his followers claimed that all the gifts of the Spirit had been restored to the church.

Nothing was able to stop the inexorable momentum of the renewal that issued forth from Azusa Street. ... "Pilgrims to Azusa" came from all parts of the United States, Canada, and Europe. They in turn spread the fire in other places.

Thus within a short time the Azusa Street Pentecost became a worldwide move of the Holy Spirit.

As the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Azusa Street revival is commemorated in 1981, it is possible to reflect on the importance of this watershed event in Christian history. By this year, there are estimates of the number of Pentecostals and charismatics in the world that approach the 75,000,000 mark. [Author includes information on Catholic and Anglican Pentecostals.]

It is a long way from Azusa Street to St. Peters and Canterbury, but in 1981 it is apparent that Pentecost has come not only to Los Angeles, but to all cities and nations of the world.

Heritage Society Presented at GC

The newly created Assemblies of God Heritage Society was introduced at the 39th General Council held in St. Louis.

The Rev. J. Foy Johnson, Peninsular Florida district superintendent and executive presbyter, introduced a 5-minute video tape showing the role of the Archives and the Heritage Society during the Friday evening service. Following the showing, General Superintendent Thomas F. Zimmerman told the delegates and visitors how they could become members of the Society.

In addition, the Archives was represented at the General Council with an exhibit. Copies of the *Heritage* paper and the new brochure, "A Grand Heritage," were distributed.

A/G Superintendents

(Continued from page 1)

roomed with Collins during the Council — wrote about his friend:

"Almost every morning he awakened me with his praying and worshiping in the adjoining room. It was not merely a matter of getting something from God. It was a time of great fellowship between his soul and heaven. He would often seem lost in adoration and praise to God."³

When F. F. Bosworth questioned the Assemblies of God position that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit and told his Dallas congregation how he felt, Collins was in attendance and supported Bosworth. But the next Sunday — after the church split over the issue — Collins returned to the church, knelt on the platform, raised his hands, and repented for taking a stand with his friend Bosworth the previous week.⁴

The "saintly peacemaker," Arch P. Collins, went to be with his Lord in 1921.

John W. Welch (1915-20; 23-25)

At age 56, J. W. Welch was one of the older delegates at the first Council. His friends affectionately called him "Daddy Welch," and they deeply appreciated his mature leadership during the early years of the Assemblies of God.

Welch was one of several Pentecostal leaders who had their roots in the Christian and Missionary Alliance. But while ministering in Oklahoma in 1910 he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. When the call came to organize the Assemblies of God, Welch was there and was elected as an executive presbyter.

Recent Acquisitions

E. N. Bell correspondence from Stetson University, De Land, Florida.

Papers and correspondence of E. L. Tanner, Smith Wigglesworth, and Stanley H. Frodsham.

District records from New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Southern New England.

Wood banister out of Hot Springs, Arkansas, Opera House. Donated by Hot Springs-Garland County Historical Society.

Myer Pearlman's first Bible and a Torah scroll. Donated by Mrs. Irene Pearlman.

New Equipment Purchases

The Archives recently took delivery on a new Panasonic video tape player-recorder, monitor, and cabinet.

In 1915 the delegates elected Welch as Chairman, a position he held from 1915 to 1920. When E. N. Bell was returned to the Chairman's office, Welch became Secretary for the movement.

On June 13, 1923, knowing that Bell was experiencing physical problems, Welch called on him at his home in Springfield. While they were talking, Bell slumped over with a heart attack and died in Welch's arms.

So at the age of almost 65, Welch again assumed the leadership of the Assemblies of God.

After W. T. Gaston was elected as Chairman in 1925, Welch pastored in Modesto, California, served on the faculty of Glad Tidings Bible Institute, and then in 1931 he returned to Springfield where he served as president of Central Bible Institute and as an executive presbyter.

W. T. Gaston (1925-29)

The state of Arkansas gave the Assemblies of God a number of leaders in the early years of the movement. One of these was the 4th Superintendent, William T. Gaston.

His mother dedicated William to the Lord and would often call him her "little preacher boy."⁵ Mrs. Gaston died when William was only three, but her spiritual influence would follow him throughout his life.

In 1909 Mrs. Gaston's "little preacher boy" — now married and with a family — started out full-time in the ministry. In 1910 he was ordained and then assisted in the formation of the Assemblies of God.

After serving for four years as superintendent, Gaston went back into pastoral work, at First Assembly, San Diego, and then for a short time at North Hollywood. He was called to pastor Bethel Temple in Sacramento where he remained for nine years.

In 1944 Gaston was elected superintendent of the Northern California-Nevada District and held this office until his death in 1956.

E. S. Williams (1929-49)⁶

What should a man do when he is happily pastoring a fine church and his ministering associates elect him to the highest administrative office in his denomination?

If you were E. S. Williams and pastoring Highway Tabernacle in Philadelphia, you would have reluctantly accepted but not until a year had gone by would you have moved to the headquarters city — not until you were convinced the move was in the will of God.

But that was characteristic of Ernest Swing Williams, the man who was

elected and reelected 10 times to the highest office within the Assemblies of God.

Williams dated his salvation experience to 1904 when he was 19 and living in Southern California. Two years later while he was in Colorado, his mother wrote, telling of the revival going on at the Azusa Street Mission. He returned to Los Angeles, and there in the old mission he received his Pentecostal experience.

In 1907 he was ordained by the Apostolic Faith under the ministry of William J. Seymour. After four years of ministry on the West Coast, Williams and his wife ministered in Kentucky, Ohio, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Late in 1914 he heard about the formation of the Assemblies of God and soon received a certificate of ordination.⁷

His 20 years service as General Superintendent was during a growing period for the organization. He put his whole life into the work of an administrator, and blessed thousands with his wisdom from the pulpit and his writings.

Even though he retired in 1949, E. S. Williams never gave up ministering. He joined the faculty at Central Bible College where he remained for seven years. Then when he and Mrs. Williams moved to Maranatha Manor retirement home in 1974, he became an unofficial chaplain to other residents.

The new chapel on the CBC campus was named in honor of this Azusa Street Mission veteran and congenial leader of the Assemblies of God.

(Continued in Spring Issue)

¹Two of the nine, E. N. Bell and J. W. Welch, each served two non-successive terms; so technically the current superintendent — T. F. Zimmerman — is the 11th superintendent rather than the ninth.

²Letter to Dr. John F. Forbes, April 15, 1902. Original at Stetson University, copy in Assemblies of God Archives.

³*Pentecostal Evangel*, July 9, 1921.

⁴J. B. McMath, oral history tape, Assemblies of God Archives.

⁵*The District Chronicle* (Santa Cruz, California: Northern California-Nevada District Council of the Assemblies of God, 1957), p. 8.

⁶While this article was being prepared, E. S. Williams was called to his heavenly home, Sunday, October 25, 1981. In January he would have been 97.

⁷This original certificate is preserved at the Assemblies of God headquarters.

Editor's Note: The editor is grateful for information gleaned from *Suddenly... From Heaven*, by Carl Brumback; *Anointed to Serve*, by William W. Menzies; issues of the *Pentecostal Evangel*; and other sources in the Assemblies of God Archives. It is hoped that in the future a writer will do a definitive study on the lives of these leaders.



Miss Sigman Marks 100th Birthday

She Is Oldest A/G Minister

The Assemblies of God owes much of its growth to the early preachers and evangelists who traveled around the country. In this issue of *Heritage* we are featuring one of our senior evangelists, Nancy Verna Sigman. Born on August 15, 1881, Miss Sigman is the oldest minister holding credentials with the Assemblies of God.

Miss Sigman pursued studies in the fields of art history and ornamental design at Liberty College (Liberty, MO) and the Art Institute of Kansas City. For five years Miss Sigman was an instructor at Missouri Wesleyan College.

While attending a divine healing meeting in Kansas City in 1923, God healed her body. Devoting her artistic talents to the Lord, Miss Sigman began illustrating sermons and songs. After receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1930, she became licensed with the Assemblies of God. Over the years she ministered in the Midwest and California. An oil painting she did in 1949, "Portrait of Diety," hangs in the prayer chapel in our Headquarters building. Miss Sigman now resides at Maranatha Village where she recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD HERITAGE

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Wayne E. Warner, Editor
Pam Eastlake, Assistant Editor

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PRESERVING YOUR CHURCH HISTORY

Selecting and Arranging Historical Materials

Pam Eastlake

Preserving your church history provides a useful service in many ways. It assures that important legal records are maintained and it is a record of the involvement of the members in the church and the interaction of the church with the community.

What materials should your church keep for its archives? Below is a brief list of items suggested for retention.

- Reports of conventions and conferences, official minutes of boards and commissions, committee reports, mission reports, and financial and legal records.
- Manuscripts, correspondence of members of the church, sermons, special reports, journals, and diaries.
- Church books (whether published or manuscript), agenda, hymnals.
- Periodicals issued by the church.



OUR HERITAGE IN PHOTOS

The Rev. and Mrs. D. W. Kerr. He was a strong leader in the early years of the Pentecostal movement and the Assemblies of God. His dedicated service included involvement in the formation of three Bible colleges.

- Photographs of the church and its members.
- Records of membership, baptisms, and marriages, church history.
- Biographical sketches of staff workers such as the pastor, teachers, and lay leaders.
- Commemorative medallions, coins, and medals, artifacts or museum pieces such as paraphernalia used by missionaries.¹

Once it has been decided what materials will be retained, the next step is arranging the records. While a library uses Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress cataloging rules, there are no standard rules for archives. However, there are some basic principles that can be applied to any archives.

Records are arranged in record groups, series, and file units. The largest division, record group, is a body of records related by function and organization. In the case of church records, different committees may be considered as individual record groups. A series is a subdivision of the record group. Using a church committee as an example, a committee on special events may have a series of records dealing with a specific event such as an anniversary celebration. The series is then organized by file units, such as incoming correspondence and outgoing correspondence.

It is important to arrange your church records in a way that reflects the manner in which your church is organized. Listed below are some books which may help you in identifying valuable records and determining how they should be organized.

Suelflow, August R. *Religious Archives: An Introduction* (Available from the Society of American Archivists, 330 S. Wells, Suite 810, Chicago, IL 60606.

Gracy, David B. *Archives & Manuscripts: Arrangement & Description*. (Also available from the Society of American Archivists)

¹August R. Suelflow, *Religious Archives: An Introduction* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1980), p. 12.



Pam Eastlake is Archives Assistant, A/G Archives

Charter Membership Deadline Is Dec. 31

Charter memberships in the new Assemblies of God Heritage Society are available until December 31, 1981. If mailed, applications must be postmarked no later than December 31 to qualify. Charter members will receive a gold-printed certificate.

An application on page 6 of this issue can be used for regular or gift memberships.

Members will receive a gift book of their choice, an oral history sampler tape, and a subscription to *Heritage*.

What Do You Know About Our History?

A Quiz on People and Events

You can answer the above question by spending a few minutes with this brief quiz on the Pentecostal Movement and the Assemblies of God. Answers are given on page 6.

1. A Pentecostal outpouring took place in a small Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901. Who was the leader of the school?

2. A second historical revival broke out in the Azusa Street Mission in 1906. In what city was this mission located?

3. A black man was the leader of the Azusa Street Mission in 1906. What was his name?

4. In what year was the Assemblies of God formed?

5. Name the city in which the organizational meeting was held.

6. Four of the men below were elected to the first Executive Presbytery of the Assemblies of God. Who are they?

a. Ralph M. Riggs b. J. Roswell Flower
c. Raymond T. Richey
d. E. N. Bell e. J. W. Welch
f. Howard A. Goss g. Charles Parham
h. Stanley H. Frodsham.

7. What Assemblies of God missionary became famous in Egypt and was known as the "Nile Mother"?

8. Nine men have served as General Superintendent (or Chairman) in the 67-year history of the Assemblies of God. Five of the nine are A. P. Collins, W. T. Gaston, J. W. Welch, Gayle F. Lewis, and Wesley R. Steelberg. Name the missing four.

9. This man served as the director of the Foreign Missions Department from 1927-1959. Who was he?

10. This man served as General Secretary for 27 years (1914-16 and 1935-1959). What is his name?

11. This former Baptist founded what became known as Southwestern Bible

THE HERITAGE LETTER Wayne Warner

Heritage Society Response Is Excellent

With this 2nd issue of *Heritage* we welcome hundreds of you as charter members of the Assemblies of God Heritage Society. The warm reception we received at the 39th General Council in St. Louis and the excellent response by mail and telephone is appreciated more than you'll ever know. God bless you!

As you will note elsewhere in this issue, charter memberships will be granted until December 31, 1981. This means you have only a few more days to remember a loved one with a charter membership. And with Christmas just around the corner, what better time to give than right now!

Please use the coupon on page 6 for either regular or gift memberships. Or if you do not wish to cut your *Heritage*, make a copy of the page or write the information clearly on a separate sheet of paper.

Speaking of gift memberships, I must tell you about Larry Gaither who lives here in Springfield. Larry wanted to help spread the word about our Heritage Society, so he is providing memberships for three of our senior ministers and two memberships for Maranatha Village.

Thank you, Larry (and others), for providing memberships for these friends.

* * * *

I am convinced that the people associated with the Assemblies of God are proud of their grand heritage. They realize God has blessed this movement around the world.

The Heritage Society was created to work with the Assemblies of God Archives to preserve and promote our grand heritage. *Heritage* is designed to keep our heritage alive with every generation until Jesus comes. We hope the stories and photos will inspire, inform, entertain, and bring back old memories.

Above all, on every page, we hope you will see the imprint of the Holy Spirit on dedicated men and women who pioneered in the early years of the Pentecostal movement and the Assemblies of God.

We always welcome letters on our history. Thank you for your response.

* * * *

Right now there is a tremendous interest in our roots. But I am wondering

College at Enid, Oklahoma, in 1927. Who was he?

12. Who wrote the official history of the Assemblies of God, *Anointed to Serve*?



T. E. Gannon Receives First Heritage Society Certificate

When the Rev. T. E. Gannon heard about the new Heritage Society, he immediately sent a check for \$100 for his lifetime membership. Here General Superintendent Thomas F. Zimmerman presents him with Lifetime-Charter Member certificate number 1. General Secretary Joseph Flower also took part in the presentation.

what your church and district are doing about their history. Be sure to read Pam Eastlake's column on preserving your own church history.

While our pioneers are still with us, please — for the sake of your church, district, and national heritage — get started on your historical collections now! A quick way to collect information from our pioneers is through the use of a cassette recorder (for most of us, it is easier to talk than write).

But a year — or even a week — from now might be too late.

If you are planning an anniversary or historical publication, perhaps we can help. Simply write or call our Springfield office.

* * * *

Please enjoy a Christ-centered Christmas and a blessed 1982.

Peace.

Wayne E. Warner is
Director of the A/G
Archives



