

Rachel Sizelove, taken about the time she received the vision of the sparkling fountain.

# The Sparkling Fountain: Early Pentecostalism in Springfield, Missouri

By Glenn W. Gohr and Darrin J. Rodgers

One hundred years ago, the Assemblies of God (AG) relocated its national office and publishing house to Springfield, Missouri. Could this have been a fulfillment of a vision from God? Five years earlier, in 1913, Pentecostal evangelist Rachel Sizelove had a vision of a “sparkling fountain” in the heart of Springfield. At the time, Pentecostals in the Ozarks city were struggling to establish a church, but Sizelove’s vision foresaw rivers of living water that would flow from Springfield and bless all the earth.

The decision in 1918 to purchase the former meat market on 434 West Pacific Street to house the national ministries of the AG resulted in Springfield becoming a ministry hub within the Fellowship. Numerous national ministries developed, including educational institutions, missions agencies, a retirement community, and various church and para-church ministries. The city’s first Pentecostal congregation, Central Assembly of God, flourished and dozens of new churches were planted. As of 2018, 36 AG congregations exist in the city, with many more in neighboring communities.

Looking back at the history of the Pentecostal movement in Springfield, early AG leaders could see the hand of God. They sensed that the history unfolding before them would be important to future generations. They carefully documented the history in various published and unpublished forms, and these stories have been told and retold over the generations.<sup>1</sup>

The following pages provide an overview of the events and people that shaped the development of the Pentecostal movement in Springfield from 1907 to 1918, starting when Rachel Sizelove brought the Pentecostal message from the Azusa Street revival and concluding with the arrival of the national offices of the AG. The stories reveal the vibrant spiritual life

and worldview of early Pentecostals and will hopefully inspire future generations to likewise follow God whole-heartedly and to believe God for great things.

## From Azusa Street to the Ozarks

Like many revivals throughout Christian history, the Pentecostal movement in Springfield did not originate with prominent people or in gilded edifices, but with humble, devout people who desired to be fully committed to Christ and His mission. James and Lillie Corum and their family were such people.<sup>2</sup>

The Corum family moved from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to Springfield in 1905. They lived in a white clapboard farmhouse, located on East Division Street, which, at the time, was outside the city limits. James initially worked as a telegraph operator for the Frisco railroad and later as a freight office supervisor. Lillie cared for their four children—Hazel (Bakewell), Artemus, Fred, and Paul.<sup>3</sup>

The Corum family had their first taste of Pentecost on a rainy day in late May 1907. Fred and Hazel were playing on the front porch when they saw their aunt, Rachel Sizelove, pull up to the house in a taxi. Rachel and her husband, Joseph, lived in California and had become active in the interracial Azusa Street Mission, which was a focal point in the emerging Pentecostal revival.<sup>4</sup>

What happened next was burned into young Fred’s memory: “From behind Mother’s apron, I saw Aunt Rachel step through our doorway. Her face was aglow and her countenance was radiant. Her hands were uplifted, and she was speaking in a heavenly language.”<sup>5</sup>

Sizelove and the other family members sat down in the parlor. Fred remembered that they talked about a single topic: “What was God doing in Los Angeles at Azusa Street?”<sup>6</sup>

**Sizelove’s vision foresaw rivers of living water that would flow from Springfield and bless all the earth.**



**Leaders of the Azusa Street Mission, 1907. Seated in front (l-r): Sister Evans, Hiram W. Smith, William Seymour, Clara Lum. Second row, standing (l-r): unidentified woman, Brother Evans (reportedly the first man to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street), Jennie Moore (later Mrs. William Seymour), Glenn A. Cook, Florence Crawford, unidentified man, and Sister Prince. Florence Crawford's daughter, Mildred, is seated in the front on Hiram Smith's lap. Inset: Rachel Sizelove, who brought the Pentecostal message from Azusa Street to Springfield, Missouri.**

The Sizeloves were baptized in the Holy Spirit at the Azusa Street Mission in July 1906. They had served as Free Methodist evangelists since the 1890s. However, this Pentecostal experience changed their lives and ministries. At Azusa Street, they joined black and white Pentecostals who tarried at the makeshift altar and prayed for each other. An intense sense of God's presence and love prevailed. Rachel described how the baptism in the Holy Spirit gave her a new sense of "the holy presence of God" and how the voice of the Lord grew clearer while the voices of the world grew distant. The Sizeloves found spiritual depth and vitality, and they encouraged others to likewise seek all that God had for them.<sup>7</sup>

In May 1907, Rachel sensed God call her to visit her siblings and mother in the

Midwest and tell them about her experience. Rachel was only in Springfield for a brief time before she returned to Los Angeles, where she had committed to work at an upcoming camp meeting. But she succeeded in sowing a Pentecostal seed. Early in the morning, on June 1, 1907, in an all-night prayer meeting, Lillie Corum became the first known person to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Springfield.<sup>8</sup>

### **Early Years**

The Corum family formed the nucleus of what became the first Pentecostal congregation in Springfield (now Central Assembly of God). When Lillie Corum received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, she discovered that she had a newfound empowerment to share her Christian faith. She wanted to tell ev-

eryone about her experience, and one of the first people she told was her pastor. The Corums were members of a Baptist church, where James served as Sunday School superintendent. Lillie expected her pastor to rejoice with her, but instead he scoffed at her. James and Lillie were baffled and felt hurt, so they resigned their membership at the Baptist church.<sup>9</sup>

Lillie told her neighbors and friends about her Pentecostal experience and, one by one, others also received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. For the next several years the small but growing band of Pentecostals held cottage meetings in the Corum home and, on occasion, held special evangelistic meetings in tents and rented halls. They did not have an official pastor and had not formally organized a church.<sup>10</sup>

The new Pentecostal flock was, at

times, mocked and threatened. They held their first tent meeting in the summer of 1907 on Center (now Central) Street, near the Courthouse, attracting large crowds of curious onlookers, including local ministers and students from Drury College. Lillie Corum recalled that a group of men who visited the tent meeting said, “Why this is a terrible thing to be doing in the name of religion. That’s no religion.” They threatened to organize a posse and run the Pentecostals out of town. Such threats by vigilantes had to be taken seriously, as the previous year a large mob had lynched three African-American men in Springfield. Tom Thomas, a man from First Baptist Church, defended the Pentecostals, saying, “No. Let them alone. If it’s not of God, it will soon fall through, but if it is of God, it will stand.” Thomas’s argument won the day, and the Pentecostals were left alone.<sup>11</sup>

The Pentecostal group grew slowly and struggled to establish a church in Springfield. At times, some of the Pentecostals worshipped with Holiness congregations that welcomed them despite their doctrinal differences.<sup>12</sup> But the Pentecostals had a persistent desire to establish a more permanent presence in the town.

In April 1911, the group erected a tent on the northeast corner of Campbell and Calhoun and began holding services. Local boys repeatedly interrupted the services and damaged the tent, which left it in tatters. The evangelistic efforts seemed to make little impact, which demoralized believers.<sup>13</sup>

Pentecostals from varied places and backgrounds sent reinforcements to the city. “Mother” Leonore Barnes, the leader of an influential Pentecostal mission in St. Louis, visited Springfield several times between 1910 and 1912 with her evangelistic team.<sup>14</sup> Lula France and others from Joplin, Missouri, made frequent ministry trips to Springfield.<sup>15</sup> James L. Delk, a white evangelist connected with Charles H. Mason’s mostly African-American Church of God in Christ, also



**J. J. Corum and Lillie with their two oldest children, Hazel (center) and Artemus (baby), in 1900.**

held meetings in Springfield in 1908.<sup>16</sup>

The greatest assistance was provided by Pentecostals from the small town of Thayer, Missouri, located 140 miles southeast of Springfield. A remarkable revival stirred Thayer in 1909, and the town became one of the most important early Pentecostal revival centers in the region. Fred Corum visited the Thayer revival as a boy. He recalled that Mother Barnes, who was preaching in Thayer at the time, had an “Irish wit” and “would have the crowds bursting at the seams with laughter one minute and weeping the next.” After Barnes finished her sermons at the meetings, Harry Bowley gave the altar calls and, in Fred’s estimation, was speaking directly from the Lord. Numerous people ran to the altar and repented of their sins, including a band of horse thieves and a woman who operated a local brothel.<sup>17</sup>

Three preachers from Thayer—Joe French, John Davis, and Joe Duke—began making ministry trips to Springfield around 1910. In 1911 or 1912, French moved to Springfield, opened a restaurant, and became one of the lay preachers in the congregation. A hardened former sailor, he frequently testified that he had been very sick and died, but that God raised him from the dead during the Thayer revival. The experience of being raised from the dead prompted French to completely dedicate his life to God.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, in 1912, the congregation secured a regular meeting place—Woodman Hall on Prospect Avenue.<sup>19</sup> On No-

vember 13, 1913, members elected Lillie Corum and Gerry W. Martin to oversee the congregation. Prior to the vote, Corum had served as the informal leader. In early 1914, the congregation elected a female to serve as its first pastor—a Sister Sloan (her first name has been lost to history). She served a short time, and later that year James S. “Sig” Eaton was elected to serve as the congregation’s second pastor.<sup>20</sup>

## **Vision of a Sparkling Fountain**

Toward the middle of August 1913, Rachel Sizelove returned to visit the Corum family, staying for several months. By this time she reported “there was quite a good sized assembly of baptized saints”<sup>21</sup> at the Pentecostal church in Springfield.

While in prayer one afternoon, she saw a vision of a “beautiful, bubbling, sparkling fountain in the heart of the City of Springfield.”<sup>22</sup> The fountain sprang up gradually and began to flow to the east, west, north, and south until soon “the whole land was deluged with living water.”<sup>23</sup>

Afterwards, she came into the dining room, and the Corum children later recalled seeing “a holy glow upon her countenance.”<sup>24</sup> “I’ve been in the presence of the Lord,” she declared, “and I saw the Lord sounding a bugle for the angels of heaven to go and do battle for the city of Springfield.” She reported that she then saw the angels come down

to battle and conquer. She said the Lord spoke to her: “I’m going to do a mighty work in Springfield that will astound the world.”<sup>25</sup>

This vision occurred a year before the brethren met together in Hot Springs, Arkansas, to form the AG in April 1914, and five years before the AG moved to Springfield.

After Rachel Sizelove identified with the Pentecostal movement, she initially was opposed to church structure and organization such as was found in the AG. Her views changed as she saw the fulfillment of this vision: “But when I think of the vision the Lord brought before me of the waters flowing out from Springfield I have to say surely the General Council at Springfield, Missouri, is of God.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Amanda Benedict: Prayer Warrior**

One unsung hero in the history of Pentecostalism in Springfield is Amanda Benedict. She was not a part of the original group when the Holy Spirit fell at the Corum farmhouse on June 1, 1907,<sup>27</sup> but she came along soon after, and is remembered as a mighty prayer warrior.

Educated in New York, her home state, she later conducted a rescue home for girls in Chicago and was connected with a faith home for children in Iowa.<sup>28</sup> She had a burden for lost souls.

She moved to Springfield sometime before 1910 and met Lillie Corum while working as a door-to-door salesperson. Amanda began praying together regularly with Mrs. Corum, and soon she also received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> A circle of three women—Lillie Corum, Birdie Hoy, and Amanda Benedict—steadfastly joined together in prayer and evangelism to build up the small group of believers that became Central Assembly of God.<sup>30</sup>

Amanda Benedict would fast and pray for days on end, until a burden was lifted or victory came. At one point she felt led to fast and pray for Springfield for one entire year—living only on bread and water.<sup>31</sup>

During the tent meetings held in 1911, Benedict would go to a nearby grove of trees and pray all night. The grove of trees where she prayed ended up being the same spot where the choir, pulpit, and altar rail of Central Assembly were located when a newer sanctuary was built in 1957.<sup>32</sup>

In 1915 Amanda Benedict moved to Aurora, Missouri, where she started a Pentecostal church and passed away ten years later.<sup>33</sup>

At her funeral, held at Central Assembly of God, a lady arose and told of the early days of the Pentecostal outpouring in Springfield, when a tent was set up on the very site where the first sanctuary



**Amanda Benedict**

was later erected. She testified that Sister Benedict “was under a tremendous burden night and day. The Lord put it on her heart to pray for mighty things in Springfield, that would make it a center from which His blessings should radiate to the ends of the earth.” She said, “I believe this present assembly, the Gospel Publishing House and the Central Bible Institute, are all here as a result of that praying in the Holy Ghost on the part of Sister Benedict.”<sup>34</sup>

Buried in Eastlawn Cemetery, Amanda’s grave remained unmarked for 82 years. When Central Assembly held its centennial in 2007, a marker was erected in her memory that includes the inscrip-

tion: “She prayed and fasted for the city of Springfield.”<sup>35</sup>

Amanda’s prayers laid the groundwork for further advancement of God’s work. In a letter to Lillie Corum she wrote:

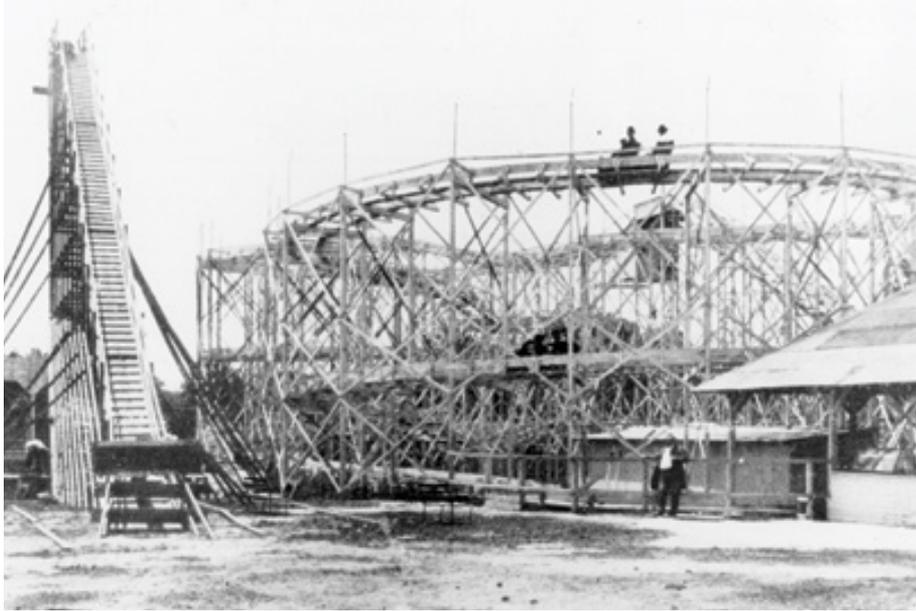
... Pray, fight, hold, till hell gives way, till the real power, the power of His might, of our real God shall fall with such invincible force, that sin shall go down before it and the Christ that saves from sin shall be lifted up ... Our fighting force is small, but it’s gaining ground. Every forward step is hotly contended, but our flag is flying, our bugle is sounding an advance to our forces; a retreat to the foe ...<sup>36</sup>

### **Five Boys Claimed Property for God**

Another fascinating development in the advancement of Pentecost in Springfield centers around the prayers of five boys who claimed two blocks of property for God.

After a New Year’s Eve watchnight service that concluded on January 1, 1915, Fred and Paul Corum, their cousin Laurel Taliaferro, and probably Claude Martin and Leonard Hoy (son of Birdie Hoy)<sup>37</sup> started walking home toward the Corum farmhouse on East Division Street, a distance of about three miles. One boy suggested they could save time if they took a shortcut and went across White City Park.

White City Park was a large, fenced-in amusement park that took up one city block, bounded by Boonville and Campbell Avenues and Lynn and Division Streets. Some of the boards were loose, so they would be able to crawl inside. It was similar to a carnival and included a large roller coaster and was not being used at the time. It had a bad reputation because of burlesque performances, vaudeville acts, a pool hall, and ballroom dancing. The boys knew it was a wicked place, and they felt like they were cross-



**The roller coaster at White City amusement park.**

ing into the devil's territory.

Fred Corum recounted the following narrative:

One of the boys in the group said, "This place is unclean."

Another asked, "Do you suppose it could ever belong to God?"

Then Laurel Taliaferro, the oldest of the boys, said in faith, "Let's claim it for the Lord."

So the boys agreed, and there beneath the stars, they knelt and started praying.

One boy said, "How much shall we claim?" Another said, "Let's claim the whole block."

Paul Corum said, "Let's claim the other block too—from Boonville to Campbell and from Division to Calhoun."

Fred Corum spoke up and said, "We shouldn't take the greenhouse at the corner of Boonville and Calhoun. We sold peaches to the people living there, and they are nice people."

Laurel said, "Why not? God will take care of them. Let's claim it all."<sup>38</sup>

In the early morning hours of the New Year, the boys prayed fervently that the two blocks of land would be used for

God's purposes. One of the boys looked up at the bright stars overhead and remarked, "Just think, when the Lord told Abraham to look up and see if he could count the stars, they were the same stars we can see tonight." Another boy said, "Let's pray that the gospel will spread over all the earth and reach as many people as there are stars."<sup>39</sup>

The property did not change hands overnight. Several years later the first property was turned into a baseball park called White City Park. During the 1930s and early 1940s, White City Park was the scene of minor league baseball. Some of baseball's greats such as Joe Garagiola, Stan Musial, and Mickey Owen played on this field.<sup>40</sup> The home team, the Springfield Cardinals, was a minor league team owned by the St. Louis Cardinals. White City Park closed during World War II since eligible men were needed for the war cause.

At the 1945 General Council, the AG fellowship, recognizing the growing needs of the national office, unanimously authorized the construction of a new publishing plant and an office building to house administrative offices.<sup>41</sup> As it turned out, the old White City Park, a choice site of five acres on Boonville Avenue, was available, and the AG purchased it for \$35,000.<sup>42</sup>

New printing facilities for the Gospel Publishing House were erected on

the former White City Park property with the construction completed in 1949. A new four-story administration building, almost as long as a city block, attached to the printing facilities and facing Boonville Avenue, was completed in January 1962.<sup>43</sup> A six-story distribution center was added to the Campbell side of the complex in 1972, followed by a shipping warehouse in 1980. For a period of time, the Southern Missouri District Council office also was located in that same block on a building at the northeast corner of Campbell and Boonville.

## **Central Assembly**

On the second block that the boys claimed, Central Assembly erected its first frame building at the northeast corner of Campbell and Lynn in 1920. As Central grew, its third sanctuary, built in 1957, occupied the place where Amanda Benedict prayed in a grove of trees and where the Koeppen Greenhouse once stood. Central built an even larger sanctuary in 1992.

The last portion of the two-block area to come into the possession of the AG was the former National Auto Supply at the southwest corner of Boonville and Lynn, where the AG ran a bookstore for many years.

And God did take care of the family who owned the greenhouse. Louisa Koeppen, and her husband, Rudolph, established the Koeppen Greenhouse at the northwest corner of Boonville and Calhoun in the 1890s. (The greenhouse was just east of the grove of trees where Amanda Benedict prayed.) By 1915, Louisa was a widow, and her daughter, Clara, and son-in-law, Russell Tuttle, were assisting her with the greenhouse. Clara Tuttle and another daughter, Augusta Smith, became members of Central Assembly and descendants still attend the church.<sup>44</sup>

When Fred Corum and his wife visited Springfield in 1972, they saw the transformation which had taken place on the land that he and his young friends had claimed in the new year's prayer

meeting sixty years earlier.

Fred Corum wrote,

When I look on this area now and see the General Council headquarters complex, Central Assembly, and the district headquarters all on this property, I am overwhelmed. When I see the presses turning out the printed word, and the missionaries being commissioned, and the radio programs going to the ends of the earth, I know there is a God who hears our sincere prayers. How insignificant one feels to behold His mighty works that are exceedingly and abundantly above all the five teenage boys—or grown folk either—could ask Him to do.<sup>45</sup>

## Race and Revival

The Azusa Street revival is often noted for its interracial character. Participant Frank Bartleman famously exulted that at Azusa Street “the ‘color line’ was washed away in the blood.”<sup>46</sup> This was in marked contrast to the broader American culture at the turn of the twen-

tieth century, when racial discord often dominated news headlines. One frightening manifestation of this discord was the deadly melding of racism and vigilantism, where white lynch mobs killed thousands of people—mostly African-Americans, Hispanics, and other ethnic minorities—in the United States between 1880 and 1940.<sup>47</sup>

Springfield was not immune to lynchings. On April 14, 1906, three African-American men were killed by a mob on the town square. The lynchings of Horace Duncan, Fred Coker, and Fred Allen led to the exodus of hundreds of blacks from Springfield to less hostile areas. The ethnic makeup of Springfield, to this day, reflects that horrific event. The African-American community in Springfield remembers the event much like Jews remember the Holocaust.<sup>48</sup>

Amazingly, on the same day as the Springfield lynchings, on the Saturday before Easter, William Seymour began holding services at the run-down mission at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles. It was an incredible contrast—heaven came down in Los Angeles, while all hell broke loose in Springfield. That day was witness to both the darkness of hu-

manity and the light of God.

The lynchings were a topic of conversation in Springfield for years to come. How did Pentecostals in Springfield respond to the lynchings? Did they reflect the values of Azusa Street, or did they accommodate the racism of the surrounding society? Over one thousand people had been caught up in the mob hysteria, chanting, “Hang him, hang him!” It was a sensitive issue, as many in town participated in the lynchings. Perhaps it would have been easier to ignore the issue rather than confront it.

Fred Corum and Hazel Bakewell, in *The Sparkling Fountain*, devoted a section to the story of Brother Geisler, who participated in the Springfield lynching. At the time, Geisler was an unsaved alcoholic. Afterward, in about 1907, he visited Joplin, where he encountered a Pentecostal street preacher confronting people and asking if they had participated in the lynching. The preacher said, “Everybody that gave their consent for killing these Negroes was a murderer and has committed murder.”<sup>49</sup>

Geisler followed the preacher into a small Pentecostal mission, intending to tell him that he was not a murderer. The preacher, however, convinced Geisler otherwise, and he repented of his sins, accepted Christ as his savior, and was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Geisler returned to Springfield and became a faithful member of the small Pentecostal group that became Central Assembly. Geisler’s testimony, including his repentance for participation in the lynching, became an often-repeated story in Central Assembly. It presumably reflected the congregation’s belief that if someone is genuinely full of God’s Spirit, there should be no room in their heart for racial hatred.<sup>50</sup>

## Charles Parham’s Influence

Early Springfield Pentecostals traced their roots to Azusa Street through Rachel Sizelove. There was an earlier unsuccessful effort to establish a Pente-



Central Assembly’s first building at the corner of Campbell and Calhoun.

costal church in Springfield, however, made in 1906 by Henry G. Tuthill, a leader in Charles Parham's Apostolic Faith Movement.

Tuthill held a series of revival meetings in the hall over the Brooks Furniture Store. The services began on March 26, 1906, less than a month before the Azusa Street revival would start in Los Angeles. The meetings, Tuthill wrote in a local newspaper article, "are noted for the power of God manifested in them in pentecostal showers."<sup>51</sup> Tuthill failed to attract a following in Springfield. Corum and Bakewell, in *The Sparkling Fountain*, stated that Sizelove held "the first Pentecostal meeting in Springfield" in 1907.<sup>52</sup> They were apparently unaware of Tuthill's earlier efforts.

It should not be surprising that Parham's group attempted to start a church in Springfield. Parham played a significant role in Pentecostal history and was the earliest and most prominent Pentecostal pioneer in the region. In 1901, students at his Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, began speaking in tongues, which he identified as the "Bible evidence" of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Parham, through his Apostolic Faith Movement, had between 8,000 and 10,000 followers in 1906. The bulk of his followers were in Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, and Texas.<sup>53</sup>

Several possible reasons exist why Parham's group did not make an impact on Springfield. First, Parham held to several controversial doctrines, including annihilationism (the belief that God will destroy the wicked rather than allow them to endure eternal conscious torment) and British Israelism (the belief that the lost tribes of Israel migrated to Europe). These positions marginalized Parham among other evangelicals and Pentecostals.

Second, in October 1906 Parham repudiated the Azusa Street revival and its leader, William Seymour, who was a former student of Parham. Parham's critique included theological, racial, and power issues. This repudiation would



**Gospel Publishing House employees, including executive officers, shortly after the move to Springfield in 1918. (L-r): Walter Loomis, Mrs. Warren, Delpha Henegar, Anna Crumbie (E. N. Bell's stepdaughter), Cecile Knox, Nellie Rowlands, J. W. Welch (general chairman), E. N. Bell (editor of the *Christian Evangel*), Harry Thaw, Stanley Frodsham (general secretary and associate editor), Mr. Brown (son), and Mr. Brown (father).**

have alienated Springfield Pentecostals who were positively impacted by Rachel Sizelove and the Azusa Street revival.<sup>54</sup> Third, Parham allegedly had a moral failing and, by the summer of 1907, most of his followers had left him.<sup>55</sup>

It is significant that Springfield Pentecostals, in their historical self-understanding, largely ignored Parham and traced their lineage directly to Azusa Street. In a 1934 article, Fred Corum wrote extensively about Azusa Street and its place in Pentecostal history but omitted any reference to Parham. While Parham claimed to be the founder or "projector" of the Pentecostal movement,<sup>56</sup> Corum undercut Parham's claim: "It cannot be said that anyone person is the founder" of the Pentecostal movement.<sup>57</sup> When Church of God in Christ evangelist James L. Delk ministered in Springfield in 1908, he also distanced himself from Parham, noting in a local newspaper that he "was not connected to the apostolic faith."<sup>58</sup> Early Springfield Pentecostals emphasized their roots in the interracial and doctrinally orthodox

revival at Azusa Street and did not want to be identified with the controversies surrounding Parham.

## **The Move to Springfield in 1918**

As World War I came to a close, the small band of Pentecostals in Springfield remained united in purpose, yet without a permanent church building of their own. All this changed in 1918 when reinforcements came. The national office of the AG, then located in downtown St. Louis, needed a larger place for its ministries and printing operation.

After outgrowing earlier facilities in Findlay, Ohio, and St. Louis, Missouri, AG leaders began looking for a new location. Having received a gift of about \$3,600 for expansion purposes in the spring of 1918, AG leaders searched for a building in St. Louis but found nothing suitable.<sup>59</sup>

Having learned of low real estate values in Springfield, Chairman J. W. Welch and E. N. Bell went to investigate the possibilities. With the assistance of a



## The Assemblies of God National Leadership and Resource Center.

local police officer, Harley A. Hinkley, they found several buildings which had promise for future development. Officer Hinkley personally escorted the men as they looked at several buildings on or near Commercial Street. “Finally the men settled on a building at the southeast corner of Pacific and Lyon, which then housed a wholesale grocery company.”<sup>60</sup>

Welch and Bell were impressed with the building, and the policeman referred them to the owner, C. O. Sperry, who offered the building for sale for \$3200—which was \$200 more than the men were willing to pay. They were adamant that they would not pay more, and the owner stayed firm on his offer. Amazingly, when members of the Commercial Club heard about the situation, a number of the local businessmen pitched in money to help the AG be able to purchase the building.<sup>61</sup> It was obvious they wanted the AG to move to Springfield. After Welch and Bell conferred with the Executive Presbytery, J. Roswell Flower was authorized to oversee the move which was completed in June 1918.<sup>62</sup>

The original two-story building had 45 by 65 feet of floor space. The ground floor was used for the printing operation. Rooms on the second floor were readily adapted for offices without the need for remodeling. Adjoining property was purchased later to permit expansion of the plant. Growth came so rapidly that additions were made to the original building on five occasions until by the late 1940s it became apparent that larger facilities were needed.<sup>63</sup> The printing operation moved to 1445 Boonville

Avenue in 1949, and the offices moved to a new administration building adjoining the printing plant in 1962. Since that time, the Assemblies of God national office has continued to expand.

### Lessons from History

Several themes emerge from these vignettes about the early Pentecostal movement in Springfield. First, the Holy Spirit empowered women to serve in leadership roles. Rachel Sizelove brought the Pentecostal message from Azusa Street to Springfield. The first person to be Spirit-baptized in Springfield under her ministry, Lillie Corum, gathered a flock and served as the first unofficial pastor of what became Central Assembly of God. The first elected

pastor was also a woman, Sister Sloan, although little is known about her.

Second, there were strong voices seeking to bridge racial divides within early Pentecostalism. The Pentecostal message emerged from an interracial revival at Azusa Street, during an era of racial discord, and came to Springfield, a city that had been rocked by the lynchings of three black men. Springfield Pentecostals embraced their roots in an interracial revival at a time when racial separation was expected. They desired to follow God’s will more than they desired to be popular.

Third, early Pentecostals in Springfield sensed that they were part of God’s unfolding divine plan. They witnessed the fulfillment of two highly improbable visions—that a sparkling fountain of living water would flow from Springfield to the ends of the earth, and that White City Park would be dedicated to God’s work.

Fourth, the intensity of the spiritual lives of the early Springfield Pentecostals set them apart from the world and from other Christians. They encouraged full consecration to Christ and His mission, they practiced biblical spiritual gifts in a way that pointed people to Christ, they viewed prayer as an essential part of their lives, and they learned to become dependent on God.

When Rachel Sizelove visited the Corum family in 1907, she knew that she was following God’s leading. However, she could not have imagined that she was helping to lay the foundation for the national offices, schools, and countless ministries of the Assemblies of God, a



**The June 1934 issue of *Word and Work* which told about Rachel Sizelove’s vision of the sparkling fountain.**

fellowship that would play a significant role in spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. ✨



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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The most significant account of the early Pentecostal revival in Springfield is: Fred T. Corum and Hazel E. Bakewell, *The Sparkling Fountain* (Windsor, OH: Corum & Associates, 1989). The account, authored by two participants in the revival, siblings Fred Corum and Hazel Corum Bakewell, was largely based on earlier writings. Fred Corum (1900-1982) was a graduate of Drury College (A.B., 1922) and Harvard Law School (L.L.B., 1926; J.D., 1969). He had a law practice in the Boston area for over 55 years. Hazel Bakewell (1897-1990) was a graduate of Central Bible Institute (1926) and Southwest Missouri State Teacher's College (1932). She lived in Springfield for most of her life and taught piano.

<sup>2</sup>*Windows into Central's 100 Years of Ministry* (Springfield, MO: Central Assembly, 2007), 8.

<sup>3</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>Rachel Sizelove, "Autobiography: A Sketch of My Life," unpublished manuscript, 1925; Corum and Bakewell, 1-2, 54-63.

<sup>8</sup>Rachel Sizelove, "A Sparkling Fountain for the Whole Earth" N.p.: n.p. [193?], tract; Corum and Bakewell, 2, 113-121.

<sup>9</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 122.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 122-127.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 124-125; *Windows into Central's 100 Years of Ministry*.

<sup>12</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 126.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 158-159.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 168-169.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 124, 143.

<sup>16</sup>"Show Boy Evangelist to Conduct Meetings," *Springfield Daily Republican*, March 29, 1908, 4.

<sup>17</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 128-133; Harry E. Bowley, "The Great Ozark Mountains Revival," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 2:2 (Summer 1982): 1, 3.

<sup>18</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 134-140, 169-170.

<sup>19</sup>L. F. Martin, undated history of Central Assembly of God, 2-3.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 4. Gerard J. Flokstra, Jr., "The History of Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri," 1983.

<sup>21</sup>Fred Corum, "A Sparkling Fountain for the Whole Earth," *Word and Work* 56:6 (June 1934): 12; Sizelove, "A Sparkling Fountain for the Whole Earth."

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 179.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Corum, "A Sparkling Fountain for the Whole Earth," 12; Sizelove, "A Sparkling Fountain for the Whole Earth."

<sup>27</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 113.

<sup>28</sup>Lillie Corum, "How a Handmaiden of the Lord Kept the Army in Rank," *Word and Work* 56:7 (July 1934): 2.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>30</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 164.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>32</sup>George O. Wood, "Assemblies of God Springfield History," video, accessed March 5, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/102969428>. The grove of trees where Amanda Benedict prayed is also the spot where a young George O. Wood (who later became general superintendent and also served for a time as interim pastor of Central), after finishing his paper route, would practice preaching when the sanctuary was under construction.

<sup>33</sup>*The Daily Advertiser* (Aurora, MO), April 25, 1925; *The Daily Advertiser* (Aurora, MO), April 27, 1925; Amanda Elizabeth Benedict, certificate of death #12224. Missouri State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 1925.

<sup>34</sup>Stanley H. Frodsham, "The Romance of the Gospel Publishing House," *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 9, 1927, 3.

<sup>35</sup>Linda Leicht, "Prayer Warrior's Testimony Leads Man on a Mission," *Springfield News-Leader*, June 9, 2007, 2C.

<sup>36</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 166.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 190-191.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>40</sup>Susan Atteberry, "Memories from Baseball's Past," *Springfield Leader & Press*, June 9, 1983, 1C.

<sup>41</sup>Menzies, 261; *General Council Minutes*, 1945, 27-29.

<sup>42</sup>Menzies, 261.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup>Dorothy Watson, telephone interview by Glenn Gohr, March 7, 2015.

<sup>45</sup>Robert C. Cunningham, "An Unforgettable New Year's Prayer Meeting," *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 31, 1978, 10-11.

<sup>46</sup>Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles: The Story Behind the Azusa Street Revival* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2017), 94.

<sup>47</sup>Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>48</sup>Kimberly Harper, *White Man's Heaven: The Lynching and Expulsion of Blacks in the Southern Ozarks, 1894-1909* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010).

<sup>49</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 125-126. The identity of the street preacher in Joplin is unknown. However, street preaching was a common method of evangelism used by Parham's Apostolic Faith Movement. Parham himself was reported to have preached to hundreds of people on the streets of Joplin. *The Apostolic Faith* (Houston, TX), December 1905, 13.

<sup>50</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 125-126.

<sup>51</sup>Henry G. Tuthill, "Apostolic Faith Revival," *Springfield Daily Republican*, March 28, 1906, 5.

<sup>52</sup>Corum and Bakewell, 111.

<sup>53</sup>James Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 169-170. Parham had many followers along the Kansas-Missouri border, with churches in Joplin, Missouri, and Galena, Baxter Springs, and Keelville, Kansas.

<sup>54</sup>Goff, 101-104, 153. Parham regularly distinguished himself from other Pentecostals by repudiating Azusa Street and emphasizing his doctrine of annihilation. See, for instance: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 7, 1912, 2.

<sup>55</sup>Howard A. Goss and W. Fay Carothers gathered many former Parham supporters into their new organization, which carried the Apostolic Faith name until 1910 or 1911, when it was renamed Church of God in Christ. The group apparently disbanded in 1914 when most of its leaders joined the AG.

<sup>56</sup>Goff, 106.

<sup>57</sup>Corum, "A Sparkling Fountain for the Whole Earth," 1.

<sup>58</sup>"Show Boy Evangelist to Conduct Meetings."

<sup>59</sup>William W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), 122.

<sup>60</sup>"Unsung 'Builder' of City Reaches End of Long Trail," *The Daily News* (Springfield, MO), June 19, 1949, D-1.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the History of American Pentecostalism, Volume 1* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 239.

<sup>63</sup>Menzies, 123.