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# *The Allegheny City Society* **REPORTER DISPATCH**

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## **THE KATHRYN KUHLMAN STORY NORTHSIDE'S MOST FAMOUS EVANGELIST**

*By Doug Lucas*

Ask any Pittsburgher “of a certain age” if they remember the evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman and they will respond in the affirmative. But then, who could forget this dynamic woman preacher who arrived at the North Side Carnegie Music Hall on July 4, 1948 for a “Miracle Service” so successful that another had to be held later that evening? For the next twenty years until it closed in 1968 for renovations, Carnegie Hall became a famous destination for believers who sought physical or spiritual healing. People from all over the world came to the North Side of Pittsburgh to attend the services.

Some people revered Miss Kuhlman, while others believed that her “powers” were not heaven sent. At any rate, the woman was a charismatic figure shrouded by a veil of mystery and controversy.

One of four children born to German parents in Concordia, Missouri on May 9, 1907, Kathryn attended a Baptist Seminary and became an ordained minister. At sixteen years, she began traveling with her sister and brother-in-law doing tent revivals. In five years, she was preaching on her own and soon established a church in Denver, Colorado, where many well-known evangelists came to preach. Burroughs Waltrip, Sr., a married man with two children, was one of those guest preachers. They soon fell in love, and he left his family in order to marry Miss Kuhlman. But, six years later in 1944, the marriage was over and the ministry became the sole focus of her life.



Dogged by scandal and gossip, she relocated to Franklin, Pennsylvania to preach and initiate a radio ministry. When “healings” started to occur, saving souls became secondary to “performing miracles” and

relocation to the Carnegie Music Hall soon followed. Her fame as a faith-healer grew to international status with appearances on the Johnny Carson, Merv Griffin, Mike Douglas, and the Dinah Shore television talk shows.

In 1967, Mayor Joseph Barr presented her with the keys to the city of Pittsburgh. In 1972, Miss Kuhlman traveled to Vatican City for a private audience with Pope Paul VI. Over the years, many other honors followed – too numerous to mention here. The Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation, based downtown in Pittsburgh’s Carlton House Hotel,

performed charity and missionary work on a global scale.

Among numerous books authored by Miss Kuhlman, her most famous, *I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES* sold over two million copies around the world and was translated into many languages. In addition to her popular radio programs, there were also weekly television programs broadcast in the U.S. and Canada on the CBS network; services were held in many U.S. and foreign cities.



The services were characterized by a “laying on of hands where people would be touched by Miss Kuhlman. They would come under the power of the Holy Spirit and be caught by her assistants as they fell to the floor in a swoon. The healings were followed by an “altar call” where people would then testify about their healings and the power of the Holy Spirit. It was quite a show – music, singing, and drama!

In 1968, services were moved to the First Presbyterian Church in downtown Pittsburgh and her ministry continued to expand. There were Friday morning miracle services, Tuesday night preaching services, special Holiday services, and on Sundays she traveled to Youngstown, Ohio for services at the Stambaugh Auditorium.

Miss Kuhlman departed this earth on February 20, 1976 and was entombed at the famous Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California. Interestingly, her grave is only a short distance from that of another famous and controversial evangelist – Aimee Semple MacPherson, founder of the Four Square Gospel Church. Oral Roberts gave the eulogy at the funeral. He confessed to being uncomfortable in that role since they were rivals, and her dislike for him was well known.

Shortly before her death, “Tink” Wilkerson, a regent from Oral Roberts University, took control of Miss Kuhlman’s affairs. Following her death in 1976, a mere \$267,500 was available to be divided among the loyal long-time employees in Pittsburgh. Her Fox Chapel home, contents and personal effects were sold at public auction with the proceeds intended to further her ministry. At the end, the great bulk of her estate went to Wilkerson and his wife. Possibly, it may have been funneled to Oral Roberts University, but it is likely that the full truth will never be known. The Kuhlman Foundation received nothing. In 1992, Wilkerson was convicted of fraud involving his Oklahoma automobile dealership and served time in prison.

Miss Kuhlman’s legacy lives on as her Foundation continues to perform world-wide missionary work from their Pittsburgh headquarters located in the South Hills. Her credo is inscribed on her tombstone – “I believe in Miracles, because I believe in God”.

## **CHARLES TAZE RUSSELL – FOUNDER OF THE JEHOVAH WITNESSES**

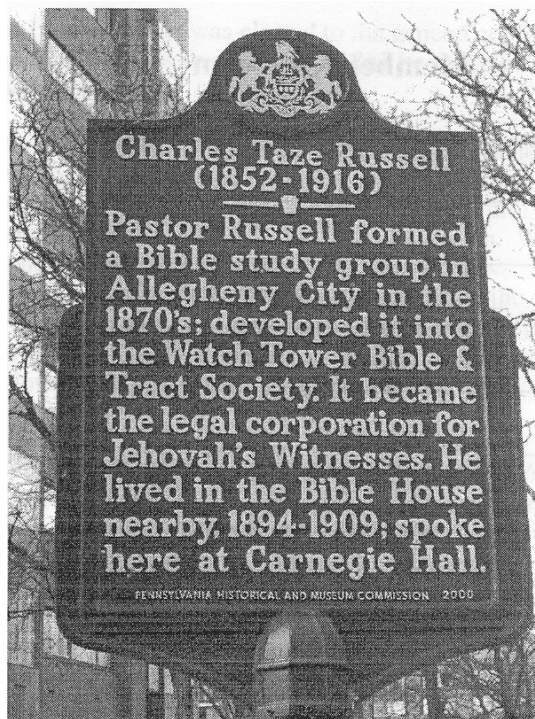
By Ruth McCartan

Russell was born in Allegheny City on Feb. 16, 1852, the only child of Joseph L. and Eliza Birney Russell. His father had a general store on Federal Street and the family lived above the store. Russell’s mother died when Charles was only eight years old and, after that, he and his father were almost inseparable. His father tutored him at the store and at eleven he became a full partner. The business prospered and by 1869, the

family was operating out of different locations with even a store in Philadelphia.

But despite his success in business, young Russell was troubled in spirit. Troubled by the doctrine of eternal damnation, he had become an unbeliever, but kept probing for some faith he could accept. After attending an Adventist meeting he resumed his study of the Bible. He started a bible study class and began public discussions about his faith. In 1877, he joined with George Barbour in publishing a paper “Herald of the Morning” and writing a book, “The Three Worlds”. In this book he predicted the end of the age as 1914, which many believed meant the end of the world, but which he later explained as the beginning of the final preparation.

That same year, at 25, the young merchant called a meeting of all the ministers of Pittsburgh, and laid his views before them. They listened to him but declined to join him in his movement. This rebuff convinced him that he needed to break with all the different churches. He sold his stores and took his personal fortune, stated at the time as \$350,000, to spread his teachings.



In 1879, Mr. Russell began publishing a paper, “Zion’s Watch Tower” and married Maria Frances Ackley, a member of one of his study groups. The publishing prospered, but the marriage did not.

By 1880 he was traveling and lecturing extensively, writing books on religion and publishing his journal. By this time, he was beginning to be called Pastor Russell, and in 1890, the Pittsburgh City Directory for the first time listed him as a minister. The first convention of believers was held in 1893 with only 350 delegates attending but the religious movement was growing and, by 1904, over 150,000 to 200,000 attended.

Pastor Russell was becoming one of the most controversial figures in America with his teachings. Believers at the turn of the century were called "Russellites". Today they are called "Jehovah's Witnesses", with churches all over the world.

In 1909, Russell moved his publishing organization from the Bible House on Federal Street to the Bethel Home in Brooklyn, New York. Constantly on the go, Pastor Russell suffered a stroke on the train in Texas and died in 1916. He left his fortune as a trust fund to carry on his work. His remains are buried near a pyramid monument in a cemetery in Ross Township. The monument is filled with books and magazines sealed to await the end of time.

#### **PHMC AND BUHL FOUNDATION FUND ALLEGHENY CITY BOOK**

Thanks to a \$15,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and a \$7,000 grant from the Buhl Foundation, along with in-kind assistance from various local groups, local creative artist and author, Lisa A. Miles, is researching and writing a book on Allegheny City based, in part, on a collection of recently catalogued materials at the Pennsylvania State Archives. The book is to be published in 2007, marking the centennial of Allegheny City's annexation to Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation is overseeing the grant and publication process. Lisa can be contacted at [lisamilesviolin@earthlink.net](mailto:lisamilesviolin@earthlink.net).

#### **Allegheny Trivia**

On May 6, 1896, Samuel Pierpoint Langley (1834-1906) launched one of the first unmanned and successful airplane flights (model no.5), which achieved a flight of 3,000 feet on the Potomac River. Mr. Langley was a professor of physics and astronomy and director of the Allegheny Observatory where he conducted model airplane flight experiments. The

Observatory was located in present-day Perry Hilltop, where Triangle Tech was built. The Observatory was moved to its present location after the turn of the last century.

#### **2006 RIMMEL AWARD WINNER**

On April 26, 2006, the Allegheny City Society presented the prestigious William M. Rimmel Award to the Buhl Foundation, for its many projects in the North Side of Pittsburgh that this foundation has supported in its almost 80 years of existence. Accepting the award was Dr. Doreen Boyce, its president.



#### **Upcoming Events**

- **July 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> – Allegheny West Civic Council – House & Garden Tour**
- **September 10, 2006 – Mexican War Streets Society 37<sup>th</sup> Annual House & Garden Tour**
- **September 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> – Pennsylvania Genealogy Conference – Sheraton Station Square.**



**Allegheny City Society**  
**P.O. Box 100255**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15233-0255**

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### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

On the evening of November 2, 2006, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Conference will sponsor a candlelight tour of the Mexican War Streets and Allegheny West neighborhoods. As part of this tour, the Allegheny City Society will host an informational display of photographs, maps, memorabilia, and other items relating to the history of Allegheny City. We need volunteers to help staff this function. This will be a fund raising event for the ACS, who will be also providing refreshments for the tour guests – Reymers' Blend will be featured.

### **ALLEGHENY CITY SOCIETY 2006 OPEN COMMITTEES**

The ACS has openings in the following committees:

- Archives and collections
- Newsletter
- Programs and projects
- Website
- Annual meeting planning

If you are interested in serving, please leave us a message on our answering machine (412-322-8807), and you will be contacted.