

Information on Bethany Hall
By: Barry Stultz

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WESTBROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BEGINNINGS

Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out!

In the summer of 1907 or 1908, two assembly preachers held tent meetings in the City of Westbrook, ME, on Berkeley St. Their names were Mr. Hugh Thorpe and Mr. John T. Dixon. Mr. Howard F. Stultz, a resident of Westbrook, attended the meetings, and he became interested in them.

(Mr. Stultz was born in Waterside, NB, in 1880, the youngest son of Alfred and Ann (Steeves) Stultz. He was born again in 1898. Sometime after the death of his father in 1892, Mr. Stultz and his mother moved to Portland, ME. There he married Miss Mary E. MacCormack, in 1905.)

By their invitation, he went with Mr. Thorpe and Mr. Dixon to visit the Cliff Street Gospel Hall in Boston, MA. He was attracted to the simplicity and seriousness of their meetings, and the scriptural order of their gathering. After this, Mr. Stultz wanted to see a similar testimony to the Lord's Name in Westbrook, and he built a garage at his home at 51 Lamb Street, to be used as a meeting place. A New Testament assembly was established in Westbrook for the work of the gospel. It remained there on Lamb Street until 1925, when it moved to a new building at 540 Main Street, which was called Bethany Hall. Finally it moved to the present building, in 1959, Spring Hill Gospel Hall, located at 225 Spring Street. In 1980 a 30' by 36' addition was built on the southerly side of the existing

building to provide for class-rooms, a nursery and dining room expansion.

During the 1st period, perhaps about 1925 Miss Mary Falt, a student at Gorham Normal School, was received into the assembly. Some of the children of Mr. Stultz were baptized as believers and received during this period. Mrs. Edith M. Stultz was received in December of 1932.

A highlight and fond memory of many christians was the assembly Bible Conferences held in Old Orchard Beach, ME in the 1930s, using the facilities of the Salvation Army Campground and Tabernacle, and a boarding house called Hazel's Den. Some of the preachers at those times who ministered the Word were: Mr. James Waugh (Scottish preacher), Mr. Benjamin Bradford of NY, Mr Edwin J. Tharp of Rockport, MA, Mr. John T. Dixon of Richmond, Mr. Hugh McEwen of Philadelphia, PA, Arthur Dewhurst, John Knox McEwen, Robert T. Halliday and others. These conferences didn't continue because of the hardships of WW II. The brethren looked for another place for the conferences, because it was too close to the Old Orchard attractions. Mr. Stultz, Mr. Halbach, Mr. Marshall and Mr. Dewhurst found a campground available for sale on Newfound Lake in Bristol, NH and purchased it, in the summer of 1945. The new facility was called Camp Berea, and was used greatly of the Lord to edify the saints and reach children with the gospel during summer camps.

In July of 1946, Mr. Clark McClelland, his wife Jean and family moved to Westbrook to help in the work and to preach the Word, having been commended to the work of the gospel by the West

Street Gospel Hall in Orillia, Ont. in April, 1946. There they labored for nearly 50 yrs until July of 1996, when they moved to Pittsboro Christian Village at Pittsboro, NC. Although he travelled widely as an itinerant preacher, the assembly benefited greatly from their labors, encouragement and ministry. Jean was well known for her great gift of hospitality.

In the early days, tent meetings were frequently used to reach the lost with the gospel in surrounding towns. Also, in 1942 and 1943, Mr. Hugh Thorpe conducted children's meetings in a tent in the driveway in front of the Hall on Main Street.

During the war years of 1941 to 1943, Jamaican workers were sent to the South Portland shipyards to work for the war effort. On Friday nights the assembly prepared a meal for them and the gospel was given out using 8-minute films, literature and gospel preaching. Mr. David Simpson of New Bedford, MA came often to help in this work.

The gospel was also preached frequently in Open-air Meetings, conducted in Gorham, Naples, Windham, Westbrook and Portland, by Mr. Clark McClelland, Mr. Charles Grob and others.

Frequently the assembly used tract-band evangelism, both in mailing of literature and calendars, door-to door distribution and summer tract distribution in popular tourist areas.

In the 1960's and 1970's, there were many series of Friday Night Children's meetings held during the winter months, conducted by Mr. Charles Grob and others. They were well attended and a means of reaching many children with the gospel. Some of those

who attended as children still mention their memories of the meetings and Bible teaching.

In the winter months for many years there were monthly fellowship suppers, for inviting friends and family to a meal and gospel meeting afterward. This was a fruitful means of meeting strangers and introducing the gospel to them.

The assembly sponsored and produced a daily radio broadcast called "Echoes of Grace", on station WLOB-FM in Portland, from July 1970 to Aug of 1974. Listener responses for offers of free literature were encouraging.

In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, six older couples and families retired and moved north to Maine from points south, and greatly blessed the assembly with their labors, hospitality and faithfulness to all the meetings. Kenneth and Margurite MacLeod from Worcester, MA in 1972; Walter and Eleanor Bliss in Oct 1981 from Long Island, NY; Karl and Jeannie Van Dyke in Feb 1982, also from Long Island; Ed and Margie Christensen, former missionaries to Peru; Ross and Lorraine Burnett from Worcester, MA, in June 1989; and Stan and Ruth Anne Mincks and family from Miami, Fla in July 1983.

The Hymn Book generally used for the Remembrance meetings has been The Believer's Hymnbook, published by Pickering and Inglis, Ltd. Other Hymnbooks used in ministry and gospel meetings are Redemption Songs, Pickering and Ingliss, Ltd, Great Songs of the Gospel, Moody Press, Choice Hymns of the Faith, Gospel Perpetuating Publishers, and Hymns of Truth and Praise, Gospel Perpetuating Publishers.



Home of H. F. Stultz about 1920.
51 Lamb St. Westbrook, ME (with Gospel Hall on left)



540 Main St.



225 Spring St.