
The Allegheny City Society

REPORTER DISPATCH

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Bishop Matthew Simpson - a Brief Biography

By John Lyon

On March 14, 2004 Calvary United Methodist Church rededicated the Apocalypse Window. In the center panel is written "In Memoriam Simpson." What does this mean and who was Simpson?

Matthew M. E. Simpson was born in Cadiz, Ohio on June 20, 1811. (90 years later Cadiz Ohio would be the birthplace of movie actor Clark Gable.)

When Matthew was two years, old his father died, so his uncle Matthew (after who he had been name) raised him. His uncle had served in the Ohio State Senate for ten years and had been a judge in the County Court system. He was familiar with Greek and Hebrew, and gave his nephew many advantages that boys living in the west did not have.

When Matthew was 16, he left home and became a student at Madison College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. (This would later become Allegheny College at Meadville)

Because of his uncle's early teaching and his hard work and study habits, he became a tutor before he was 19 years old. He also apprenticed himself to a physician. He continued to study medicine, and in 1833 began his practice. At a camp meeting he gave his heart to Christ and began to feel inward pressure to preach. However, Matthew was very shy and this seemed impossible. But he began to speak at religious meetings and gradually gained more confidence. After nine months, he gave up his practice when Charles Elliott, a Methodist educator, asked him to become a circuit rider.

(*See note below) On April 5, 1834, he saddled his horse and rode out on his first circuit.

The shy boy from Cadiz Ohio became a master educator, the most influential Methodist of the day. He was a powerful speaker who never used notes. It was said that audiences wept, clapped and leapt to their feet during his sermons. He was asked to repeat favorite

messages over and over again. Abraham Lincoln considered him "the greatest orator he had ever heard."

Matthew was appointed to Liberty Street Church in Pittsburgh. It was here he met Ellen Verner. They were married in 1835. In 1837 he was asked to become vice president of Allegheny College and a professor of natural sciences.



He accepted the presidency of Indiana Asbury (DePauw) University in 1839. It was during his presidency that he helped change the university from a Methodist experiment in a semi-wilderness to an established four-year college. In his spare time he found time to spy on the increasing student body by posing as student and taking part in "sprees" and to "wage war upon Mrs. Larrabee and her school" (Female Collegiate Seminary in Greencastle.)

In 1844 Simpson was elected to the general conference and in 1848 was re-elected. In 1852 he was elected bishop.

An abolitionist, he became a close personal friend to Abraham Lincoln and often prayed with him at the White House. His powers as an orator made him admired and earned the gratitude of the nation. When Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865, it was Simpson who preached the funeral sermon at the White House and in Springfield. He was the only person beside family members and the honor guard allowed in the private railway car that carried Lincoln's body to Springfield.

Simpson published several books including *Hundred Years of Methodism*, *Cyclopaedia of Methodism* and, after his death, a volume of *Sermons* was edited by Rev. George R. Crooks. He attended the general conference in 1884 but was in poor health and could not sit through the sessions but his farewell address was well received. Matthew Simpson died on June 18, 1884.

When Calvary Church was built the Verner family, wanting to honor this great man, donated and dedicated

the Apocalypse window in his memory. The Apocalypse Window can be found in the west balcony, above the choir loft of Calvary Church. In it's time it was the most expensive Tiffany window ever made at a cost of \$3,500. The scene depicted in the stained glass window is of Saint John writing the Book of Revelation on the island of Patmos. It relates his vision of the New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven where God will dwell with human kind. This Tiffany stain glass window should be viewed when the afternoon sun shines through, the whole window shimmers with a special golden light.



The restoration of the Apocalypse window at a cost of \$226,000 was funded in part by grants from the Pennsylvania Historical Commission (\$71,000), an anonymous gift of (\$110,000) and the remainder by the generosity of Hartley Walker. Workers from Stained Glass Resources performed the rescue of the window.

*Note: The wide spread of Methodism was made possible by the circuit rider. A circuit rider was an ordained preacher who traveled within his "circuit" usually three or more churches at least one a month. It was also necessary for the rider to carry his supplies with him. Many of the early circuits stretched for hundreds of miles. The circuit could include 20 or more "preaching places."

Information for this article was taken from the following web sites:

Depauw University www.edauw.edu
 Christian History Institute: www.gospel.com
 Virtual American Biographies
www.famousamericans.net

Location of Allegheny City Schools 1894

- HIGH SCHOOL-** Sherman Avenue, about Ohio St.
- First Ward** - Corner of Rebecca & School St.
- Second Ward** - Corner of Sherman Ave. & Ellsworth St.
 - Irwin and Washington Ave.
 - Observatory Hill
- Third Ward** - Corner of James St. & North Ave.
 - Chestnut & Perry St.
- Fourth Ward** - Liberty St. near Chestnut St.
 - Liberty St. near Cedar Ave.
- Fifth Ward** - Page and Fulton St.
- Sixth Ward** - Chartiers St. & Washington Ave.
- Seventh Ward** - 125 Spring Garden Ave.
- Eight Ward** - 541 Ohio St.
- Ninth Ward** - Wilkins near Preble Ave.
- Tenth Ward** - No.1 - Charles St.
 - No.2 - Perrysville Road
 - No.3 - Hall's Grove
 - No.4 - end Perrysville Road
- Eleventh Ward** - Corner of Shady Ave. & Eckert St.
 - New Brighton Road
- Twelfth Ward** - No.1 - 254 East St.
 - No.2 - Willis St., Nunnery Hill
- Thirteenth Ward-** Clark St. near Lowrie St.

Allegheny Trivia

Rail transportation between Allegheny And New Brighton was started in the 1850s and the Pittsburgh, Allegheny and Manchester Railways Co. began horse car service over a new Sixth Street Bridge in 1860.

Upcoming Events

Save This Date—April 26, 2006

The Allegheny city Society's Annual Meeting will be held on April 26, 2006 at 6:30. The Society will be presenting the 2005 William Rimmel Award and will be electing board member for new terms. Additional details will be available soon. Expect an announcement in your mailbox.

John Canning Lecture Series

John Canning, board member of the Allegheny City Society, will be giving the following talks at the Allegheny Branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The location in the library will be in the Children's Dep't area. This is being coordinated with Patte Kelley at the library. All programs are on Tuesdays, will begin at 1:30 PM, and will last 35 to 45 minutes.

- March 14 -----The Irish of Allegheny City
- March 28 -----Anica Preble Barlow and Harriet Preble: Cosmopolites in Frontier Allegheny Town
- April 11 -----Allegheny Artists: George Hetzel
- April 25 -----Allegheny Commons:From Pasture to Park
- May 9 ----- Religious Congregations in and about the Commons
- May 23 ----- Public Sculpture in the Commons: A Talk and a Walk

John is a lifelong resident of the North Side: 33 years in Brighton Heights, 33 in Allegheny West, and presently in the Central North Side. He studied History at Indiana State Teachers College and at Duke University and taught for 38 years in the Mt. Lebanon schools. Since becoming a member of the Board of Directors of the Allegheny City Society, he has become more and more involved with preserving and interpreting the history of the North Side communities. He and his wife, Ann, recently moved to Jacksonia Street only a few blocks away from where his great grandfather, an immigrant from Ireland, worked as a shoemaker. Their daughter, Jennie, and grandson, Blaise, also live a few doors away on Jacksonia Street and their other daughter, Rachel, lives in the Observatory Hill neighborhood.



Allegheny City Society
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- Student/Senior Citizen \$5.00

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