

Glen Bell Oral History of the Grinnell Assembly of God Church

Poweshiek History Preservation Project

Conversation recorded during scan session of photos Glen contributed to PHPP

Present were Monique Shore, Glen Bell, and Glen's sister

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The History of the Assembly of God Church

Shore: You were saying that that one was the post office. That's the first Assembly of God Church in this area.

Bell: And that's my mother-in-law's writing.

Shore: Moved from Gilman. Oh, so they physically moved the building.

Bell: Yeah and built the church.

Shore: But this is the building as it stood in Gilman.

Bell: Yes. It's the post office. And on the window you can see printed that Edward B Wright was an Evangelist.

Shore: Old time revival service every night.

Bell: And that was my father-in-law. Then they moved that to Grinnell and built this little white church.

Shore: Out of this as their frame-work. So they first started meeting in Gilman.

Bell: He was holding Evangelistic meetings in Gilman. It wasn't charted yet. Assembly of God.

Shore: And what was his name?

Bell: Edward B. Wright.

Shore: So do you happen to know, is this Edward B Wright in this picture?

Bell: Yes, that's George Driscoll and Edward Wright. They were partners. And house-movers.

Shore: But Edward was also the preacher?

Bell: He was the Evangelist.

Shore: So there are three gentlemen in this picture. Do you happen to know which one is which?

Bell: Far right is Edward B. Wright. The one on the other side is, I'm thinking is George Driscoll. I don't know who the one in the middle is. I'm thinking probably one of Ed's boys. Could have been Elmer. Or George's boy.

Shore: Do you have any idea when this picture would have been taken?

Bell: Okay. Now I have an idea. The church was incorporated, she's got all that information, in '34. But before this church was moved, they held, they rented a storefront uptown and had meetings. They rented a store front.

Shore: Here in Grinnell?

Bell: Here in Grinnell in the early thirties. Along where Rutkins is.

Shore: So you're thinking they probably moved the building from Gilman in the early thirties?

Bell: Yeah.

Shore: Okay. Alright. Very good. Let's see.

Bell: They had a store front rented and they met there and had Evangelist come in and hold services. They didn't have a minister, only themselves. And then they bought a lot where the church stood and they put up a tent and they had—

Shore: Tent revivals.

Bell: Yeah, tent revivals. And the ladies and the young women, girls, my wife and a friend of ours, they would sew a rip where the wind would rip it. And they kept it going through the summer. And then they moved that church in and made that their building. That's the first building.

Shore: So if I understand what you said, before this building was physically in this location there was a tent there. So he was doing, Edward Wright was coming and doing tent revivals at the same time he was going to the post office in Gilman and doing it there?

Bell: Well yeah but it wasn't just him. It was other Evangelists.

Shore: Oh, coming to the tent.

Bell: Yeah. And one of them was Jack Hamilton and one of them was Ruby Pleatcher and her husband which would be Jim Miller's sister that used to be the councilman. And that's how it started.

Shore: Okay. Okay. I want to make sure I get the road right. So these were on Broad Street? Right? Okay. Now.

Bell: Yeah. 619 Broad Street. And I lived close there, under the water tower. So I knew everything that was going on at that church. I saw everything. Most everything. That's T.W. Stark. He was the pastor. He was here twice. But that will be coming up. He was the first pastor.

Shore: So then this was the third building on this site. This was built. So you're not sure when this picture was taken.

Bell: No. I am.

Shore: You are? Alright.

Bell: When the picture was taken but you're talking about when the church was built.

Shore: Well tell me what you know about—

Bell: 'Cause it changed over time.

Shore: So this picture was taken in—

Bell: Well, when you get to where the church was first chartered it gives a list of the pastors, when they came and when they left. And this church was built when Reverend C.B. Bell came after Stark. And I don't know where that list is at.

Shore: Is that what was on the phone? I'll get it printed out. There is the list of the pastors.

Bell: See this came from the district office in Des Moines. And they don't have it just right. See, there's T.W. Stark up here at the Glad Tidings. He was here twice. But he was here before Clarence Bell was here. And they don't have him down. And Bell came after Stark so Stark was here until '40 I suppose, 'Cause Clarence Bell took over. And what I'm saying, is there any information here?

Shore: So tell me about this building, this brick building. The one you were married in you think was build—

Bell: In 1940. I'll say that's when it was build. It might have been '41.

Shore: Approximately 1940.

Bell: Because his wife died and he left in '44. So it had to be built while Clarence Bell was here. And I remember helping on it. And he was the one that overseen the construction.

Shore: And there's no people in this picture. It was taken at a later date?

Bell: Yes because, you see these balusters on here? They wasn't built when the church was built. They reinforced that later. And it had a round roof. Well then, if you notice they had a fire. My

sister-in-law was married in November 5th, 1950 and the church burned about a week later. So they had to gut it. And they took this round roof off and made a flat roof.

Shore: Okay. So it burned in 1950 but they were able to repair it.

Bell: Yeah.

Shore: So it was repaired with a flat roof. And then, did that stand until they built—

Bell: The new church.

Shore: The one that was the last building there.

Bell: Yeah, they built a church on the side. Between here and that house and then they built an educational wing on the back and that was then the Reveas was here.

Shore: So in the '60s?

Bell: He was here from '67 to '88. He was here quite a long time.

Shore: So probably in the Seventies this building was taken down to put up the other one?

Bell: They didn't take it down. They just added on to it.

Shore: Oh really?

Bell: It wasn't taken down until, Mayflower just took it down. So while we're talking about this, the church was incorporated in '34 in September. And the church opened December 4th, '34. And then it closed in 2009. But what I'm trying to tell you is that T.W. Stark who was the pastor from then until Bell came.

Shore: Oh, so he was the founding pastor. Really for the first ten years or so if Bell didn't come until forty. So he was the first six years.

Bell: He was from '34-'40. About six years. Five or six years.

Shore: Stark was. And then he came back in the fifties.

Bell: Yeah. To open the Glad Tidings.

Shore: Okay, so this photograph we think was taken in what would have been the late forties because it still has the round roof.

Bell: Well I would say until 1950 because then they made a flat roof, 'cause it burnt down.

Shore: Right, so this picture was before it burned so it must have been in the forties.

Bell: Well, we were married in '48 and we was married in this church.

Shore: Okay, so it must have been, yeah. What you're saying is that this round roof went away in fifty. So this picture is maybe about 1948. We'll guess 1948. That's what it looked like when you got married. It says right here that the pastor is D.E. Skieles. Is that pastor that married you?

Bell: No. He was there, but he went on vacation. So Clarence Bell came back and married us.

Shore: Tell me about this picture. Is that in a parade?

Bell: Well here it is on the back, first parade of the Assembly of God.

Shore: Well there you go.

Bell: And they got 1923-24, well that's incorrect. Oh, it says, "I believe this was taken in the area of '33-35. Bob Smith". I wanted to fill this in. T.W. Stark came to Glad Tidings when the church was affiliated. They got that down but they don't have him as the pastor. But he was the pastor, there's his name and it started in '51 but it isn't up here.

Shore: Well I'm going to guess I get to keep one for our records so I'll make a note on our copy. That he started in 1951?

Bell: I know he did. I was there.

Shore: What do you know about this picture? It says 1950s. Okay.

Bell: Well it was 1951 or 1952 because the church didn't start until 1951.

Shore: So we are about out of time. So if you want to come back at a later time we would love to be able to scan more.

Bell: Here's that picture of the old church.

Shore: You got one more group of names in you?

Bell: Yup—

Shore: You also said you had some more pictures of the church and the different pastors... Well we got the church stuff recorded. We would love to have more of your memories recorded. It was very nice to meet you.

[End]