

Ontario farm girl rises to fame in glitter capital of America

BY RON PRESTON

Aimee Semple McPherson rose from the obscurity of rural Ontario farm life to fame and fortune in the glitter city of Los Angeles, California. Yet she did not become an actress in the normal meaning of the word. She was "Sister Aimee" the evangelist.

She was born Amy Elizabeth Kennedy, in 1890, the daughter of a Salford farm couple. She became involved with religion when she married a Pentecostal preacher named Robert Semple when she was only 17-years-old.

Shortly after their marriage, they travelled to China to act as missionaries. Robert caught malaria shortly afterwards and died. Aimee returned home, with her baby daughter who had been born in China. She met her mother, Minnie Kennedy in New York.

A depressed and despondent woman, Aimee entered into a marriage of convenience with a New York grocery salesman, Harold McPherson. Together they had a son but the marriage was a disaster.

Aimee fled with her two children back to Ingersoll. She soon became involved with "The Sawdust Trail", a group of wandering evangelists. She would later describe these as the happiest times of her life.

Her mother joined her on the road in what would become a famous and tumultuous relationship known to millions of people.

It was in 1918, after several years of aimless wandering, that Aimee and



Minnie set out with "10 dollars and a tambourine" to California.

Four months after they arrived, "Sister Aimee and Mother Minnie" were given a free house by devoted followers. Aimee had evolved into a dramatic, flam-

boyant performer on stage. She began preaching across the country in order to raise money for a new church.

Four years later, in 1923 Aimee dedicated Angelus Temple, built at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million. The complex eventually became

known as the Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

By now, Aimee had become a media event. The beginning of what would become numerous scandals and courtroom battles happened in 1926.

Ingersoll Times
Aug. 24, 1983 31A

McPherson, A.S.

Aimee supposedly drowned while swimming. However, six weeks later, she turned up outside a little Mexican village with a story that was never proved, saying she had been kidnapped. Trials and charges provided front page news for years. Accusations that Aimee had run away with one of her employees from the temple seem to have some basis in fact.

But Aimee fought back, accusing her enemies of plotting against her. She beat the charges of perjury surrounding her alleged kid-

napping but still could not keep out of court or the limelight of adverse publicity.

Aimee would be involved in over 55 lawsuits over the next 10 years, including fights with her mother and daughter. She would marry for a third time and again with unhappy results.

But besides the scandal and innuendo, no one denied

the good Aimee did. She organized soup kitchens and other donations to the destitute in the years of the Depression.

The last few years of Aimee's life were the quietest, with less scandal and more good deeds. But in death as in life, there was controversy.

Aimee was found by her son, lying dead in her bed on

September 26, 1944. A bottle of pills was nearby: An autopsy proved that she had died of an overdose but a jury ruled it an "accidental death".

Aimee Semple McPherson was an evangelist, an actress, an enigma and undoubtedly one of the most famous and controversial personalities Canada has ever produced.

Ingersoll Times
Aug 24, 1983.

Salford Man, 82, Recalls Aimee Semple McPherson

SALFORD, Dec. 27 — It is a big rambling white clapboard farmhouse, typical of hundreds throughout the countryside, but its haughty perch, atop a hill overlooking the little crossroads village of Salford, is somehow in keeping with the girl who once lived there and later became one of America's most famous women.

In that house once lived a girl named Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy, who later, as Aimee Semple McPherson, won fame and fortune as one of the greatest evangelists of her time.

The story of Aimee's rise from a poor farm girl to the leadership of thousands throughout North America is very familiar to 82-year-old Herb Piper, the oldest resident of Salford, who sat downstairs in her home while she was born upstairs.

Wed at 17

He knew her as a neighbor's girl from the time of her birth until she was married at 17 and moved away, but Mr. Piper will take no part in the controversy over her life that still rages on even after her death.

"It isn't a good thing to say anything about your neighbors whether they are good, bad or indifferent," Mr. Piper said, summing up his attitude towards the question.

The only observation that he would make was: "She was just like a lot of other girls — a bit of a tomboy — but a fine looking woman."

Mr. Piper's acquaintance with the Kennedy family stretched back to even before they were married. And while they lived across the road from the Piper home, he "spent as much time at their place as I did at my own."

After Aimee Kennedy married

costal preacher, and moved to Chicago, Mr. Piper still kept in touch with her for she returned often to visit her parents.

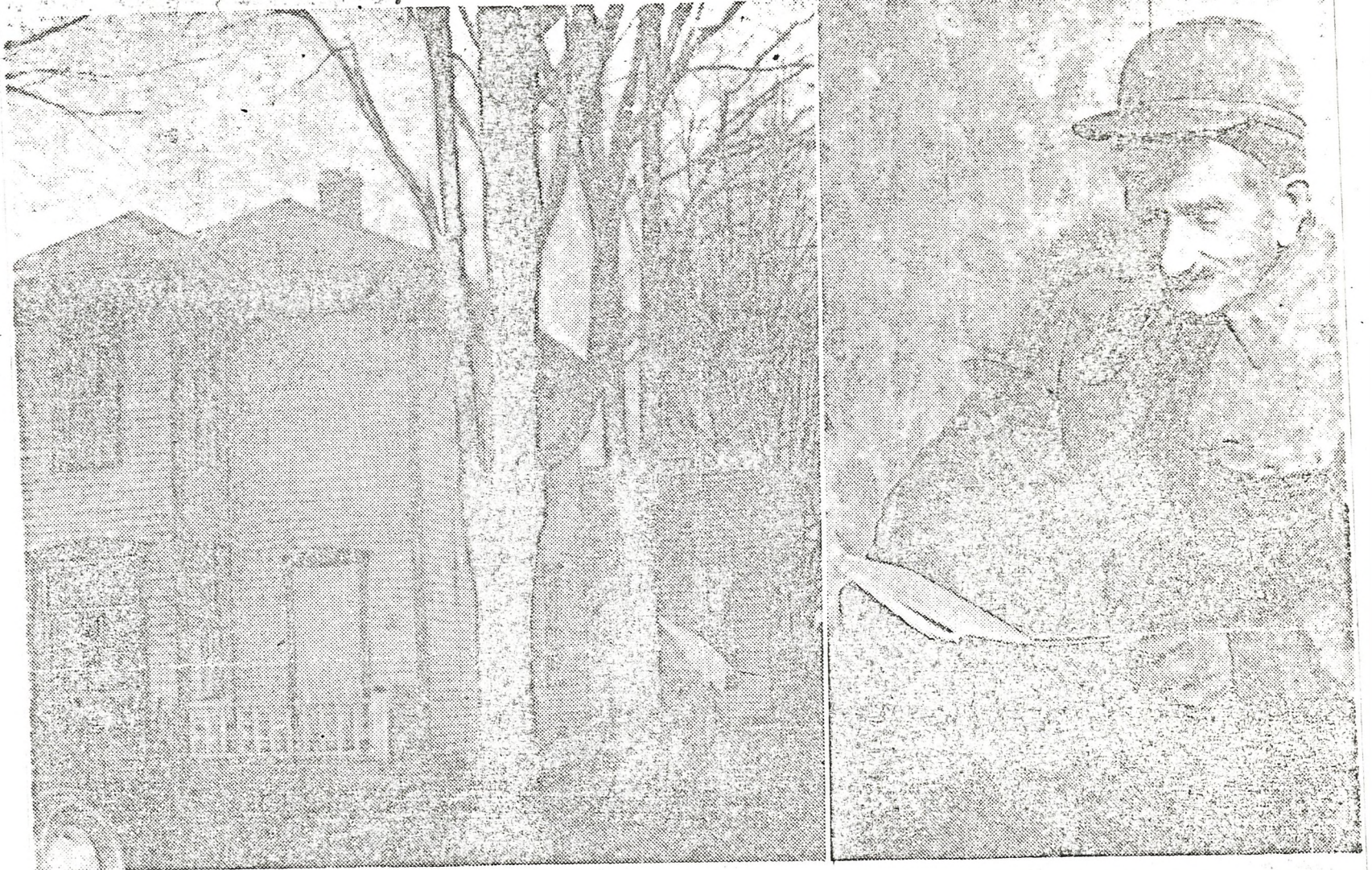
Then the Semples went to China as missionaries, where Robert Semple died, and the Kennedy family moved to New York.

"Sawdust Trail"

Even after she had embarked on what was then termed the "sawdust revival trail," and built the huge Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, Aimee Semple McPherson still returned occasionally to visit her old home.

Last October, Mr. Piper traveled to California with friends and visited the grave of the famous evangelist, who died in 1944 at the age of 54.

Salford Home Recalls Time of Aimee Semple McPherson



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members her as a child is 82-year-old Herb
Piper, now a resident of Salford, who lived for
years in the house across the road from
Aimee's home. He is shown here in the

kitchen of his little brown stucco cott
ing a magazine account of the li
great evangelist.

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McPherson, Aimee Semple

Aimee Semple McPherson Visited Scenes of Her Girlhood in 1929

McPHERSON, Aimee Semple

Visited Schools and Church She Had Attended as a Girl, and Placed Flowers on Her Father's Grave

After an absence of some 17 or 18 years, during which time she had stirred the Christian world by her startling success as an evangelist, as well as by her daring and strange adventures, Aimee Semple McPherson, whose death occurred yesterday at Oakland, Calif., came back to her old home district, Ingersoll, July 9, 1929, to tread once again for a few brief hours the paths of her girlhood days.

Aimee came back to Ingersoll in an automobile, and in the company of an old schoolmate in the person of Major James Clark, Windsor barrister and well-known former Ingersoll resident, who was later to become Speaker of the Ontario Legislature. She had spent her collegiate days in Ingersoll at the same time that Major Clark did. There had grown a friendship that was not forgotten.

The party, numbering three, the third one being Major Clark's adopted son, Billy, arrived in Ingersoll shortly after one o'clock, going straight to the Ingersoll Inn. Here were some seven or eight Toronto newspaper men and one woman; two London newspaper men; local newspaper men as well as a few others who were on hand to meet her. They were the self-appointed reception committee. Cameras clicked. Aimee smiled that most gracious of smiles—nodded here and there—and sought her room. Even here, there was no privacy. The writers were after her—and they got in. Later, when she finally got an opportunity to have lunch, she was again surrounded by the party. The questions and their answers were so thick and fast that her meal became cold and it was with rare grace that she finally decided that "she must be getting on as it was getting late."

The first and foremost consideration of the entire trip from Detroit was to look after some details regarding a headstone or monument over the remains of her father in the Harris street cemetery, two miles south of Ingersoll on the Tillsonburg road.

VISITED CEMETERY

Arriving at the well-kept little cemetery where lay the remains of many Oxford pioneers, a fair-sized crowd was noticeable on the entrance level of the property. As the evangelist was about to step from Major Clark's car, she suddenly remembered that it would be a fitting time and place for the placing of some floral remembrance upon the paternal grave. She was driven back to town and within a short time was at the graveside with a generous array of flowers, which she placed in front of the headstone to the accompaniment of clicking cameras.

Aimee straightened and placed her face full to the sun as she stood over the side of the grave. "I am very grateful to you good people," she said, "for having turned out in this way. It is very lovely of you, and may God bless you."

From this point the party hurried to Aimee's next point of interest—the old school which she attended as a child at Salford.

"The same old stile," said Aimee as she climbed the steps over the fence into the school yard where she first sought to learn the ways of the world. "What countless little feet have climbed those steps. And there is the dear old pump—and here is the door I always used." She tried the door. It was fastened. She half circled the building and came back again to the front. Going to the other door, she found it open. Here was her opportunity to see the old walls again. "And the bell rope—here is the old bell rope," she said as she clasped it and sought to pull it.

She sought the south room of the building. Directly she went to the back row of seats in the west aisle. "This is where I used to sit. Probably this is my same old seat." She looked for her initials. She then decided that the seats in the passing years had been changed. With reporter's copy paper in front of her and with a borrowed fountain pen she wrote, "Cat-hat-hat—I seen a cat—I see a rat." The cameras clicked and clicked and meanwhile Aimee had lived again a portion at least of her school days. Now to the front steps where more pictures were taken, one being especially posed with one of her old school trustees, W. H. Wilford, who was on the board when Aimee went to school.

MET PASTOR

At the school grounds where a number of the older residents had gathered, Aimee was introduced to the Rev. and Mrs. P. S. Banes. Mr. Banes was pastor of the little church where Aimee as a child went to church and Sunday school. She said her father, the late James Morgan Kennedy, had led the choir in that little church many years ago. It was here, too, that Aimee had won a silver medal in an oratorical contest, and it was there that she probably had her first real insight into her gift of speech. She said that from there she later went to London and won a gold medal.

At the instance of the photographers again, Rev. Mr. Banes and Aimee posed for a picture at the front door of the church. Rev. Mr. Banes was shown opening the door of the church to admit Aimee. Once inside, she readily found the place where she used to sit. She looked up to the front where as a member of the choir she had her place. She commented upon the splendid manner in which the church had been kept up. She explained that she was raised in the Methodist denomination for a time, but in later life became ordained as a Baptist minister.

After more pictures were taken

on the church steps, Aimee whisked away to her two girlhood homes some two miles south and on the same road.

GIRLHOOD HOME

At the first home, where she had spent many of her maturing years and where incidentally she was first married, Aimee looked about with more than usual interest. She told of a great wire that once ran from the roof of the barn to the top of a tree at the front of the property. With a seat fastened to this wire, she used to slide down the steep incline and across the entire barnyard. She brought to mind the "gentleman cow" that knocked her down in the yard one day while she was wearing a new white "dress with red moons on it." She narrowly escaped that time as she recalled it. She looked just a bit wistful at the windmill—the scene of childish climbs and childish slips and falls. The old pump beneath caught her eye also. She visited with Mrs. Wilson who then occupied the house and went upstairs and down. In the front room she sat down at the organ.

"We had a piano when we lived here," she said. "When I felt the first call to preach, I used to sit at the piano and to my own accompaniment sing, 'I'll go where you want me, O Lord.'"

Aimee then struck a chord on the organ, swung over into the old familiar time and sang a few bars of the hymn.

HER BIRTHPLACE

The next call was at the house where she was born, just the next place north. Here she recalled a number of incidents of her childhood days. She was talking—talking and smiling and recalling all through. This tree reminded her of an incident. That portion of the barn another, and so on. Outside she stopped to gather small twigs of cedar and lilac, and of another shrub which she said they used to call "golden fringe." These she tucked away to take back to her new home of affluence in the south.

From this point, Aimee wished to go further north on the road to another school where she had spent her very first school days. This turned out to be what was then commonly known as the White school house. When she saw it she was not a bit interested.

"No need to stop," she said, "as it is a new school on the old site. I do not know it."

If Aimee appeared to be anything during the entire afternoon, it was just in being plainly natural. There seemed no sorrow in her memories. She betrayed no sentiment. Just plain recollection, untinged by anything other than the bare perspective itself, which of course had changed. Once she said, "This must be all very boring to you boys. I am sure it is very commonplace." There was no trace of maudlin sentiment anywhere on the trip. Everything seemed to be recalled with a smile.

SEMPLÉ--KENNEDY

Marriage of Two Popular Young People in Salford.

A domestic event that has been looked forward to with intense interest by a large number of young people, took place Wednesday afternoon, at "Kosy-Kot," the charming country home of Mr. and Mrs. James Kennedy, near Salford, when their daughter, Aimee E. was united in the holy bonds of matrimony to Mr. Robert J. Semple, of Toronto, according to the beautiful service of the Salvation Army, by Lieut-Col. Sharpe of London, in the presence of about fifty guests. The ceremony took place beneath a beautiful evergreen cedar bower, profusely decorated with golden glow flowers. While Rosie Mitchell, of Ingersoll, played the wedding march, the bride was led from her room to the bower by her father, attended by Miss Annie Holmes and little Vera Cable, who made a sweet and charming flower girl. Mr. Fred Groves assisted the bridegroom through the impressive ceremony.

After the nuptial knot had been duly tied and fervent congratulations had been bestowed on the newly-wedded couple, the guests partook of a sumptuous dinner, served by Brooks Bros., caterers of Ingersoll, on spacious tables on the lawn, "in the shade of the old apple tree."

While the ceremony was being performed and the festivities at the tables were going on the weather was clear and fine, but before the feasting was finished a heavy rain storm came on, and a grand rush was made for the house, where the time was spent very pleasantly in music, social chat, etc., till the time arrived for the departure of the bridal party and the guests.

The beautiful wedding cake was a gift from a Chinese confectioner in Toronto, who had been converted to Christianity through the evangelistic efforts of the bridegroom.

A large and attractive array of wedding presents was received by the bride from several of her friends as tokens of good-will and esteem, to remember them by.

A fine assortment of beautiful and fragrant flowers was contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Vrooman, of Woodstock.

The bride was neatly attired in a white silk gown, trimmed with real lace, and in her hand she carried a lovely bouquet. The bridesmaid, Miss Holmes, wore a pale pink silk gown and carried a beautiful bouquet of pink carnations. The little flower girl, Miss Vera Cable, looked lovely in a pale blue, and white costume, carrying a large basket of flowers.

The bride is very popular in the community around Salford and in Ingersoll. She was one of the successful contestants in the Sentinel - Review Free Trip contest a year ago, and accompanied the party of winners to Toronto, Montreal and Quebec and return last September. She is also a gold medalist in elocution, and has always been a cheerful contributor at local entertainments when requested to assist on the program.

The bridegroom was formerly engaged in business in Toronto and took up mis-

sion work with gratifying success. Last winter he conducted services in the Pentecostal mission hall here for a few months, and latterly he has been carrying on similar work in Stratford.

The newly-wedded couple left on a short wedding tour for Toronto, and after visiting the bridegroom's old home in Belfast, Ireland, they will go out with a party of missionaries to China.

Guests were present from Ingersoll, Stratford, Bothwell, London, Avon, Mt. Elgin and the neighborhood.

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"I HAVE
BEEN HOME"

says Aimee Semple McPherson

Faker or martyr—which is she? Those who have met this world-famous Canadian evangelist still argue the point.

Here is her own story—written exclusively for Chatelaine, and presented only as the personal view-point of one of the interesting figures of the day. Chatelaine takes no responsibility for the statements expressed.

TWENTY-FOUR years ago, I left the little Ontario farm where I had been born and brought up. Newly married, I was off to China to share in the work of my missionary-husband.

For years, I have nursed an ambition to re-visit the early Ontario scenes. I have just fulfilled this wish. In a dreary downpour of rain, I recently saw again my father's grave in the ancient cemetery founded by the people of Ingersoll in 1832.

I peered through the windows of the little school-house I attended, I circled the church where I once sang in the

choir, I looked into the one-time village blacksmith shop, I walked around the now dilapidated general store where pennies once went for candies.

I was homesick for Canada and, in that peaceful setting, I was profoundly moved. I wept at the rush of memories.

Grey skies were overhead. The rain poured down. The leaves of the maples were turning. The trunks of the trees seemed bleak and gaunt. The old home, once so bright and cheerful, had become run down and sadly needed paint.

Believe me when I say that I was hungry for a sight of Canada. Everyone was kind and gracious during my short visit. Later, I addressed my fellow Canadians in the famous Maple Leaf Gardens. I shall never forget the experience.

For years, it has been my hope that I might one day stand before my own people and tell them my true experiences. So many malicious and false stories had appeared in some American newspapers. If I could present my side of the story in my own words, I felt that the British fair-play verdict would be my vindication.

You remember, when you were a little girl, how the whole family worshipped together. The Bible was taken down each evening and read. Some of you must have been rocked to sleep, as I was, with Bible stories.

But public taste has changed; the sense of values has become distorted. The Sunday sermon in some churches is fifteen minutes long so that the men may play golf sooner

In the United States, the church-goers often attend the motion pictures after the service is over. Many of the churches have become social clubs. In Denver, I know of one church that staged wrestling bouts as a preliminary to the Wednesday evening service.

In my Methodist home, I listened to Bible stories daily. The years went swiftly past. I lived as any child does on a Canadian farm. I helped with the household duties. I brought in firewood. I milked the cows.

The time came for me to enter high school. I bicycled into Woodstock. In winter, when the drifts of snow swept in, I drove a cutter to school. And then I embarked on a wonderful study called "Science." This set forth for me new theories regarding the formation of the earth, the stars and the moon. These explanations ignored the hand of God in their creation. I learned all about evolution, that man was cousin to the ape!

I was overwhelmed with disturbing doubts. Which was true, my Bible or my textbook?

My teacher reassured me. He laughed at my puzzlement. "The Bible," he said, "is a literary classic—such purity of English. But the story in the Bible is a myth!"

I started reading Huxley, Paine and Darwin. Their plausible arguments seemed to substantiate their theories. Still, I wanted to believe my childhood teachings.

In the meantime, I engaged *[Continued on page 64]*

"I Have Been Home"

(Continued from page 21)

in high school activities. There are still some yellowed posters advertising something as having been "Written and Directed by Miss Aimee Kennedy." One night, after a Christmas play rehearsal, I dropped into the building where Robert Semple was preaching; I went to scoff and found myself praying; I went to be amused and found myself impressed.

Anyone who has ever heard the deep quality of Robert Semple's vibrant voice can never forget it. The fervor of this young Presbyterian minister, just out from Dublin, affected me deeply. The compelling quality of his teachings seemed irresistible to all his listeners.

I went again and again to hear him. His teachings went deep into my consciousness, but still some doubts prevailed. And then,

in the privacy of the little room I recently visited in my old home, I dropped one night to my knees and pleaded: "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." As the days went by, I found myself hating the things I used to love and loving the things I used to hate. Dancing days were over; there were more serious things in life.

Six months later, Robert Semple asked me to be his wife. I was seventeen. He was going to China and he wanted me to come with him, not only as a missionary but as his helpmate. I closed my eyes and saw a golden road with Robert and me steadily mounting upward!

We were married beneath a bower of goldenrod on the lawn of my old home. It was a country wedding. White ribbons fluttered from the whip as we were driven off to the station. My husband had been transferred to Stratford, Ontario. We went to London for a short time. Then the big day arrived!

We left for Saint John, New Brunswick, sailed from there to Liverpool, boarded another ship for China.

I CAN still hear the sing-song of tongues and the shuffle of shoes on the Shanghai streets. I still remember the blazing sun, the smells of the city, the harbor swarming

with sampans. We were met by missionaries and later sent to Hong Kong. We had no thought of what we should eat, what we should drink or what we should put on.

Months went by. The intense heat and the lack of sanitation played havoc with the health of the white dwellers. Malaria was raging. We were down the coast at Macao when Robert was taken ill. He was carried back to Hong Kong and up the mountain to Matilda Hospital, an English institution.

I was nineteen. I sat beside my husband, wondered that he was so thin and emaciated, promised myself to look after him tenderly when he came home again. I did not know he was dying.

My husband was buried. I went through weeks of agonizing loneliness. I lay sleepless for hours, staring into the darkness of the long nights. The only sound was the irregular breathing of the patients about me. Then came my little daughter. I named the tiny mite Roberta after the father she would never see on earth.

When Roberta was born, I was on the opposite side of the world from those in Canada who had always shielded and protected me. I decided to bring my baby home to Ingersoll, Ontario.

Father cried when we arrived.

AS THE period of adjustment set in, I later joined a mission group near London, Ontario. My tasks were slight. I waited on table and washed dishes. I painted signs. One day, the preacher lost his voice. Huskily, and with difficulty, he asked me if I would preach. I gulped and said I would. That night, I stood up and spoke.

Later, I went to Northern Ontario. People thought a woman simply couldn't preach. But I remembered that the first Easter service was preached by a woman. Do you remember that Mary Magdalene brought the first message of Christ to His disciples after the Crucifixion?

After six years of work and constant travel, a great longing for a home came over me. I married again. I tried to escape evangelistic work and settle down to a domestic life. Sickness came. Within a year, I underwent two serious operations. I felt I had been punished for renouncing my work. Too weak to argue the point, I returned to Canada and commenced to preach the Word at Mount Forest, Ontario.

Mr. McPherson was with me for a time now. He agreed with me that I must not leave the work I felt called upon to carry out. But his interests were deeply rooted in the business world and he felt he would not like to give up these activities to accompany me. I went on preaching alone; my husband returned to his business.

For two years, I preached under canvas. In New Rochelle, New York, my daughter was stricken with influenza which developed into double pneumonia and brought her to the point of death. When the child recovered, we went to California.

There the work continued. As this expanded, the need arose to build "a house unto the Lord." In Echo Park rose the Angelus Temple. This steel and concrete structure seats 5,300 persons in the main auditorium alone. Later came the great Bible School, the administration building, our own printing plant. Today, we have our own cemetery where the followers of the Four-Square Gospel may rest in peace together when death calls.

The work of the Angelus Temple continued to expand. We have established missions in nineteen foreign lands. My work in this respect has taken me to Africa, India, China and the South Seas. Graduates of our Bible School are missionaries at these stations.

I think we are definitely the only church to have increased our missions, missionaries and cash appropriations during the depression. In January, I leave for India again to visit our missions in that country.

The radio has been a great help to us at the Temple. We have been able to send our message to countless hundreds of thousands of people.

One day, it was heard in the Los Angeles jail by a poor woman who had been pleading

with the matrons for just one shot of dope, just one drink of whiskey. The Angelus Temple messages changed her life. She immediately asked to see me.

I heard of her story. The woman had not long to live. She was paroled in my care. We welcomed her to Angelus Temple. At every meeting, she would stand up and testify to the change that had been brought about in her life.

She started to expose California's drug traffic. She named the dope-peddlers and gave their addresses. She named the higher-ups within the ring. She charged that certain civic officials were getting graft and lending their protection in return. She named the men. She told just how the drugs were being flown up by plane from Mexico. She named the landing fields!

I could have stopped her but I did not. I began to get threatening letters. A recurring phrase within these notes was "taken for a ride."

Investigations into the drug traffic were launched as public opinion clamored for action. Some of those engaged in this nefarious traffic were given penitentiary sentences!

One day I was swimming, the one recreation I try to find time for. The girl who did my secretarial work for me had come along to the small and quiet beach outside Los Angeles. While we were in the water, I suddenly heard a man calling to me from the shore. His baby was very ill, perhaps dying; would I help?

No doubt or suspicion entered my mind. I was well known by sight to thousands. A woman rushed down to join him. I presumed it was the child's mother. She gave me her coat and I threw it around my shoulders.

We hurried to the car. The motor was running. A man sat in the back with a bundle in his arms. As I put my foot on the running-board, I was violently shoved forward. I fell into the back of the car. Blankets were tied about me and I felt the car start off. I lay on the floor in terror. I was almost suffocating.

I had no means of measuring time. We may have travelled for hours. We reached the kidnappers' destination. When the blankets were removed from my head, I found I had been taken to a small and miserable cabin. All around lay the desert, dotted here and there with cactus clumps. Some people felt, and still do, I suppose, that this abduction was the brain-wave of a press agent. I can assure you that nothing is farther from the truth.

I was held in this shack by the two men and the woman and later taken to another shack over the Mexican border. After ill-treatment and even torture, because no ransom money was forthcoming, I one day escaped through the negligence of the woman who had been left behind to guard me.

I tramped the many weary miles across the desert and, exhausted, reached Douglas, Arizona. Then the storm broke!

The underworld and the crooked politicians struck back. Religious dissenters entered the fray. They said this and they said that about me; they said I was here, there, everywhere with this person, and that person. Sensational newspapers flung out reports across the wires.

I tried to bear up. Then, weary of the unfair persecution, I demanded vindication and a show-down. The prosecutor haled everyone into court that he could find who had been making sweeping statements. The whole business was thrashed out. The prosecutor built his case upon the testimony of a woman witness who claimed I had never been kidnapped at all, that I had been taking a "vacation." She named the time, the place and the man!

Later, she recanted her story and testified that she and an attorney had hatched the plot for blackmail purposes. Dismissal of the case was instantly asked and granted. The attorney later served a prison sentence. I am informed the so-called witness also was convicted on a forgery charge.

I think the storms are over now. Things have settled down. The hurricane has

McPHERSON, Aimee Sempé

blown out. I feel that I have stood up under criticism and attacks that might have floored many men. My chin is up. I am still carrying on my work.

There have been many chances offered me to leave religious work if I had wanted

to. I don't want to and I don't plan to. I hope, perhaps, to make myself a little better understood. I think Canadian people are capable of that understanding. They gave sufficient evidence of this during my recent visit here.

CHATELAINÉ

November 1934

Ontario Schooldays Vivid in Memory Of Titian Aimee and Girlhood Mates

McPherson Aimee Semple

Aimee Semple McPherson died yesterday at Oakland, Cal. And with her ending ends the saga of the little country girl who was "good at" elocution, and who became known as "God's Star Saleswoman."

"Sister" Aimee developed her undoubted ability as an elocutionist from her "Four Square Gospel" Angelus Temple in Los Angeles into millions of dollars and the world's front pages with marriages, divorces, court actions and a widely publicized disappearance. But she never forgot she was a native of Ontario.

James H. Clark, former Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, and perhaps her greatest friend through a colorful lifetime, last night told The Globe and Mail, from Windsor, her Canadian history.

"She was born in Salford, near Ingersoll. Her father and mother belonged to the Salvation Army, so Aimee, too, joined. When she came into Ingersoll to attend high school she was my classmate. She was a strikingly beautiful girl, with auburn hair—but she was just a country girl, thrilled to the heart at going to school in the 'big city' of Ingersoll.

"Other girls were jealous of Aimee because she was smart and energetic. Many thought she was just a dreamer, but she certainly displayed marvellous ability in recitations and readings. I sometimes thought she had funny ideas, but later I realized she was just extremely clever."

Wins Newspaper Contest

Mr. Clark told of the Woodstock newspaper giving Aimee her first chance to travel. There was a subscription contest, which Aimee determined to win. "I guess she sold more subscriptions than all others put together," he said, "and as a result she won a trip down the St. Lawrence and Saguenay Rivers. She was tremendously thrilled."

Before she matriculated from high school Aimee had attended a number of evangelistic meetings being held by Robert Semple. Mr. Clark continued. "She fell in love with him, attended meeting after meet-

ing, and eventually married him. They went to China, where he died, leaving her with one child. She married Harold McPherson, a wholesale grocer, but things went wrong and she left him.

"She started from the East to the West Coast, with an old car, a silk tent and her two children," Mr. Clark said. "She told me that when she neared the west, a snowslide forced her to make a 1,200-mile detour. But she got through to Los Angeles and settled there, starting to preach. Her last trip to Canada was in 1929, when I drove her from Windsor to Ingersoll and her old home. There she laid a wreath on the tomb of her father, the late James Morgan Kennedy, in Harris St. cemetery at Salford.

Father Led Choir

"Visiting the United Church there, she told me: 'This is the place they taught me to preach. As a child I came here and learned the Word of God. My father led the choir here. I belonged to the guilds. I won a silver medal here once, and then went to London later and won a W.C.T.U. gold medal.'"

A few weeks ago Mr. Clark was in Los Angeles and called to see his schoolmate, he said, only to be told she "wasn't well." He did not realize, he said, she was fatally ill and "it was a tremendous shock to me to learn of her death." She was a wonderful girl and grew into a wonderful woman," he said.

Sister Aimee once told of her meeting with Semple, who was conducting a "Holy Ghost Revival" at Ingersoll: "As a schoolgirl I spoke at church and school entertainments and took part in all the amateur plays I could. I loved the stage and decided to be an actress. Then one day, dressed in all my finery, I slipped into a little mission, attracted by the voice of the handsome young preacher. He had curly brown hair and a beautiful face and he upset me.

"At first I giggled at some of the things he said, but I could not forget them. I went again and then one afternoon driving along the frozen country and in a sleigh the miracle happened. A warm glow

filled my heart and I began to pray to God to forgive me. I was converted."

Romance of Sickroom

Some time later, Semple walked into a neighbor's home while Aimee was tending two sick children, she said. "Robert talked earnestly of what a life of faith meant, the sacrifice, the joy, the reward; then reaching over, he took my hand in his and, telling me of his love, asked me to become his wife and enter the work as a helpmate by his side. I said 'yes' to God and 'yes' to Robert."

Despite the fact she won worldwide fame, the "girl from Salford" was viewed somewhat coldly by many of her old-time schoolmates. One once said: "She told us about flirting with the boys and acting up with the train crews. I told her a nice girl wouldn't do these things."

The confused marital relations of the evangelist were also viewed with disapproval by conservative Salfordians. The fact that differences arose between her mother and father, resulting in the return of the latter to Salford, while Aimee went on to her meteoric career, didn't help matters.

Salford a Battleground

Then came the sensational disappearance of Sister Aimee and her subsequent return 10 days later, a disappearance which has never been completely explained.

Salford promptly divided into two camps—pro and anti—some residents arguing that Aimee had always been "flighty" and a "publicity seeker," and others taking the view that the "kidnapping" story she told at the time was entirely true.

One thing certain is that the name of Aimee Semple McPherson swept across the American scene like wildfire, right from her arrival at the West Coast. When she arrived there in 1924 she didn't have a cent. Within five or six years she had built a temple which was a vast, highly organized institution with 22,000 members on its rolls and a cash and property value of millions. The organization was complex, but she ran it entirely. She

was president of the Church of the Four Square Gospel; president of the Echo Park Evangelistic Association, which owned the property on which the Angelus Temple is located; president of the International Four Square Gospel Lighthouse Association, which extended the work to distant fields.

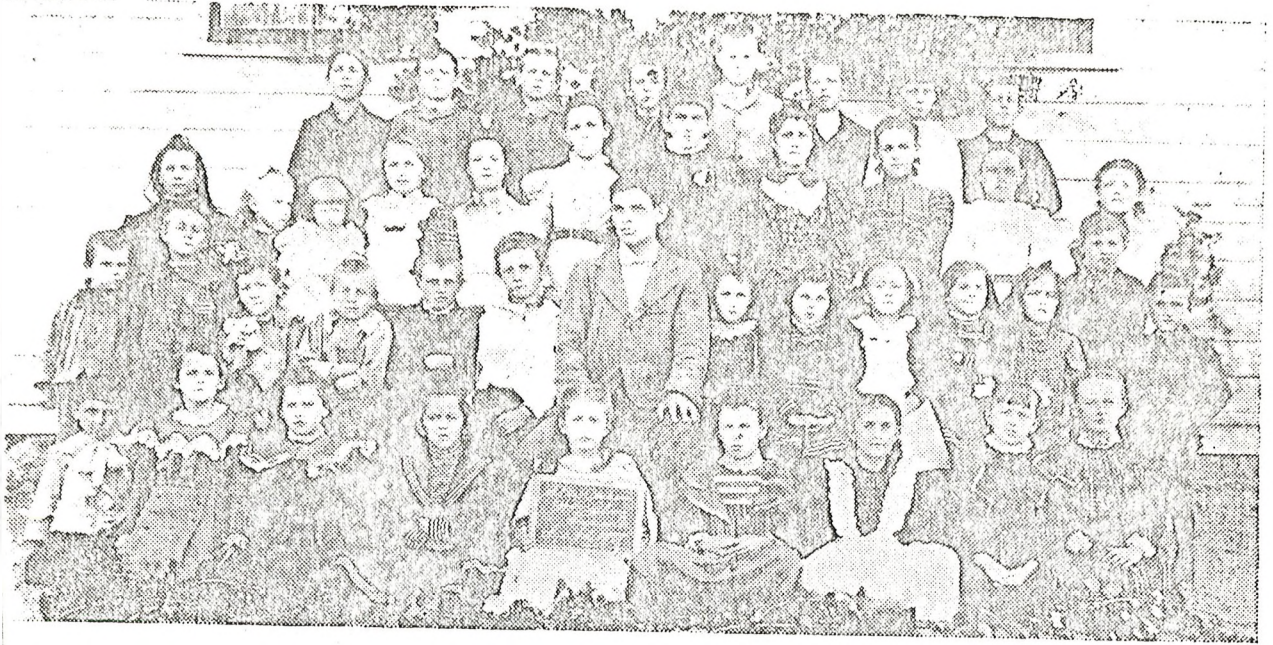
"No one seemed to think a woman should be a preacher," Sister Aimee once told an interviewer. "But why not? After all, a woman brought evil into the world—poor Eve—and why should a woman not help to wipe it out?"

Barbital Overdosage Cause of Aimee's Death

OAKLAND, Calif., Oct. 13.—(AP)—A pathologist testified today at the inquest into the death of Aimee Semple McPherson that the Canadian-born Evangelist died last September 28 "of shock and respiratory failure due to overdosage of barbital compound" and a kidney ailment.

1944

Aimee Kennedy Semple MacPherson and Fellow Pupils



That pretty little girl holding the slate in the front row of this picture taken in 1898 is Aimee Kennedy Semple MacPherson. She became one of the most famous daughters of this area. The picture, brought

in by Mrs. Arthur Bell, is of pupils of S. S. No. 3, Dereham. The teacher is W. R. Bloor, who as Dr. Bloor, was recently honored by the University of Rochester.

Many Residents Recall Evangelist When Country Girl

Scores of Ingersoll citizens paused yesterday afternoon and during the evening to read the bulletin in the Sentinel-Review window which announced the sudden passing at Los Angeles, California, of Aimee Semple MacPherson. In many instances there was almost a visible reaction.

Some who read the brief announcement had known the famous evangelist intimately when she was a plain country girl attending the Ingersoll collegiate institute. She rode to and from the town behind a slow moving horse at the beginning of her collegiate career, but it soon became apparent to teachers and her class mates that she possessed talent out of the ordinary as was reflected in debate and in matters of leadership and independent thinking.

In those days she accompanied her mother in attending meetings here of the Salvation Army which probably stimulated her religious ambitions and was the beginning of her meteoric climb to the pinnacle which won her world-wide recognition in the field of evangelism.

Many other citizens, who knew Aimee Semple MacPherson by name only, recalled the prominence that Ingersoll and the village of Salford had received as a result of the worldwide publicity accorded the evangelist.

For a period of several years during the high tide of the tourist traffic from the United States hundreds of tourists stopped in Ingersoll each season seeking information as to the birthplace of Aimee Semple MacPherson, and many of them were directed to her former farm home near Salford.

Not a few local citizens who knew Aimee Semple MacPherson as a mere girl have also recalled the transition that had taken place when she returned some 15 years ago, a queenly woman, noted for her eloquence, her organizing capacity, her dramatic power, truly in the spotlight on the American continent.

Some Ingersoll and district citizens from time to time have paid immeasurable tribute to the great ability of Aimee Semple MacPherson in her chosen sphere of endeavor. They visited her temple in Los Angeles and were thrilled as never before by her eloquence and the manner in which she moved her vast audiences.

Aimee Semple MacPherson has passed on but with her memory the village of Salford, Dereham town-



WORLD FAMOUS OXFORD-BORN EVANGELIST DIES

—Death came suddenly yesterday at Oakland, Calif., to Aimee Semple McPherson, native of the Salford district and founder of the famous Angelus Temple at Los Angeles. Sister Aimee, as she was known to her followers, died of a heart attack in her hotel suite. In Oakland to assist in the dedication of a new Four Square church, she was found in an unconscious condition in her rooms. Doctors, after working to revive her, called for a police inhalator, which likewise proved ineffective. She had been ill for several weeks last spring, but associates believed she had completely recovered. Photo LEFT is a reproduction of a painting made of the evangelist some 15 years ago by Austin Shaw of Los Angeles, former Toronto boy. RIGHT, recent photo of Mrs. McPherson, who only a few weeks ago claimed that she had, in her 34 years of spectacular evangelism, preached more sermons than had any other evangelist of her time.

OCT 6



Gaudy costumes, stunts, planned hysterics chilled and thrilled Aimee's thousands of disciples. Inset: the tomb she chose in 1934, ten years before she died.



With dyed hair and in dazzling dress, actress Aimee read from this monster Bible at 1931 mass meeting.



Lawsuit expenses beset Aimee in 1937 so her fervid followers helped, some even giving personal jewels.



Aimee (left) and her mother, who forbade her to go on the stage. Below: Dave Hutton, one of Aimee's three husbands, meets some New York chorus girls.



AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON:

HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE JAZZ AGE

As a tawny-haired teenager at Ontario's Ingersoll Collegiate she won a gold medal for dramatics; in her fantastic Angelus Temple in Los Angeles and all over the world she held thousands spellbound as she preached a gaudy salvation. She made a fortune from her religious recipe of "incense, nonsense and sex appeal" and died after an overdose of sleeping pills

By DOUGLAS DACRE

IN THE giddy Twenties and the ominous Thirties the most flamboyant evangelist on this continent was Aimee Semple McPherson, who was born on a farm near Ingersoll, twenty miles east of London, Ont. She summoned her faithful to prayer with all the trappings of a cat, impresario, using painted choir girls, golden trumpets, scarlet robes, syncopated hymns and, in her own frank words, "incense, nonsense and sex appeal."

While other churches were half empty on Sundays Aimee's fantastic Angelus Temple in Los Angeles was filled to its fifty-three-hundred-seat capacity seven days a week.

Attendance reached its zenith in 1926 when bobbed hair, short skirts, bathtub gin, necking in rumble seats, foxtrotting, movie-star scandals, stunt aviators and heavyweight champions had distracted most of the Western world from religion. On the eve of her death in 1944—after the war had kept her out of print for five years and she was fifty-four—Aimee's hypnotic personality still drew ten thousand people to an open-air Bible meeting in Oakland, Calif.

Aimee first heard the lusty hymns of revival at the age of three weeks when her mother took her to a Salvation Army "jubilee" in Ingersoll. All through childhood the "blood-and-fire" philosophy of General Bramwell Booth enveloped her, though this old evangelist would never have recognized Aimee's later interpretation of the Scriptures any more than he would have approved her conduct.

Aimee hesitated once at a crossroads which might have led to a career on the stage but she chose the quicker medium of evangelism to vent a spiritual fervor which eventually was warped by the turbulence of her histrionic talents and her insatiable thirst for an audience.

At twenty-two she was heating up and down the United States with a shabby car, a tattered tent and a bronchial portable organ, dragging along two tiny children by different fathers, and her mother, the famous Ma Kennedy, whose influence dominated her life.

So sensational were Aimee's meetings that after ten years on the sawdust trail she reached a rainbow's end under the impious sun of Hollywood where she was immediately enshrined as the most gorgeous, tempestuous and prodigal air have grown rich on Holy Writ.

In her gaudy career as a hot gospel showed a flair for publicity, a spellbinding power which threw her listeners into hysterics, and an uncanny sense of timing with the collection box. She hit front pages by scattering religious tracts from airplanes, calling on fight fans to repent from the boxing ring, converting prostitutes in local brothels, interrupting dance-hall revels in the name of Jesus and inviting incurables to test her powers as a healer.

From Los Angeles to London, England, from Winnipeg to Wellington, New Zealand, from Montreal to Melbourne, Australia, and from Jersey City to Jerusalem, she preached the virtues of purity while she herself drank champagne, wore Paris fashions, got her face lifted and dyed her hair. For thirty-five years she pleaded for universal brotherhood but threw her own daughter out of the house.

Three husbands entered her life, each to depart with cruel alacrity within eighteen months. She could attract thirty thousand people to a single gathering yet she never made a genuine friend. Even though Aimee Semple McPherson earned more than a million dollars she died comparatively poor.

In her heyday she was a handsome vibrant and magnetic personality. Although her ankles were a fraction too thick, her body a trifle too broad and masculine, she was full and high in the bosom and radiated physical appeal. Her hair, sometimes piled up on top, was a tawny chestnut color. Her eyes were brilliant and provocative. Her skin was as smooth as the petals of a creamy tulip. When she smiled her wide full red mouth bared splendid teeth. And in profile her nose was patrician.

A thousand sermons, delivered on street corners, under the big top and

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A MACLEAN'S FLASHBACK

MACLEAN'S MAGAZINE, NOVEMBER 15, 1951

High Priestess of the Jazz Age

Continued from page 12

in the city auditorium, had imparted to her voice the rich contralto of the midwest. She learned to use its husky breaks with great dramatic skill, suggesting stifled laughter, the bravely choked sob and sometimes the throaty intimacy of Mae West.

Beneath her shallow reverence raged the fires of a frustrated artist. Once she tried to disappear from the religious lights she had drawn deliberately on herself but the form of her escape was a tawdry elopement with an already married radio announcer and she exposed herself to the charge of pulling a grotesque publicity stunt which had backfired.

A short-lived third marriage to another radionian who was immediately sued for breach of promise by a jilted girl friend, and a long series of legal actions which disclosed unsavory quarrels with her mother and daughter, sped her into a decline.

She battled desperately through the Thirties to sustain her reputation as a Messiah. Evangelism, however, was not her vocation. She was a misplaced Katharine Cornell, a Vivien Leigh on the wrong tack. Aimee Semple McPherson might have been Canada's first great contribution to the legitimate stage. But in the circumstances of her upbringing she was denied her chance.

She probably realized this in 1944 when she took an overdose of sleeping tablets and died.

Her story begins late in the Eighties when James Kennedy, an elderly, widowed farmer, and a strict Methodist by conviction, married a second time. His bride was a young Salvation Army lass, younger than any of Kennedy's children by his first marriage. In 1890 this oddly matched pair produced a child who was christened Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy. Her parents and her schoolmates in Derham Township, Ont., called her Betty. But she always preferred Aimee.

Her mother, Minnie Kennedy, always known later as Ma, had already wearied of life down on the farm. "Not enough people," she used to say. By the time Aimee was three weeks old Ma's hankering for the old Salvation Army days was irresistible. So she took the newborn babe five miles in a buggy, through November winds, to an Ingersoll meeting. Aimee's Aunt Maria said bitterly, "You'll kill that child! Anybody who doesn't know how to take care of a baby better than that shouldn't have one." But Ma Kennedy ignored her and took the baby to Army meetings several times a week.

According to Aimee's autobiography she was "promoted to the platform" at the age of six weeks and her voice was added enthusiastically to the services. "It was the hour," she says, "for which my mother had longed and prayed, the hour when she consecrated this visible answer to prayer, her little daughter, to the service of the Lord." Ma Kennedy was now back in her old Salvation Army rank of sergeant-major.

By cutter, by buggy, and on the handle bars of her mother's bike, Aimee went to Salvation Army meetings for the next sixteen years. At her first school she was teased because of the Army. But such was her personality that within a week Aimee had made a drum out of a cheese box, a banner out of a red table cloth, and playing Army had become the favorite schoolyard game.

When she was about ten she bloomed as an elocutionist. She was an excellent mimic and had a repertoire of humorous

Irish poems. Her father proudly displayed her talents at the local Methodist church. Immediately she was in demand for miles around to entertain the chapel congregations at oyster suppers, strawberry festivals and Christmas parties. "They would laugh and clap until the tears rolled down their faces," wrote Aimee. Ma Kennedy would ask the audience please to listen to one of Aimee's sacred numbers. But they nearly always insisted on "something comic."

In high school, at Ingersoll Collegiate, Aimee was the star of the dramatic

society. She won a gold medal. In 1907 she was awarded first prize in a local personality contest—a trip to Quebec City. "The applause of the people," she wrote, "was very alluring," and with other girls she talked of going on the stage. Ma Kennedy opposed these plans bitterly and mother-and-daughter relationship became volcanic. It swung, with fierce speed and startling frequency, from angry recriminations to tearful reconciliations.

Like other high-school girls Aimee started going to the movies, skating in

fancy-dress carnivals, and reading paper-backed novels which she kept hidden in her desk. Meanwhile Ma pursed her vinegary lips. When Aimee wanted to go to the school ball Ma flatly refused permission. There was a painful scene and Aimee coaxed her mother around. She went to the ball, according to her autobiography, "radiantly happy." Her first partner, however, was the local Presbyterian minister. Soon afterwards she was conscience-stricken because "I knew mother was praying alone at home."

In the library she discovered Darwin,

Voltaire and Tom Paine and agreed with others they had "done their work well." For a while she was engulfed in the "shifting sands of doubt." There must have been big scenes with Ma over this.

The next thing we read in her autobiography is the sigh: "Ah, sin, with what dazzling beauty, with what refinement and velvet dost thou cover thy claws. How alluring are the fair promises with which thou enticest the feet of youth."

Suddenly Robert Semple, a bulky, six-foot, clarion-voiced Ulsterman, steaming in his native tweeds, thundered down the main street of Ingersoll. He was an itinerant preacher and his unruly forelock set all the girls aflutter. Taking his stand in the Pentecostal Tabernacle he summoned the wayward to account. From the spiritual heights of the Salvation Army, Ma looked down with a curling lip on the more emotional Pentecostals and when she heard that Aimee was going to hear Semple regularly she said: "Just you wait, my lady. I'll attend to you!"

When Semple converted Aimee from the Army to Pentecost and carried her off as his seventeen-year-old bride most people in Ingersoll thought it was a defeat for Ma. But as things turned out it was a victory. Semple took Aimee on a brief preaching stint in Chicago, then to Ulatar, where she met his folks, on to London for more meetings, and finally to China as a missionary's wife. In Hong Kong Semple died of malaria before he had converted a single heathen.

Aimee was now nineteen, penniless and pregnant. But by the afternoon mail on the day of her husband's death a month-old letter arrived from Chicago. It was written by two Pentecostal Sisters who said the Lord had awakened them in the middle of the night saying: "Little Sister Semple is in trouble. Rise immediately and send her sixty dollars." A money order for this sum was enclosed. Aimee said: "Oh Halle-lujah!" and was able to pay the funeral expenses.

A month later Aimee was delivered of her daughter, Roberta Star, in the English hospital. Local missionaries chipped in to meet her bill and provide her with a steamship ticket as far as San Francisco. On the ship Aimee played the piano and led the hymns at Sunday services. Passengers who had heard of her plight collected enough to buy her a transcontinental ticket. Aimee was very impressed: "Ladies came tapping along on jeweled heels to mother me," she wrote. "Elijah's ravens were still on the wing. The Lord looks after his own."

"I'm Going to Get a Crowd"

Ma Kennedy was on a visit to New York where she engaged in Salvation Army work. Aimee sought her out there but found the reconciliation incomplete. She fled to Chicago and found shelter with the local Pentecostal brethren. Here her destiny was sealed. She began preaching for her living. Sometimes, she said, she was on the platform until two or three in the morning and this "was beginning to take the bloom from my little Roberta's cheeks." Soon she longed for a home of her own and returned to New York "besieged with a restless loneliness." Her parents had returned to the farm and somewhere she met Harold McPherson, a grocery clerk, and married him. McPherson gave her a good solid home. They had one son, Rolf. Eighteen months after her marriage she once more heard "the trumpet call which brooks no denial." She was missing her audiences too.

One night when McPherson was out

Aimee telegraphed her mother and ran away with the two children. Ma Kennedy met her at Ingersoll and informed her that "everything was settled." She had written to a Pentecostal camp at Kitchener, Ont., and reserved accommodation for Aimee. Soon McPherson divorced her for desertion, complaining of her "wildcat habits" and "dual personality." At Kitchener Aimee often preached until two o'clock in the morning and next day was up early, eagerly awaking sinners who dropped in on the way to work. When the camp closed she was invited to preach for a while in the Victory Mission, Mount Forest, Ont.

Services were held every night—to the same six people. Aimee was affronted. "These people," she told one of the Sisters, "are preached up. I'm going to get a crowd." She stood on a chair at the street corner, "motionless, rigid, silent, erect, arms lifted to heaven—praying." Curious citizens gathered to see this strange enchanted figure. When the group had reached the desired proportions Aimee snapped

Final Note

You may have the last word
And stress and underscore it.
What bothers me, my dear, are
The thousand words before
it!

—Leonard K. Schiff

open her eyes and shouted "Quick! Follow me!" She ran to the mission with the crowd in hot pursuit. When the last straggler pushed through the door the walls were heaving. "Shut the doors," cried Aimee. "Don't let anybody out." She never lacked a crowd again.

Her congregations wailed, beat their breasts, gave impassioned testimonies and rolled over on the floors. Some of the testimonies, so garbled they were incomprehensible, were said to be in "the tongues," the voices of departed foreign spirits who could only speak Spanish or Hebrew and who had temporarily possessed members of the flock. Aimee would cry: "Fill me, Jesus! Fill me, Jesus! Oh Jesus come and fill me!" Then women would hang onto each other weeping, laughing and shaking, and grown men would kiss each other.

In 1911 Aimee bought the old car, a mildewed tent, a miniature organ, a string of electric lights dipped in colored paint, rolls of red, white and blue bunting, sheaves of U.S. flags and hit the road as a free-lance Messiah. For a few months she slogged around New York state, picking towns where there were Pentecostal brethren, living off gifts of food and offerings. She wrote to Ma of the generosity she encountered wherever she took her little crusade and within a year her mother joined her as business manager. Rolf and Roberta tagged along too.

During World War One Aimee extended her beat down the eastern seaboard from Maine to Florida. In winter they worked south, in summer north. Ma and Aimee slept in the car. Rolf and Roberta slept on camp cots alongside. Over car and cots they erected a tent. Before long they bought other tents to house a small band of regular and irregular female followers and they lived like Amazonian gypsies.

There were nights of battling with wind and water-soaked canvas, swinging sledge hammers with blistered

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hands, hanging on to guy ropes and ridge poles, their hair streaming, their skirts clinging in the driving rain. There were mornings when they woke to find the tents as stiff as plywood from their frozen breath. In Maine their car radiator froze but a steam roller came along and the driver gave them hot water. (Later Aimee said God had sent the steam roller.) In Florida the car stuck in the mud and only after Aimee and the girls had taken off skirts, petticoats and blouses to tie around the tires was it driven out.

By 1915 Aimee had a female choir and a banjo orchestra in her cavalcade and had to ship her equipment ahead by rail to advance parties who prepared the way with publicity leaflets. She formulated her simple Four Square Gospel creed: 1, The infallibility of the Bible; 2, baptism by water; 3, physical healing; 4, the personal return of Christ. Aimee now appeared on the platform in crisp white form-fitting gown with a rich blue cloak flung back from her shoulders. Her followers wore clean white uniforms and often the girls wore tin halos.

The old-time hell-and-damnation technique was rejected. Aimee preached joy in the Lord and good fellowship. She invited listeners to "sit back, relax, and have a good time." She attracted neither rich nor poor. Once she said: "I come to bring spiritual consolation to the middle classes, leaving those above to look after themselves and those below to the Salvation Army." Most of her flock were of puritanical stock who led monotonous and lives close to the earth. Into the lives of people who denounced the movies, dancing and reading novels as wicked

she brought, under the mask of religion, that for which they were starving—glamour.

During her sermon she made frequent references to the "green handshake." Taking the hand of each worshipper as he left she usually found in her own a dollar bill. At one early meeting she recalls collecting sixty dollars this way. As her fame grew, however, and audiences were too large for individual farewells, the collection box appeared. Gradually the one-tent outfit matched a three-ring circus in size. She owned several big tops as big as Barnum and Bailey's. But now instead of one-night stands she was holding three- and six-week seasons. Instead of going into corners for the people they drove from hundreds of miles away to meet her. Aimee's monthly magazine, the Four Square kept followers in touch with her itinerary.

Her own tents, plus those of congregations who encamped on the spot, covered nine or ten acres. Aimee, assisted by girl dressers, changed her costumes six and seven times a day. Relays of supporting preachers held the stage between her appearances. Meetings went on until dawn. Local residents complained to the police of howling, stamping, shouting and singing until far into the night. But the police had enough to cope with in the traffic.

Aimee was now calling her immediate retinue "angels" and her audiences "saints." But labor gangs from the Mexican to the Canadian border who erected tents under Ma's direction found her a tough boss.

"Mother," said Aimee's daughter Roberta one night, "why can't we have a little house somewhere, with a garden and everything, and go to school like the other children do?" It seemed a good idea to Aimee and her heart was set on California, "the land flowing with milk and honey." She headed west. In San Diego, seven thousand automobiles parked the night before she opened a giant meeting in Balboa Park. Next day thirty thousand people came to see her lay hands on scores of crippled who were brought on stretchers to Aimee's rostrum. A few of the afflicted managed to struggle to their feet and as they tottered about the stage Aimee led the throng in cries of "Hallelujah!" in weeping, laughter, dance and song.

At her first meeting in Los Angeles Aimee made it known she wished to settle in "this beautiful city." A woman rose and offered her a lot. A man promised to dig foundations for a house. Another said he'd supply the lumber. One by one dozens of individuals offered materials and labor. Throughout the building of the house Aimee remained on the scene, leading the workers in song. It was a handsome ten-room clapboard residence. Everything was given to her, even the furniture, the rose bushes and the canary. Sometimes Aimee called it Little Grey Home In The West, sometimes The House That God Built.

In 1921 Ma Kennedy paid five thousand dollars down on a lot on Glendale Boulevard, alongside Echo Park, Los Angeles. Aimee's crusades continued. At every meeting the crowds heard of her longing for a permanent church. Dollars showered in. By 1923 a monster building, a fusion of Moslem mosque, Regency palace, Italian villa and Maple Leaf Gardens had risen in the California sun.

Aimee called it the Angelus Temple. It cost a million and a half dollars and seated fifty-three hundred. A radio station, a commissary for gifts of food, a Cradle Roll Chapel where babies could be parked, a Sunday school, a

Bible college, and a "miracle room" for display of abandoned crutches, trusses and leg braces, were but a few of its features. It was owned by the Echo Park Evangelistic Association Inc., a corporation formed by Aimee's followers. Aimee was president and Ma and her daughter Roberta were appointed to the board of directors. An Ingersoll woman who was taken by Aimee for a long holiday to the Little Grey Home in the West says: "There were many hard-headed businessmen on that board but Aimee and Mrs. Kennedy were more than a match for them."

On opening day "an acre" of acolyte girls, known as Templeites, each sporting cosmetics and a permanent wave, each with bouquets of roses and orchids, were in attendance. Silver trumpets flourished when Aimee pulled the strings that unveiled the electrically lit cross which could be seen for fifty miles. Scores of followers got permanent jobs as clerks, maintenance men, ushers and nurses. The payroll was seven thousand dollars a week.

Aimee gave the spectators pageants, picture slides and illustrated sermons. In one of these a "soldier of God" shot down a dirigible which floated in from the wings and, in a flash of flame, out fell a grinning devil, presumably a professional acrobat, to tumble forty feet with a thud to the stage as the spotlight picked up an unfurled American flag and the vast organ belled paeans of praise. Another time Aimee, dressed as a cop, delivered a sermon from a motorbike and took for her text: "Stop! You are speeding to ruin!" She used a Bible as big as a baby grand piano.

She couldn't have chosen a better time to open the Angelus Temple. Between 1920 and 1930 a million and a half Middle-Western farmers migrated to the California coast and retired on modest savings. These lonely people couldn't find the multifarious sects of their childhood in Hollywood and, since they rejected popular amusements, time was heavy on their hands. In Aimee they found entertainment that didn't breach their conscience. Through Aimee they met kindred souls.

At the end of her performance Aimee asked the sinners to come forward and repent. Her voice was low, compassionate, matriarchal; the music was melancholy, soft, embracing; the lights were dim, warm, enchanting. As the processions shuffled up the aisles Aimee would shatter the atmosphere by crying: "Turn on the lights! Clear the one-way street for Jesus!" As the lights blazed on and the organ boomed the meeting would start to jump.

"One man was struck with the Power," Aimee recalled, "and rolled down a flight of stairs. But the others merely gave him a passing glance and went on with their worship."

Aimee's Disappearing Act

In Los Angeles Aimee became a civic institution. She was a spokesman for the community and expressed her views to the Press on topics grave and frivolous. The police and fire departments made her an honorary member. A dozen service clubs listed her as their patron saint. Movie people courted her and she got on well with them. But the adoration of what she called her "heart-hungry multitude," was not enough to drive this spectacular human dynamo who, at thirty-five, was at the peak of womanhood. Aimee began to get the blues. When she heard the cultivated voice of Kenneth G. Ormiston announcing broadcast services from her radio tower, her ideas turned once again to romance.

Ormiston was a married man and

soon Temple tongues were wagging about the inordinate amount of time Aimee was spending in his office. This was early in 1926 and Ma Kennedy insisted that Aimee take a tour of Europe. Aimee went off dutifully. She rented Albert Hall in London for a Sunday meeting. Her coiffure, and fifty-dollar beauty treatments, pale yellow silk sweaters, short skirts and flesh-colored stockings, startled the British newspapers. They were more startled still when they got pictures of the evangelist frequenting London and Paris night clubs. Whether

Ormiston accompanied Aimee was never established but he was absent from Los Angeles at the same time.

Early in May 1926 when she returned to Los Angeles Aimee had an air of foreboding. She frequently made such remarks as "If I should die soon." Long discussions with Ma Kennedy behind closed doors were reported. On May 18 Aimee went to the beach with her secretary. They were sitting in their swim suits in a small tent. Then Aimee sent her secretary, Emma Schaeffer, on a trivial errand. When Schaeffer returned Aimee had vanished.

By late afternoon the extras were out with the story. Thousands gathered at the Temple for news. With curious conviction Ma Kennedy took the podium and informed them: "Sister is with Jesus. Pray for her."

For thirty-two days the Templeites kept vigil on the beach where Aimee was supposed drowned. They built bonfires, wailed and sang. Airplanes swept the water searching for Aimee's body. Divers probed the sea bed and one died from exposure. An ecstatic follower, thinking he saw Aimee's image shimmering on the waves, cried, "I'm

going after her!" He plunged into the waves and was drowned. A girl committed suicide out of grief. Meanwhile Ma Kennedy collected thirty-six thousand dollars for a memorial to Aimee. The story was a bonanza for the city editors of those California dog days.

On May 27 Ormiston's name was linked with Aimee's in the papers and doubts about her death spread. Ormiston's wife had reported him missing since two weeks after Aimee left for Europe. On May 29 Ormiston, accompanied by a woman, registered at a hotel in San Luis Salinas, Calif. Police and Press gave tongue. The hunt was on. A reporter stopped a car driven by Ormiston, who was accompanied by a woman, on the San Francisco-Los Angeles highway. The car doubled back to San Francisco. The trail led from San Francisco to Nevada, to a ranch in Arizona, and from there across the Mexican border to the Foreign Club at Agua Prieta, where on June 20 two men and a woman were seen acting furtively. The papers were talking openly of Aimee's "love nests."

In the light of evidence given at a subsequent public enquiry it seems reasonably clear that Aimee, with the approval of her mother, planned to disappear with Ormiston. But once Ormiston's name was publicly associated with hers a reappearance became essential. And this was, as usual, dramatic. She stumbled half-clad out of the dark up to the door of a cottage in Agua Prieta and asked for help. She was taken to hospital in Douglas, just across the Arizona border. Reporters filed one hundred thousand words of her story about being kidnaped on the beach by three characters she called Joke, Steve and Rose. Generally the story was read with derision.

Some of Aimee's followers deserted her. Ribald Aimee jokes were circulating. Burlesque comics parodied Aimee on the stage. But she seemed determined to make her kidnaping story stick and kept badgering the police, through the Press, to quit stalling and arrest the crooks. Ormiston appeared momentarily to pronounce Aimee "entirely innocent" of association with him. But on Sept. 17 a criminal complaint was filed charging Aimee with conspiracy to obstruct justice. Every type of crackpot and headline hunter wriggled into the witness box. Evidence of hotel chambermaids and house detectives, however, left no doubt that Aimee had been seen with Ormiston during the period of her supposed kidnaping. On Jan. 27, 1927, after an interminable hearing, District Attorney Keyes implicitly moved to dismiss the case. Technically Aimee was vindicated.

Aimee went on a "rehabilitation tour" with a lecture entitled "The Story of My Life." There were to be paid admissions. She preached to half-empty halls. She was no longer a miracle worker. She was a notorious woman. Radio contracts were canceled by the dozen. Ma Kennedy, in an attempt to seize power within the Temple, became involved in a series of squabbles with Aimee which leaked out in the newspapers. Aimee fired her from the directors' board. Ma told reporters: "I have disinherited her. Her present associates are full of corruption, deceit and double dealing."

Once more Aimee went to London and took Albert Hall. But now she was just another "crazy American." Rival gospels from the U.S. reached England ahead of her and warned the people against her. The Rev. W. E. Pietsch told an audience in Hounslow, on the outskirts of London: "Shun her for she will wreck your churches and fill your lunatic asylums. She will leave nothing but broken homes and misery. She is the biggest fraud I know."

"Bishop" Alma White, of the Church of the Pillar of Fire, described her as a sorceress, adding somewhat cryptically "Have you heard of her Upper Room? There is a mystery room in her temple where they mew like cats and bark like dogs."

Fleet Street reporters visiting her at the Hotel Cecil learned from waiters that Aimee drank champagne, ate caviar and entertained on a lavish scale. Aimee said in an interview: "I turn no one away. Jesus was the friend of sinners and publicans. We discuss cocktails, modern habits, sex, and clothes." She was open about her visits to night spots in London and Paris. In Glasgow, where she spoke, students adorned her platform with empty beer bottles and hung the walls with whisky posters.

Back in Los Angeles Aimee plunged into a series of shaky business ventures on the eve of the Wall Street crash. These included a cemetery with the price of lots graded according to their proximity with her own projected grave, a summer camp with the slogan Vacation With Aimee and an apartment house. A movie on her life to be called Clay In The Potter's Hands kept her occupied for months but it was never finished. She chartered a special liner to carry a pilgrimage under her leadership to the Holy Land. Only a hundred pilgrims turned up. Reporters noted that her once-chestnut hair was now bright gold.

On her return to Los Angeles from the Holy Land at forty it seemed for a moment she was going to make a comeback. Twenty-five thousand Templites scattered roses in her path. Ma Kennedy tipped off reporters that Aimee had had her face lifted and hinted that soon she would "tell all about the kidnaping incident."

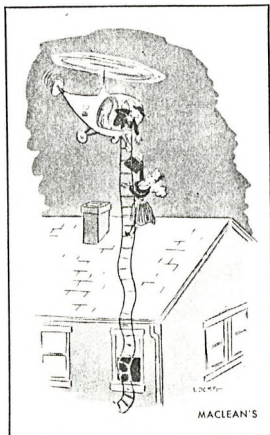
Then Aimee met Dave Hutton, a vaudeville artist. He weighed two hundred and forty pounds, a roly-poly man with cherubic cheeks. "Every woman wants a mate," said Aimee, and married him. They went off to honeymoon in her exotic Moorish Castle, a fourteen-room Christmas cake of a place decorated in gold-and-silver leaf. Two days later Hutton was sued for breach of promise by another woman. He went to the hearing without telling Aimee his mission. When he returned that evening he was angrily shouting: "Five thousand dollars!" Aimee learned this was what he had to pay in heart balm. She fainted and fractured her skull on the steps of the castle piazza.

Later she fled to London again. Hutton wired from Los Angeles: "Don't hurry home, baby. Daddy wants a well woman." But Daddy never saw her again. A year later Hutton got a divorce from her and, supported by the blaze of publicity, set off on a vaudeville tour.

Aimee was now involved in a maze of lawsuits. She faced twenty-five actions in the Los Angeles courts for unpaid bills, broken contracts, overdue promissory notes and a dozen other defaults. Several plaintiffs managed to set aside bequests made to Aimee by deceased relatives, claiming the wills were drawn up when the testators were of unsound mind.

In 1936 Aimee fired her daughter Roberta—who had married in 1930 and given up her duties—from the board of directors. Ma Kennedy plunged into print with the charge: "Aimee has done the same to Roberta as she did to me. Ever since Aimee left home at the age of seventeen she has never been able to keep anybody close to her."

But Ma was overlooking Aimee's son, Rolf McPherson. He remained loyal to his mother throughout. Today,



at thirty-seven, he is father of two children and president of the Echo Park Evangelical Association. He preaches with much less flamboyance than his mother. He lives in a modest two-bedroom home, drives a low-priced car, and is generally well liked. His only sign of ostentation is a seagoing schooner. The Temple has forty-five hundred active members and fourteen thousand five hundred inactive—or radio—members. Five services are still held daily with peak attendance of six thousand on Sundays. There is a Bible college with seven hundred and fifty students. Branch churches in fifteen different countries keep more than four hundred missionaries busy. The association owns real estate valued at nine million dollars.

As World War Two approached Aimee slipped into obscurity. Occasionally she still dazzled women's clubs as when she appeared at one luncheon "gowned in black with flowing chartrreuse, chiffon frills at the elbow, chartrreuse corsage at her throat, white fur and a small black hat set jauntily on her head."

She celebrated her forty-eighth birthday at the Angelus Temple by appearing dressed in red gingham frock and sunbonnet, carrying a milk pail as she had done in her Canadian farmhouse days. She poured out drinks of milk for the front-row worshippers and then took a collection in the empty pail. Then she vanished, reappeared in a stunning white satin gown and preached a sermon entitled My Dear Diary. As late as 1939 she got a big welcome back to Los Angeles from one of her trips. In her hand she was carrying a significant symbol: a bird in a gilded cage.

On Sept. 26, 1944, at Oakland, Calif., after years of news blackouts, and when she was fifty-four years old, Aimee Semple McPherson rode to an open-air Bible meeting in a buggy. To her amazement she found ten thousand people there. According to her son Rolf she was "very keyed up" by this unexpectedly warm reception. Next morning Rolf found her unconscious in her room at the Leamington Hotel. She died the following day from an overdose of sleeping tablets.

Her will showed personal property of only ten thousand dollars, most of which was divided between her children. She left Ma Kennedy ten dollars.

In the moment of her departure from this life Aimee may have found some consolation in the memory that not long before she had given her mother a good punch on the nose. ★

McPHERSON Aimee Semple

PHILEAS J. SMITH
275 North Thames
Ingersoll, Ont., Canada

SAINT OR SINNER

By Robert McKeown
Weekend Magazine Staff Writer

FEW of the figures of the fabulous 1920s were better known than Aimee Semple McPherson. Especially after her mysterious disappearance in 1926, her name was a household word.

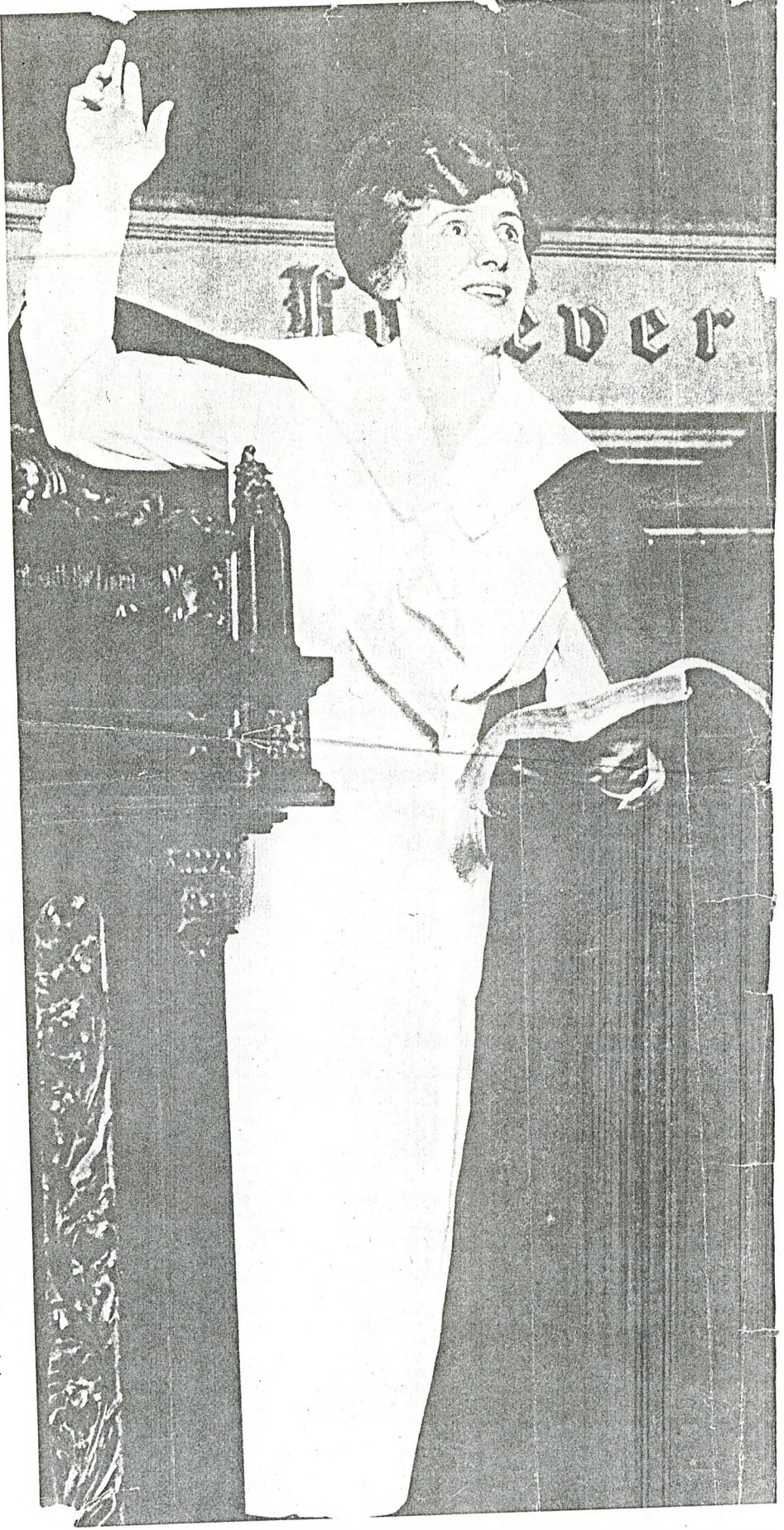
Her rise to the summit of evangelism was rapid. Born in 1890 in a farmhouse near Ingersoll, Ont., she was raised in a Salvation Army family. She was converted by a tall, handsome, travelling evangelist, Robert Semple, who returned later to Ingersoll to marry her. Semple took his bride with him to Hong Kong, where he died of malaria a few weeks before their daughter Roberia was born.

Aimee returned home and married Harold McPherson, a grocery clerk. A son, Rolf, was born of this marriage, which did not last long. (A third marriage in the early 1930s to David Hutton, a singer, also ended in divorce.) Aimee and McPherson parted after she decided to devote herself completely to her religion. She started by washing dishes at a camp meeting in Kitchener, Ont., progressed to making signs for a meeting in London, and held her own first meeting in Mount Forest.

In the years that followed she preached at camp grounds in Canada and the United States, taking her children with her. Her meetings grew until the biggest halls and auditoriums could not hold her audiences. She earned a reputation as a healer and soon hundreds of sick persons were attending her meetings.

Returning from a visit to Australia in 1922, she saw a piece of land at Echo Park in Los Angeles which was a perfect site for the temple she planned to build. The land conveniently came on the market at this time and she bought it immediately. Angelus Temple at Echo Park became her mother church, the headquarters of her rapidly-growing religious movement.

THE EDITORS



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Controversy still surrounds the strange kidnapping story told by the golden-haired Canadian-born evangelist, Aimee Semple McPherson

LOS ANGELES.

It was exactly 35 years ago, on Jan. 10, 1927, that a newspaperman's phone call gave Canadian-born evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson the first word that a Los Angeles court had dismissed charges arising from her alleged kidnapping, eight months before.

Aimee sighed and fainted. Her mother, known in the press as "Ma" Kennedy, dissolved in tears. Somewhere close by her followers struck up the hymn, Jesus Brought The Sunshine In. Within minutes newsboys were selling extras whose headlines screamed "Aimee Wins!"

There was no need to explain who Aimee was or what she had won. No other Canadian and few Americans had ever caught the public interest in the United States as much as she had. For weeks after her strange disappearance on May 18, 1926, her name had been in the headlines. Her equally strange reappearance in the Mexican desert and the court hearings that followed provided sensational daily reading for the whole continent.

The dismissal of the case set off scenes of jubila-



Evangelist extraordinary, Aimee was a sensational preacher (left) with a gift for showmanship. Above, she rests after emerging from the desert.

tion and righteousness triumphant in huge Angelus Temple, the church she had planned and built herself. Tears and confetti fell and "Hallelujahs" filled the air for, as Aimee pointed out, the Lord had confounded His enemies.

"Thank God it's over," Aimee's devoted followers told each other repeatedly.

But it was not over. Thirty-five years after her acquittal and 18 years after her death, Aimee continues to be a controversial figure. Some of the facts of her disappearance, as well as the motivation behind them, remain as much a mystery today as they were in the summer of 1926.

Aimee's flock doubted not a word of the story she told. A man and a woman later to be known as Steve and Rose, lured her into an automobile at Ocean Beach near Los Angeles, asking her to visit a sick child. With another man they over-powered her and pressed a cloth with a sickly-sweet smell to her nose. She awakened in captivity at dawn next day, but five weeks later she escaped from the cabin in which she was held by sawing her bonds against the jagged lid of an opened can and climbing out the window.

Skeptics, with whom the court appeared to side, regarded her story as completely unbelievable. It was, they said, concocted to cover up the fact that she had set up housekeeping with a radio operator in a honey-moon cottage in Carmel, south of San Francisco.

In the pulpit, on radio and in the press, Aimee defended herself against her attackers. Behind them, she suggested, were the overlords of the underworld.

"I have waged unrelenting battle with the bat-like demons from hell," she declaimed "and they fear and revile me as the devil hates holy water . . ."

She wrote her defence in serial form for the newspapers under the title "Saint Or Sinner? Did I Go From Pulpit To Paramour?"

The opposition to Aimee, which included Los Angeles District Attorney Asa Keyes, came to realize that the evangelist was an extremely resourceful person. This was not news to anyone who had watched her rise to fame. Aimee, an uneducated farm girl from Ingersoll, Ont., developed into a woman of magnetic personal appeal who had an amazing understanding of the value of publicity. In a very few years she had progressed from small tent meetings to her own 5,500-seat church and overflow audiences that sometimes numbered as many as 40,000.

Seldom has there been an evangelist, male or female, to match her in showmanship or sheer audacity. She could pack Angelus Temple every night in the week with both the faithful and the skeptical because she put on the best show in town. For self-dramatization she had no equal in Los Angeles, a city with no lack of acting talent.

Aimee did not preach sermons, she produced spectacles which could compete for customers with the vaudeville shows in "the devil's theatres." Her stage sets, costuming, and music were slickly professional — or designedly amateurish, as when she presented an orchestra of two-year-olds. Her own performance could be as banal or benign as she thought the occasion demanded. Vulgarity did not disturb either her or her audience, among whom were many retired country folk from the Midwest. When the time in the service came for people to come forward to be converted, she would cry:

"Ushers, jump to it! Clear the one-way street to Jesus!"

Great tableaux illustrated her services. When the topic was the creation, she debated evolution with an atheist of her own choosing. The atheist, a wizened little man, spoke in the shadow of a gigantic ape. Aimee, in flowing white robes and bathed in a soft light, refuted all his arguments from under the outspread wings of an angel.

Her Life, Death And Eternity, performed on a Sunday in 1927, has been described as the sensation of the season in Los Angeles — a succession of striking scenes, scores of actors, magnificent costumes and a fast-moving pace. For those not fortunate enough to be in the Temple, Aimee provided the commentary over her own radio station, KFSG.

"Say, the rich man was carryin' a big toy house to the door o' Heaven," she would say. "What d'yuh know about that? An' there was an angel stood there, she had grand wings, an' she was holdin' the doors open. Well, the rich man he started to step in, but he wanted to take his fine house along an' he couldn't get it through the door. He tried an' tried, but it stuck. Say, he had to leave it behind, all right!"

AIMEE had been among the first to recognize the promise of radio. Her KFSG was the third station on the air in Los Angeles. Those whose curiosity was aroused by radio helped to swell the throng in Angelus Temple. If they preferred to remain at home they might listen once a week to baptisms on the air, complete with the sound of splashing water.

Researchers had difficulty in discovering how much money was required to build Angelus Temple with its great auditorium, Bible School and living quarters, or the exact source of the money. But Aimee always had found that ". . . there was not one thing which I needed but the Lord quickly sent!"

"Several times when we were wondering how to meet expenses," she explained, "the money came by mail from some child of God to whom He had telephoned."

She realized, too, that the Lord helps those who help themselves. When she needed a new \$5,000 car to replace the previous year's \$3,500 model, her flock provided the money in less than a day. By asking for a large sum first (she usually started with a request for individual donations of \$1,000) she found that there was no difficulty in reaching her objectives. Invariably she pointed out that it was for God's work, not for her own needs, that the money was required.

Aimee did not deny herself the things her followers obviously wanted her to have. She had an extensive wardrobe and wore her clothes well. After her early days of skipping she travelled comfortably and widely.

She had just returned from a tour of Europe and was by far the best-known evangelist in the United States when she disappeared from the beach on a May afternoon in 1926. She had a magnificent church, a growing body of ardent followers, a religious organization that was spreading throughout the continent and a fame that was already well established. Her disappearance produced a day that, from a news viewpoint, was as frantic as the frantic city of Los Angeles has ever known.

Extra editions of the newspapers hit the streets every 20 minutes. There was a new rumor every minute. She had been seen in Winnipeg (how she got so far so fast was not explained), San Francis. . . other cities. She had been kidnapped, drowned, murdered. The local newspapers denied in one edition the news that they had reported in the previous one. Aimee's radio station poured out solace and commiseration to the faithful and to non-believers alike.

MOTHER Kennedy declared, "Aimee is gone. I have no hopes of ever seeing her alive again." She conducted the Wednesday service in an atmosphere charged with emotion. Practical as ever, the grief-stricken mother concluded with an appeal for money to buy a new carpet for one of the Temple's rooms. A Temple guard who dreamed that Sister Aimee was in Buenos Aires foresaw the possibility of her returning from the dead on the third day — an expectation that was not fulfilled.

If it had not been for the intense public interest in Aimee and the efforts of the Los Angeles newspapers to satisfy it (they averaged six pages of Aimee stories a day for a time), it is possible that the whole affair would have blown over without undue sensation. But the vigorously-competing Los Angeles newspapers, The Times and The Examiner, knew a good story when they saw it. Their reporters became a small auxiliary army of detectives investigating every clue that might lead them to discover Aimee's fate.

It was pressure from The Times that caused Keyes, the district attorney, to take an interest in the movements of Kenneth Ormiston, chief engineer at KFSG. He had left his job at the radio station and could not be found at the time that Aimee had sailed on her trip to Europe earlier that year. His wife had visited police headquarters and reported him missing. Mrs. Ormiston told the police her husband had written suggesting she get a divorce and the wife had blamed "a certain prominent woman" for her plight.

Three days after Aimee disappeared, her mother received a telegram which read:

"DAUGHTER O.K. DO NOT WORRY. COMMUNICATION PROVEN. AM SENDING FOR J.A. WHOM I BELIEVE SAFE. DETAIL IN MAIL."

This telegram had been signed in a scrawl transcribed as "DR. MERTON."

Other clues emerged as time went on. A woman who had been out airing her (Continued on Next Page)



Kenneth Ormiston (left) was accused of staying in bungalow above at Carmel, Calif., with a woman claimed to be Aimee. Both denied the charge.

Saint Or Sinner?

(Continued from Preceding Page)

baby recalled seeing Mrs. McPherson talking on the beach to a man. She said that as the man left, the woman she believed to be Aimee had called after him, "Goodbye, Denny, (or Benny)" or something similar. A detective who knew the evangelist by sight said he had seen her in a car with another woman driving toward Los Angeles at about 3 P.M.

The doorman at the Clark Hotel in Los Angeles, who was a member of Aimee's sect, had seen her enter the hotel on the forenoon of May 18. Ormiston, who was a guest in the hotel, had checked out between 3 and 4 P.M. He was easily recognized since he was lame in the left leg and limped.

First it emerged that on May 14 Ormiston had rented cottage at Carmel for three months. He arrived there with a woman companion early on May 19. The couple kept the drapes in the bungalow drawn for 10 days but the neighbors, whose curiosity was aroused, got a good view of them in the back yard. From photographs they identified the man as Ormiston and the woman as Mrs. McPherson. Grocery slips were discovered in what was stated to be Aimee's writing. All of this, however, was to come out much later — after Aimee had turned up in the desert with the story of her kidnapping.

One of the most telling arguments in her favor was the sheer incredibility of the whole tale. It seemed unbelievable that she would risk her career and reputation and then invent so unlikely a yarn to account for her disappearance.

"Perhaps you are skeptical," she told a grand jury in Los Angeles. "I don't blame anyone who should doubt my story because it does sound absurd. But it did happen, ladies and gentlemen. I would not work with one hand 17 years, and, just as I saw my dearest dream coming true, sweep it over!"

There was good reason for Aimee not blaming anyone who did not believe the kidnapping story. Never was a kidnapping performed under a more unusual set of circumstances.

AIMEE, according to her story, was just emerging from a swim at Ocean Park when the woman Rose approached and asked her to come and pray for her sick child who was in an automobile nearby. She remembered nothing from the time she was pushed into the car and put to sleep until she awakened in an old two-story house. Later her captors, who told her they were holding her for ransom, took her by car to a cabin in the desert.

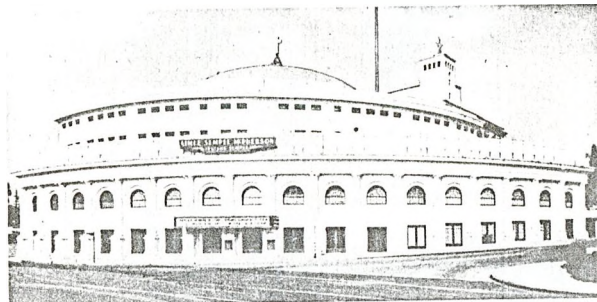
It was from this cabin that she escaped on the first day she was left alone. From 11 A.M. until the early hours of the next morning she walked through the burning desert to reach a house at Agua Prieta, close to the Arizona border. Soon she made a phone call giving word of her safety and reporters, photog-

raphers, newsreel men and radio men flew in by the plane-load to interview her.

The details of the kidnapping which she gave from her hospital bed, and later to a grand jury and a court in Los Angeles, did little to satisfy those who doubted the story — or to shake the faith of those who believed it. Here the mystery remains as deep as ever.

Who were the "Avengers" who signed the ransom notes sent to Aimee's mother? They were never found or identified beyond Aimee's description of "Steve" and "Rose." Certainly there was never a more verbose pair when it came to writing ransom notes. One of the notes ran to more than 600 words and gave a detailed, if most unprofessional, description of how the kidnapping was performed.

And where was the cabin in which she was held captive? Aimee described it as having a wooden floor and oil lamps but, surprisingly, modern plumbing. A



Bob Plunkett
Overflow audiences, up to 40,000, sometimes flocked to Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, Calif., for Aimee's meetings. Temple was built with their donations.

search provided no trace of it. In this area cabin floors were made of clay and there was no modern plumbing. An experienced desert tracker declared he knew every house in the sparsely-populated region within a distance of 150 miles. He denied flatly that the one described by Mrs. McPherson existed.

This view was reinforced by the chief of the Mexican customs guards, whose family owned practically all the land in the region. He was certain there was no such cabin. Aimee suggested later that the cabin was a portable camping outfit or had been destroyed by the kidnapers.

The tracker had been unable to find traces of Aimee's day-long route across the desert. Early in the morning, before there was any traffic about, local police had backtracked from the point of Aimee's reappearance. From reading the tracks the police concluded that a woman had alighted from an automobile and had walked just 175 yards to where Mrs. McPherson had first appeared and called for help.

There is a further mystery; how Aimee survived the day-long ordeal in a broiling sun. She was not sunburned; she explained that she had held her dress up around her head to protect herself. There were no sweat stains on her clothing; she explained that she rarely perspired. Her first request was for a telephone and not a drink of water, as might have been expected; she explained that she was thirsty but not dying for water.

THOUGH Aimee had been in a bathing suit at the time of her kidnapping, she was wearing a watch and even a corset when she was seen in hospital the day after she reappeared. She explained that the kidnapers had provided the corset and she thought her mother must have brought the watch when she came to visit her. Her mother could not recall this.

Aimee returned to Los Angeles to be greeted by a tumultuous reception in the Angelus Temple and a grand-jury investigation in the Hall of Justice. After hearing the evidence the grand jury decided there was not sufficient for an indictment. However, two days later the information about the cottage at Carmel was uncovered. District Attorney Keyes immediately announced that the grand-jury hearings would be reopened to determine if there had been perjury.

What followed was one of the most unusual inquiries in the history of U.S. jurisprudence. An affidavit arrived from Kenneth Ormiston, who had been in hiding throughout the period, to admit that he had been with a woman in the cottage at Carmel. The woman, however, was not Mrs. McPherson. She was a "Miss X" whose name he could not divulge.

Soon a woman appeared who did know the identity of "Miss X." She was Mrs. Lorraine Wiseman, of San Francisco, and she identified "Miss X" as her own sister. She produced an affidavit corroborating Ormiston's statement and promised to produce "Miss X" herself.

One statement made by Mrs. Wiseman was true; she did have a sister, a twin. The latter was a respectable married woman who denied any connection with the cottage in Carmel. She said that her twin, Mrs. Wiseman, had received a head injury when she was young, had delusions of persecution, and was unable to tell the truth. She was also wanted for forging cheques and was soon arrested.

Aimee, who had been in close touch with Mrs. Wiseman and had given her money, complained that she had been viciously misled. It was all part of a plot against her, the evangelist charged.

"Never has anyone been so persecuted as I have been!" she told her congregation. At the Temple she presented a "March Of The Martyrs" depicting the history of persecution through the ages from the crucifixion of Christ to, by implication, her own martyrdom. About 40,000 attended the three Sunday services.

Aimee's sense of persecution must have been matched by Keyes's sense of frustration. He knew that Mrs. McPherson and "Ma" Kennedy had been

working with a lawyer who was trying to produce kidnapers and a kidnap cabin for them, but the lawyer unfortunately had been killed in a car crash. Mrs. Wiseman reversed her field and stated that Aimee and her mother had encouraged her to tell the "Miss X" story. Later she changed her story again and put the blame on one of Aimee's male advisers. But who would accept the evidence of Mrs. Wiseman, whose own sister said she was unable to tell the truth?

One of the most convincing pieces of evidence was provided by the grocery slips at the Carmel cottage, said to be in Aimee's handwriting. These disappeared from the grand-jury room at about the time a woman juror visited the washroom.

CHARGES of corrupting public morals, obstructing justice and manufacturing evidence were laid against Aimee, her mother, Mrs. Wiseman and Ormiston, who reappeared before the case was due to come to court. They were never tried. After a preliminary hearing Keyes decided that amidst all the confusion proof was impossible and asked for dismissal of the charges.

Whatever the effect of the whole bizarre kidnapping episode, it did not undermine Aimee's pulpit appeal. For

18 years after her disappearance she continued to appear before huge audiences in Angelus Temple or wherever she travelled. The religious movement she had started spread to other countries and multiplied its following many times. She died at Oakland, Calif., on Sept. 27, 1944, in the words of a coroner's jury, from "shock and respiratory trouble due to an overdose of barbitol compound (a medicine used to combat insomnia) and a kidney ailment."

No one has unravelled the mystery of her personal relationships. She had no further connection with Ormiston, who returned to radio work. Soon after the dismissal of the case she became estranged from her mother, who left the Temple in 1927, never to return. Her daughter Roberta also broke with her. In her will Aimee left Mother Kennedy \$10 and Roberta, who had married an orchestra leader, \$2,500. Her son Rolf inherited the remainder of her personal property and has carried on as leader of the religious movement. Unlike his mother he leads a quiet life and shuns publicity.

Aimee's later years were anything but quiet. On her birthday in 1938 (she celebrated it as her 46th birthday although her autobiography states it as her 46th born in 1890), the Los Angeles Times said:

"Today is Aimee's birthday. Probably no woman in modern times has had more excitement packed into her life than this golden-haired evangelist . . ."

Up to then she had been sued 45 times in 14 years. An assortment of claimants — from lawyers she had retained to former employees, income-tax officials and customs officers (for failing to declare certain items on return from a trip to Europe) — tried to collect some \$4 million from her. Most suits were settled out of court, dismissed or never came to trial.

Aimee, who preached that there was a literal devil and a literal hell, seemed at times to be plagued by a personal demon which could never let her rest. She could be judged, as District Attorney Keyes said in moving the dismissal of her case on Jan. 10, 1927, "in the only court of her jurisdiction — the court of public opinion."



Mrs. Lorraine Wiseman said she knew who "Miss X" was.



"Ma" Kennedy broke with Aimee soon after episode.



Rolf McPherson, Aimee's son, continued her work.



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**SELEC
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NEUR

McPHERSON, Aimee Semple



VISITING INGERSOLL and area to recapture some childhood memories in visiting her famous mother's friends and to help prepare a documentary on her mother's life, is Mrs. Roberta Salter, right, daughter of Aimee Semple McPherson. Mrs. Salter shows an apple from the orchard on what used to be her grandparent's farm to Mrs. Marjorie McEnaney who is travelling with Mrs. Salter. They were visiting the home of Stanley J. Smith where this photo was taken. (Staff Photo).

"Sentimental" Visit Made By Evangelist's Daughter

By JOHN A. TOMLINSON
Mrs. Roberta Salter, daughter of Aimee Semple McPherson who is claimed by many to be the world's most famous woman evangelist, and who for many years provided front page material for newspapers on three continents, arrived yesterday in Ingersoll.

"I'm re-discovering my childhood here. I guess you could call it a sentimental journey," commented Mrs. Salter. She is accompanied on her visit by Mrs. Marjorie McEnaney, who has been gathering information for a documentary on the life of Aimee Semple McPherson.
Mrs. Salter was born in Hong Kong, one month after the death of her father, Robert Semple. He had gone with his young wife Aimee, as a missionary to China.

Aimee returned to Canada with her child, where Roberta stayed for a number of years under the care of her grandparents. This was at a farm near Salford where Aimee was born and raised. Her maiden name was Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy.

Giving a few recollections of her early life, Mrs. Salter said that she lived on the farm "off and on" for several years, then joined her mother, "travelling in tents from place to place as an evangelist."
"At one time," she observed, "I was a children's preacher—I must have been about 13 then — while mother had the big church."

During their travels together, life was on the rough side and at one time she was stricken by

pneumonia during a 'flue epidemic. At about this time, her mother decided to move to California.

"Mother believed that she should preach to as many as possible," said Mrs. Salter. "When one group had received the word, she felt she should move on to bring it to others." In order to do this, yet remain in one place, she had to find a locale where there was a steady influx of new people. Hence the decision to move to California.

"She was the first woman to drive a car across the continent," said Mrs. Salter. On the long and difficult drive, made in a large seven-passenger car, were Mrs. Salter, then 8½ years old, her brother, Rolf, 6, her mother and grandmother, "Minnie" Kennedy.

Commenting on the church built in Los Angeles shortly after their arrival, Mrs. Salter said the money was raised through one dollar contributions made by her mother's followers.

"Tiny California - orange bags were given - tokens representing bags of cement - for each dollar raised," she said. Called the Foursquare Gospel Church, it has a capacity of 5,000, and was opened on Jan. 21, 1923.

"The church is still going strong, with my brother Rolf in charge," she said.

Mrs. Salter is not connected with the church established by her mother. She is now living in New York City with her husband Harry Salter.

Talking about her visit here, Mrs. Salter said, the people in the area are all wonderful people . . . it's as if I hadn't been away at all."

Those she has met and talked with include Miss Ethyl Page, "A neighbor who went to school with my mother in 1898 — when she was eight years old." She still had an easter egg traded with my mother and an old school photo," Mrs. Salter said.

Mrs. Salter also visited her grandmother's farm, where her mother grew up and where she had spent her early years. It is on RR 1, Salford, and is now owned by Frank Wilson. "There is still a steady stream of people — not so many now as in former years — that come to

see the farm home of my mother" commented Mrs. Salter.

During the next couple of days Mrs. Salter plans to visit more of her old acquaintances and some of the places where her mother preached. "She started her career when she first preached in Mount Forest," she said, "and we'll visit Lindsay where Mrs. Kennedy was born."

Reflecting on the fame of her mother, she said "no one woman has held headlines for longer — about nine months daily when she was reported missing."

SENTINEL REVIEW
October 1, 1963

McPHERSON
Aimee
Semple



1923 1973

50 FACTS

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE
FOURSQUARE GOSPEL

*Received for
Mrs Stanley Oyer
May 6 - 1974*



50 FACTS INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON, FOUNDER

- 1 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON, founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, was born October 9, 1890 on a small farm near Ingersoll, Ontario, Canada, the only child of James and Minnie Kennedy.
- 2 AIMEE ELIZABETH KENNEDY, while a student in high school, attended a revival meeting conducted by Evangelist Robert Semple. For three days afterward she battled with deep conviction until she surrendered her life to Christ at the age of 17.
- 3 AIMEE ELIZABETH KENNEDY was married to Robert James Semple August 12, 1908. In 1910, they went to China to preach the Gospel. Three months after their arrival, Robert Semple died of malaria and a month later their daughter, Roberta Star Semple, was born in Hong Kong. With her six-weeks-old daughter, Aimee Elizabeth Semple returned to the United States and became active in home mission work.
- 4 AIMEE ELIZABETH SEMPLE, after a time alone, married Harold Stewart McPherson of Providence, Rhode Island. To this union was born ROLF KENNEDY McPHERSON, now president of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.
- 5 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON, weary from strenuous labor, settled down to furnish a comfortable home; but the Lord kept knocking at her heart's door with a searching question: "Now will you go?". Then came sickness and two serious operations. For a year she grew weaker; and, more dead than alive, she heard God's words ringing in her ears: "Now will you go and preach the Word?". She answered that call.
- 6 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON conducted a revival meeting in Mount Forest, Ontario, in 1915, which proved to be the beginning of a worldwide ministry. Tent revivals continued until 1918 with people coming in ever-increasing numbers to hear this remarkable lady evangelist.
- 7 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON published the first issue of the BRIDAL CALL in June 1917. Later it became known as the BRIDAL CALL FOURSQUARE, then the FOURSQUARE BRIDAL CALL CRUSADER, the FOURSQUARE CRUSADER and THE FOURSQUARE MAGAZINE. In September, 1964, the magazine received its current name, THE FOURSQUARE WORLD ADVANCE, which has an average distribution of approximately 50,000 monthly.
- 8 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON'S ministry. She made a transcontinental "Gospel Tour" in 1918 to Los Angeles, which became her headquarters. Between 1918 and 1923 she crossed the United States eight times, conducting over 38 revivals, raising funds to build Angelus Temple, now headquarters church for the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. Her ministry became international in 1922 when she ministered in Australia. She later proceeded to carry the Gospel to many nations.
- 9 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON purchased property near Echo Park in Los Angeles and began construction of the Angelus Temple by faith with only \$5,000 cash and God-given building plans on hand. On January 1, 1923, Angelus Temple, valued today at \$1,900,000, with a seating capacity of over 5,000, was dedicated. Mrs. McPherson personally conducted 21 services each week, and the new facilities could not accommodate the multitudes that thronged to hear and see her. Within 4½ months after the dedication, over 7,000 men and women had knelt at the altar in Angelus Temple seeking salvation and 1200 had been baptized in water.
- 10 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON, during her revival in San Francisco in April of 1922, became the first woman to broadcast a sermon. She was accorded this honor by the special invitation of the Rockridge Radio Station of Oakland.
- 11 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON, during the great Oakland, California revival in 1922, was inspired to call her message FOURSQUARE. It was revealed to her as she was preaching on Ezekiel's vision of the four cherubims with four faces, which typified the four-fold ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ; i.e., "THE SAVIOUR of the world," "THE BAPTIZER WITH the HOLY GHOST," "THE GREAT PHYSICIAN AND HEALER of our bodies," and "THE COMING KING OF KINGS." Her message never changed but gained a new emphasis as she proclaimed it under the God-given name of "The Foursquare Gospel."
- 12 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON opened the Bible College on February 6, 1923 in the 120 Room of Angelus Temple. It was moved to the 500 Room in September 1924. The present five-story college and administration building,

adjacent to Angelus Temple on Lemoÿne Street, opened in January 1926. L.I.F.E. BIBLE COLLEGE (Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism) was incorporated December 13, 1937. At present there are four Foursquare Bible Colleges in the United States and Canada preparing men and women for the ministry. Nearly 7,000 men and women have graduated from these training centers and have assumed ministerial places of leadership within the United States and throughout the whole world, and 889 are currently enrolled, preparing for active ministry.

13 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON dedicated the PRAYER TOWER on February 18, 1923, with 368 persons each serving in two-hour shifts every week. Men who covered the night hours drove in from as far away as Riverside, Pomona, and Santa Barbara to take their shifts. The women, likewise, filled the day-time hours. This same vital arm of the organization continues to reach around the world in its never-ending ministry as 13,000 requests monthly still pour through the Prayer Tower from all over the world with resulting miracles and divine answers to united prayer.

14 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON dedicated the three-manual Kimball Organ in Angelus Temple. A silver band, a choir and other musical groups were formed.

15 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON conducted the first session of Vacation Bible School in Angelus Temple in July 1923. Adult Vacation Bible School was added in 1930.

16 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON organized shop workers groups in 1923, and meetings were conducted in various manufacturing plants in the Los Angeles area.

23 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON, in addition to founding, organizing and establishing the parent church, branch churches, Bible College and missionary outlets, authored several books on her Bible-centered doctrines, composed over 175 songs, hymns and 13 drama-oratorios exalting the Lord. Her first opera, "Regem Adorate", was presented during the 1929 Christmas season and subsequent presentations of this and her other sacred operas have drawn scores of thousands through the years.

24 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON was a world traveler for the Gospel, speaking to thousands in many countries, including Royal Albert Hall in London, England. She used every channel known in her brief 54 years to PREACH THE WORD.

25 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON finished her earthly ministry on September 27, 1944 while conducting a meeting in Oakland, California where she first received the vision of the Foursquare Gospel. The memorial service held in Angelus Temple on her birthday was attended by multitudes of people representative of those whose lives had been touched by her ministry. She was laid to rest in Sunrise Slope at Forest Lawn, Glendale, California. Her son, ROLF K. McPHERSON, assumed the leadership of this great organization.

26 INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL operates 11 Christian Day Schools in the United States with a current enrollment of 1,575 and a staff of 136.

27 INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL has a total membership of 230,134. During 1972, there were 131,963 converts, 20,000 new members and an average Sunday church attendance of 205,162.

17 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON dedicated the "House That God Built" first as a home and then as a Bungalow Church on November 16, 1923.

18 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON and ANGELUS TEMPLE were awarded second prize in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade float entry in 1924. In 1925, the Angelus Temple Radio Float won First Prize and was also Sweepstakes winner.

19 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON dedicated radio station KFSG (Kall FourSquare Gospel) on February 6, 1924. KFSG was the first radio station in the United States owned and operated by a church and is the third oldest station in the city of Los Angeles. Today KFSG is an all-Gospel station, broadcasting the Word of God in song and message 24 hours a day, reaching vast audiences in Los Angeles County and surrounding areas.

20 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON opened the "YE FOURSQUARE BOOK SHOPPE" in 1927 and it is still serving the public faithfully as a religious book store.

21 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON officially dedicated the "ANGELUS TEMPLE COMMISSARY" on September 1, 1927, although aid was given the needy from the opening of Angelus Temple. Through the Depression Years, over a million and a half were fed and clothed. The Commissary ministers without red tape, giving spiritual help, food and clothing to those in need, regardless of religion, race or creed.

22 AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON incorporated the INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL on December 30, 1927.

28 ANGELUS TEMPLE YOUTH CENTER was opened and dedicated on September 12, 1951.

29 INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL'S official business is conducted by a Board of Directors, with the Missionary Cabinet and the Executive Council serving in an advisory capacity to the President and the Board. Included in the Missionary Cabinet are the Board, the District Supervisors, the President of the United Foursquare Women's Organization, the President of the Council of Foursquare Men and two members elected by the Convention Body, together with those appointed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors. The Executive Council is comprised of the members of the Missionary Cabinet, such other persons as the President shall appoint, subject to the approval of the Board, as well as District Divisional Representatives and Missionary Field Supervisors. The highest seat of authority is the Convention Body, which alone has the power to make or amend the Bylaws of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

30 INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL has produced two albums of Aimee Semple McPherson's compositions, one a choral arrangement with the Jimmy Owens Singers entitled, "Love Led The Way." The other is entitled "Build For Tomorrow's Sunrise," featuring Mary Jayne, Bill Cole, Lorin Whitney, Linnie Olson and the Jimmy Owens orchestra. An autobiography, "The Life Story of Aimee Semple McPherson," has been published by Word Incorporated of Waco, Texas.

31 INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL has 76 churches in the United States and Canada, divided into 10 districts, with a \$61.7 million property and equipment valuation.

- 32** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL'S Youth Department has 1,032 Crusader groups with a total membership of 13,250. This department conducted 87 camps in 1972 with a total attendance of 11,744.
- 33** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL owns seven camps across the United States, comprising 517 acres located in mountain, wooded, lake and resort areas.
- 34** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL'S Christian Education Department has 63 schools in the "Advanced Training Program" for Sunday School teachers; Sunday School Extension Classes with an enrollment of 1,043; week-day Bible Clubs with 1,119 enrolled; Home Bible Classes having 689 enrolled; classes in jails, rest homes, children's hospitals and release time attendance of 1,004.
- 35** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL has 745 Sunday Schools, with a total enrollment of 73,279. There are 6,393 teachers and 2,257 officers.
- 36** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL conducts Children's Crusades and Revivals. During 1972, 15,893 were in attendance. Vacation Bible Schools had a total enrollment of 15,181.
- 37** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL serves in 29 countries outside the United States and Canada. Ministering in these countries are 101 missionaries from the United States with 91 missionary children, 23 affiliated workers, 18 missionary assistants and 2,763 national ministers.
- 45** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL was the first religious organization in Chile and Guatemala to receive government acclaim for its Christian day school program.
- 46** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL has chartered four of the largest Protestant churches in the country of Colombia, South America.
- 47** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL ministers to North American Indians in four areas of the United States and one area of Canada.
- 48** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL'S organization for women, founded in 1954 and known as the United Foursquare Women (UFW), has a membership of 10,521, divided into 445 chapters. The UFW is a service organization to afford fellowship and service for the women of the church. It promotes activities which benefit the local church and community as well as worldwide missions. One of its most noteworthy projects is gathering, bailing and shipping tons of clothing into needy disaster areas all over the world.
- 49** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL'S organization for men, founded in 1958 and known as the Council of Foursquare Men (CFM), has a membership of 1,573. In 1972 they printed and distributed 1,400,000 pieces of Christian literature in English and Spanish. The CFM makes a definite contribution to the spiritual life of the church by contacting, converting and commissioning men for the cause of Christ. Varied projects such as radio work, visitation, construction of youth camps and maintenance of local Foursquare churches, provide avenues of service to God for all men.
- 38** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL'S missionary contributions in 1972 totaled \$1,242,244.48.
- 39** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL has established 1,343 churches and 1,294 meeting places on the foreign mission field with a total membership of 123,753. In 1972, there were 100,284 converts and 167 radio broadcasts (daily and weekly).
- 40** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL has 30 day schools, 41 Bible schools and 4 orphanages on the mission fields.
- 41** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL was the first religious organization to minister to over 200,000 Stone-Age people of headhunter tribes of the Dunatina Valley, New Guinea.
- 42** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL was the first denomination to reduce the Choco Indian native sounds to a language, and the Gospel of Mark and the Book of Acts have been translated into Indian tongue in the Darien Province Panama.
- 43** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL is the first and only religious organization commissioned by the Bolivian government to minister to the religious, educational and social needs of the Sirionos Indians of Bolivia.
- 44** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL is reported to be the fastest growing Protestant church in the Republic of the Philippines.
- 50** INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL believes the Bible is the inspired Word of God. God is triune, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That man fell through disobedience. Christ died for us. Salvation is through grace. We believe in a daily Christian life; in water baptism by immersion; in the Lord's Supper; in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit; in the gifts and fruit of the Spirit; in divine healing; that the second coming of Christ is both imminent and personal; in the final judgment; in heaven and hell; that the church is responsible to evangelize all nations, and in tithes and offerings to support the Lord's work. Its heartbeat is evangelism. Since its inception, this dynamic has run through every fiber of the church. While each minister readily accepts the full responsibility of adequately occupying, teaching and administering the local church, evangelism retains priority. Winning men to Christ is the foremost reason for its existence.

On the occasion of its Golden Jubilee Convention, celebrated February 21-28, 1973, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel pauses to thank God for what He has wrought in our midst during these past 50 years. We face the future with confidence that the Church of Jesus Christ shall prevail. We believe our organization has been brought into existence by God's divine will and that it has a specific and relevant ministry in today's world of crisis. We believe that Jesus is coming soon for His Bride, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all those who will yield to the Holy Spirit in this hour will be used in mighty signs and wonders during this latter-day outpouring. We believe that God has placed His Name in our midst and that we shall see exploits and apostolic power manifested in the short work before our Bridegroom returns.

We INVITE YOU to join us in worship and participation in this progressive evangelical church. You will find encouragement and spiritual counsel that will meet your needs.

Aimee Semple McPherson once a

By L. N. BRONSON

It is 49 years since Aimee Semple McPherson, the flamboyant, auburn-headed evangelist who came from Oxford County, near Ingersoll, burst into newspaper headlines across the continent. The head of The Angelus Tabernacle in Los Angeles disappeared, was found wandering and reported she had been kidnapped.

But Sister Aimee was a household word in Southwestern Ontario long before that. Early in 1925, a sketch of Mrs. McPherson appeared in a series sponsored by The Free Press, and entitled "Noted Western Ontario Women."

She was included along with doctors, Red Cross, Women's Institute and IOE workers, authors and poetesses as among those who were leaders in their fields.

She was described as unorthodox, modified by the statement "She is not sensational because beyond her refusal to bow down to orthodoxy is her real sincerity and faith."

Londoners had gone to hear her speak at the Angelus Temple—their sex was not given.

Of Aimee's theories of divine cures, one Londoner who had seen her in action said:

"I have personally witnessed some wonderful cures. She believes in the anointing with oil, and incessant prayer is carried on in the watchtower in connection with the temple by her workers, who hold the torch of prayer aloft for 24 hours daily taking turns at their high office."

Another Londoner who had recently visited the temple was quoted in these words:

"Whether or not you believe in revivals and religious emotionalism, you must believe in the sincerity and force of Mrs. McPherson."

"She speaks three times each Sunday and at least once daily. She depends, she tells us, more on inspiration than on preparation."

"Her testimony meetings are inspirational and I myself witnessed one woman who

had been a sufferer from spinal trouble running up and down the aisle and testifying to her cure."

The writer found difficulty in placing Sister Aimee in a definite category. The statement was made:

"Preacher, priestess, prophetess, evangelist — it is not possible to place Mrs. McPherson in any accepted category. But in her shining white temple, built by the toil of human heads and hands in part, but still more in Aimee Semple McPherson's eyes on the sure foundation of prayer, the little girl from the Oxford County farm holds supreme sway, grown now into a queenly and beautiful woman."

"A tall commanding figure and a proudly lifted head crowned with a mass of auburn hair . . . this is the woman evangelist to whom come sick and well, rich and poor, the sailors from the dock, shopmen and maids, actors and artists, the high and lowly alike."

Later it was written: "She is immensely happy

Looking over Western Ontario

and her personality reflects happiness. Her voice is strained from much speaking but its huskiness never fails to carry and is perhaps an added charm."

The article dealt with Sister Aimee's career up until that time.

She was born on an Oxford farm. The former Aimee Kennedy was educated at Ingersoll High School, when in her teens she married her first husband, Robert Semple, a Pentecostal worker and departed for the China mission fields, where death cut short his career.

The widowed Mrs. Semple and a baby daughter returned to Canada. She married a second time and under her new name McPherson be-

came an evangelist touring the United States and Canada.

She finally settled in Los Angeles where her magnificent Angelus Temple was constructed. This was completed in 1923.

By 1925, when The Free Press sketch was published, Sister Aimee—that was an endearing term used by members of her congregation—was nearing the apex of her career. The once-widowed, once-divorced auburn-haired farm girl, had become the continent's best known woman evangelist. "World-famed" was The Free Press term, although it is generally felt now the peak of Mrs. McPherson's career was reached with an overseas visit early in 1926.

The writer — there was no byline — felt the quarter of the story "probably is not yet written".

Much, indeed, remained to be written. On May 18, 1926, Mrs. McPherson went for a swim at a California beach. She disappeared. She was feared drowned.

Five weeks later, Aimee Semple McPherson reappeared along the Mexico-Arizona border walking in from the desert, and saying she had been held captive in a shack. No one was able to locate it, and an opera bouffee grand jury and court proceedings were to follow.

It involved Aimee, her mother, "Ma" Kennedy, Kenneth Ormiston the former radio operator at the tabernacle, Asa Keyes, the controver-

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sial district attorney of Los Angeles county, mystery witnesses, and the sensation-hunting California newspapers of the day.

But nothing was to come of it in the end — the case fizzled out, and there were other stories of the carefree "Roaring 20's" — pre-Depression era — to make the newspaper headlines.

Aimee Semple McPherson continued her career as evangelist. In the 30's, she visited Southwestern Ontario.

One area visit was in Sept. 1934 when Sister Aimee was in Ingersoll and Salford, prior to speaking twice in London. At Ingersoll she recalled the days when she helped take cream from the farm to the cheese factory.

She was described then as an "attractive blonde." While in London she stayed at Hotel London.

In an interview a reporter asked if she believed religion and romance should mix. She replied "Celibacy is not taught anywhere in the Bible."

Her London addresses — afternoon and evening — were at the Winter Gardens, admission was \$1.25. The Gardens on Queens Avenue — site now of the public library — was the scene of weekly wrestling matches at the time. A Free Press reporter recalled this, saying "Sister Aimee got a stranglehold on the devil and threw him in straight falls."

Aimee who told of her life in the district — her first dance, Robert Semple's proposal — also dealt with her kidnapping. She observed "All the nasty things said about me weren't true".

Mrs. McPherson said she really was kidnapped and held captive in a desert hut, adding the attorney who prosecuted her later went to prison himself.

She told of her first evangelical meeting, held at Mount Forest.

Mrs. McPherson died Sept. 27, 1944, in her hotel room at Oakland, Calif. where she had gone to attend dedication

of a new church. A coroner's jury decided her death was due to "An accidental overdose" of sleeping pills.

Subsequently it was revealed her personal property, as designated in her will, was less than \$10,000.

A son by her second marriage was to succeed her as head of the Four Square Gospel Organization, as her church was known by then.

And while Aimee Semple McPherson Hutton (Hutton was her third husband who she married in 1931 and from whom she was divorced in 1934) was being honored in death by her followers, former Oxford associates recalled little Aimee.

She had attended a Dereham rural school, Salford public and Ingersoll high.

One man recalled her as a cute little girl when she was eight, a former schoolmate said Aimee was never a brilliant student.

It was far different from the evangelistic showmanship connected with her career down the years.

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McPHERSON
Aimee
Semple

Aimee Semple McPherson

McPherson

Aimee Semple

Called from milk pail to preach the gospel

By Richard Houghton

"Called from a milk pail on a farm two miles west of Salford, to the preaching of the Gospel from a world pulpit."

These are the words that Aimee Semple McPherson used to open a book of her own personal testimony to God.

The words may sound dramatic, as well they should because the story is true about Aimee Kennedy, who was born in the Township of Dereham and grew up to be world famous evangelist, and founder of a church.

And it has now been 50 years since the young woman from the country near Ingersoll splashed across the headlines of newspapers across the continent after being found wandering in the desert of Mexico.

As Aimee Kennedy she had attended Dereham rural school, Salford Public School and Ingersoll District Collegiate Institute.

She met her first husband when she attended a revival meeting in Ingersoll, and her future husband, a young Pentecostal minister, preached at the revival.

Actually, Aimee attended the meeting only with the intention of scoffing at the worshipping Pentecostals, as she says in the transcript of her personal testimony.

"On our way to a rehearsal we dropped into the revival. I was hunting what amusement the services might provide me and was little prepared for the arrows of conviction which were already aimed at my heart," she said.

"Sure enough, the people said Amen, and Hallelujah, and I tried to smile, but when a tall young evangelist, Robert Semple arose to his feet on the platform and opened the Word of God to preach, all frivolity died from my heart and face".

"He talked as though he really believed the whole Word of God, and declared that Jesus was the same yesterday, today and forever. His message upon repentance and a born again experience, a life free from the world of sin, pierced my heart with conviction."

Aimee Kennedy and the evangelist Robert Semple were married that summer beneath a bower on the lawn of the farm house near Salford, and they went to live in Stratford, where the minister was in charge of a mission.

Later they went on to London to start a mission, and from there to Finlay, Ohio, and in this way started their travels and ministry around the world.

The couple ended up preaching in mission fields in China, where Robert Semple was stricken with malaria.

"Were away down the coast at Macao," wrote Aimee, "when Robert was taken seriously ill, and was carried in a very weak condition back to Hong Kong. Each day he grew weaker, and although I was confident the Lord would heal him, he felt that his work was ended."

"One night at midnight I sat up in bed with a start. Out of the window at the foot of my bed I could see across the great square court into the window, which I knew to be beside my husband's bed. There I saw a bright light burning. A great terror seized upon my soul, as I heard the quick step of the night nurse coming along the corridor connecting the two wards."

"Come quickly, he is sinking fast, were the words that sounded in my ears."

The widowed Mrs. Semple and a baby daughter Roberta returned to Canada, where she married a second time and under her new name, McPherson, became an evangelist, touring the United States and Canada.

She finally settled in Los Angeles where her magnificent Angelus Temple was constructed as well as a home for herself, completely by faith, in 1923.

In her personal testimony Aimee recalls how her home, which she had promised to her daughter, along with a canary came to be built.

It was just before a worship service in the Angelus Temple.

"One evening, just before I arose to preach, a young woman sprang to her feet in the audience, crying, "Excuse me please, but I must say a word. I am only a working girl but I own four lots of land, and the Lord has spoken to me that I am to give one of these lots to Mrs. McPherson that on it she may build a little bungalow for her babies," said the girl."

"Why, praise the Lord, I'll dig the cellar for you," volunteered a stalwart man rising in the congregation. "Yes an I'll help yez," came the voice from an Irishman from another part of the building. "I'm a lather and plasterer, I'll give my services free," offered another. "I'll furnish the dining room," said a kindly-faced man from over there."

"I have not much to offer when compared with these people," said a timid little voice from the rear of the hall, "but I have the sweetest singing little canary bird that you ever heard, and I'll give that for the little girl."

By 1925 Sister Aimee as she was called by the members of her congregation was nearing the apex of her career. The once-widowed, and now divorced farm girl had become the continent's best known woman evangelist.

On May 18, 1926, Mrs. McPherson went for a swim at a California beach. She disappeared, and was feared drowned.

Five weeks later, Aimee Semple McPherson reappeared along the Mexico-Arizona border walking in from the desert, and

saying she had been held captive in a shack. No one was able to locate it, and grand jury hearing and court proceedings were to follow.

INGERSOLL TIMES

February 11, 1976

Aimee was critical of the newspapers of that time, for continually criticizing her.

"The newspapers, anxious for an sensation, picked up what anybody had to say, magnified it to suit themselves and flung it out over the wires."

"At last I grew very weary of all the terrific persecution and

unfairness, and demanded a showdown. The prosecutor hailed everybody he could find into court who had been muttering about us, and the whole business was thrashed out."

Nothing was to come of the case in the end, and other stories moved in to take up the front pages of the investigative newspapers of the roaring twenties.

Aimee Semple McPherson continued her career as evangelist. In the 1930's she visited Southwestern Ontario.

One area visit was in September 1934 when Sister Aimee was in Ingersoll and Salford prior to speaking in London. At Ingersoll she recalled the days when she helped take cream from the farm to the cheese factory.

Of Aimee's theories of divine cures, one Londoner who has seen her in action said.

"I have personally witnessed some wonderful cures. She believes in the anointing with oil, and incessant prayer is carried on at the watchtower, in connection with the temple, by her workers, who hold the torch of prayer aloft for 24 hours daily taking turns at their high office."

Another person who had recently returned from a visit to the temple when Mrs. McPherson was preaching there said, "Whether or not you believe in revivals and religious emotionalism, you must believe in the sincerity of Mrs. McPherson. She speaks three times each Sunday and at least once daily. She depends more on inspiration than on preparation, she says."

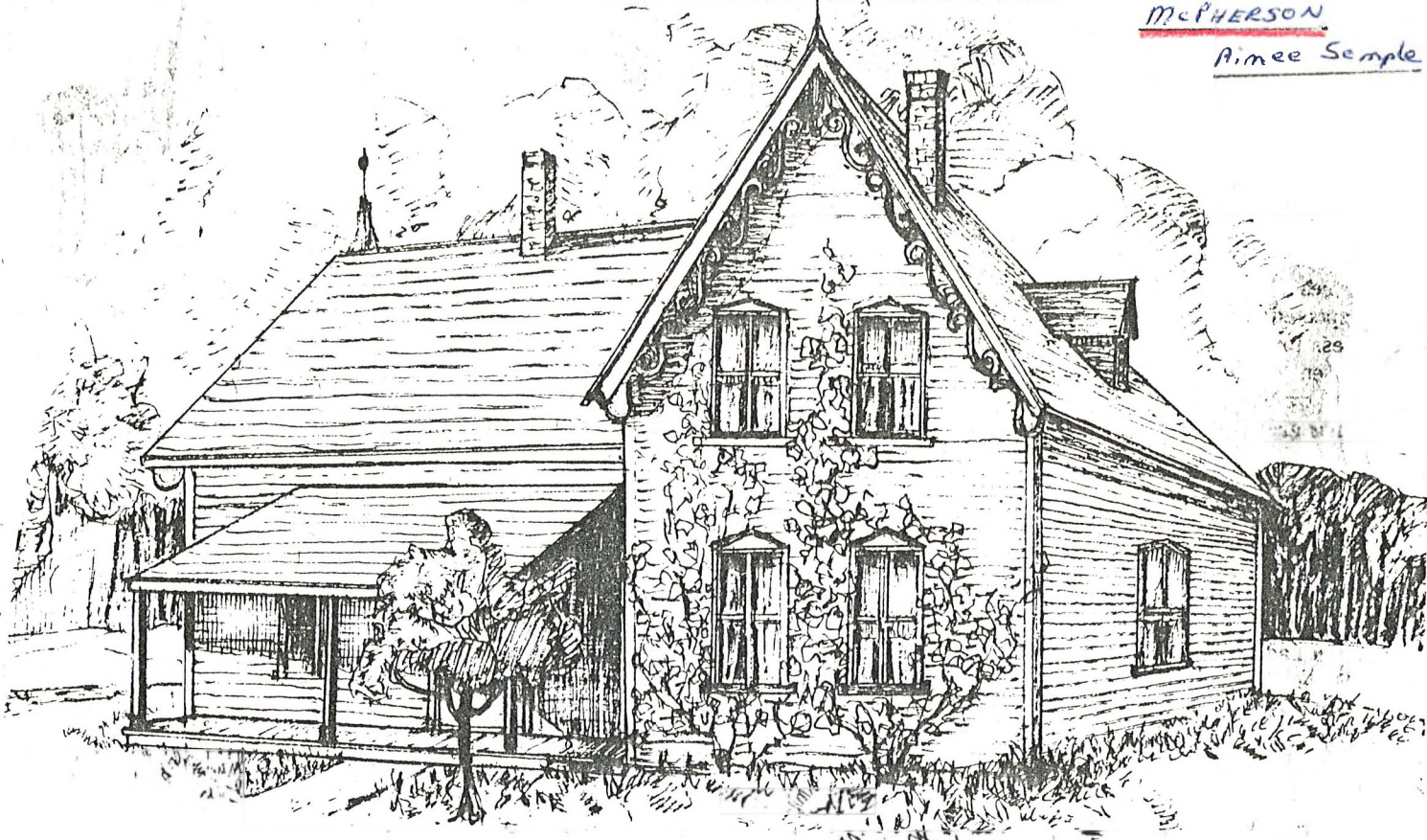
Mrs. McPherson died Sept. 27, 1944 in her hotel room in Oakland, California. A coroner's jury decided her death was due to an accidental overdose of sleeping pills.

Subsequently it was revealed her personal property as designated in her will was less than \$10,000. A son by her second marriage was to succeed her as head of the Four Square Gospel Organization, as her church was known by then.



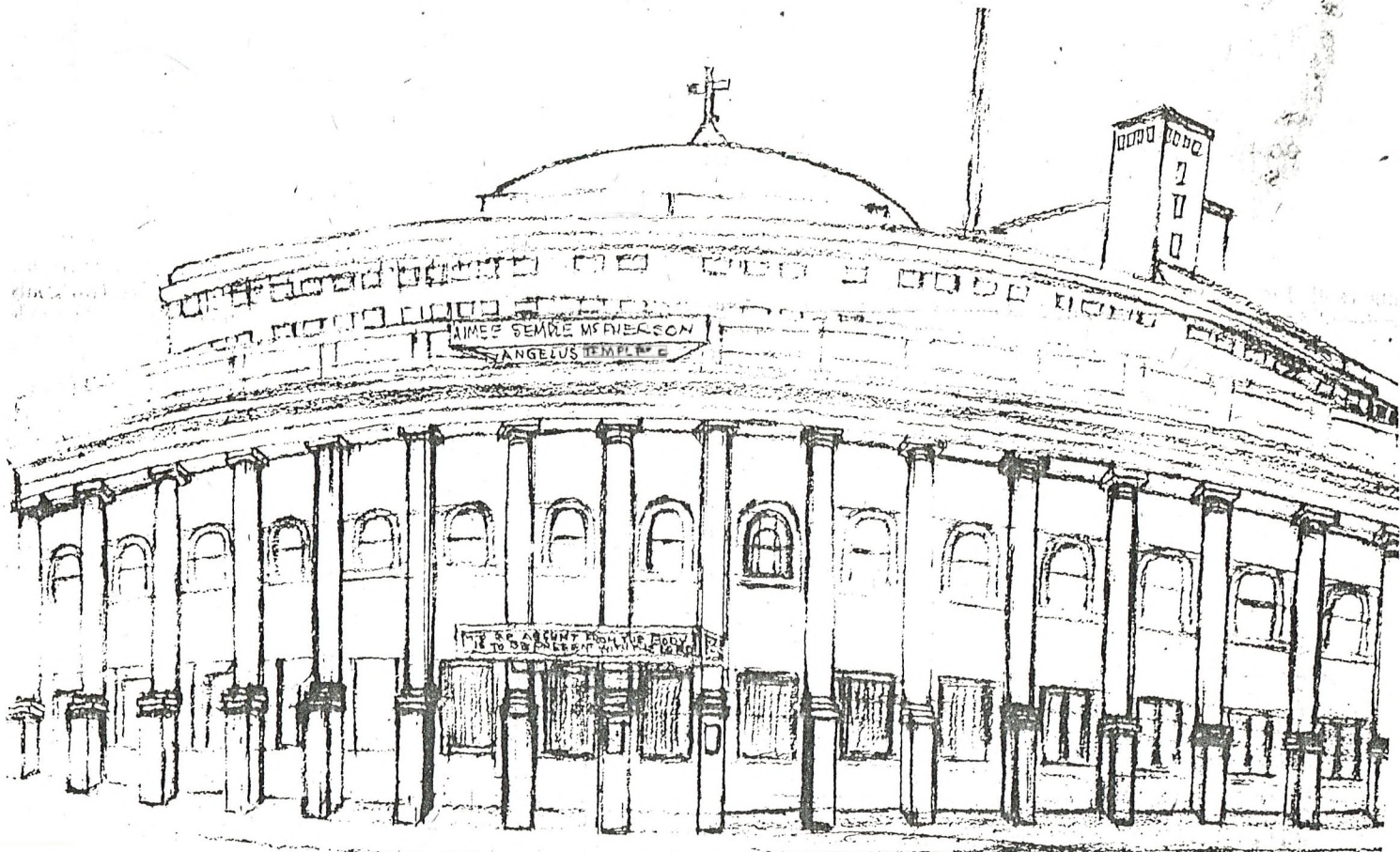
Ingersoll Times
February 11, 1976

McPHERSON
Aimee Semple



This is the house where Aimee Kennedy, later Aimee Semple McPherson was born on September 7, 1890. The house no longer stands, on the spot where she was born about one and one half

miles west of Salford.
(Drawing courtesy of Harry Whitwell).



Aimee Semple McPherson began construction of the Angelus Temple, in Los Angeles, California, with only \$5,000 cash. On Jan. 1, 1923 the temple valued today at over \$2 million with a

seating capacity of 5,000 was dedicated. (Drawing courtesy of Harry Whitwell).

AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON

Popular evangelist during the 1920s had her roots in the Ingersoll area

By JAN TAYLOR

Sentinel-Review Staff Writer

Aimee Semple McPherson was quite a gal.

Born in 1890 and reared near Salford in Oxford County, she became known as the wild woman of religion.

For Aimee Semple McPherson led her life of preaching and evangelism in a way unfamiliar to others in her field, but her following in the 1920s was second only to that of the great Billy Sunday.

Others preached hell-fire and damnation while Aimee, in her loving way, talked of sunshine and goodness.

As a young girl at her home 1½ miles west of Salford, Aimee Kennedy was greatly influenced by her mother's enthusiasm for the Salvation Army in nearby Ingersoll.

An only child, Aimee would preach to the farm animals and created a game called Salvation Army which she played with her friends at school.

KNEW AIMEE

George Nagle of RR 1, Salford attended Salford Public School with Aimee.

"She was an awfully smart scholar," he remembers. "She used to take all kinds of prizes at school."

And although Aimee left the area when young, she left quite an impression on those she knew.

"She had a wonderful personality to meet people," Mr. Nagle said.

Aimee was an ambitious girl. On train rides to Ingersoll while attending the collegiate there, she was not satisfied sitting with other students but spent the time up front talking to the engineer and fireman and learning of other places.

And when she became restless to move out of the area, a blitz selling Sentinel-Review subscriptions made enough money for the ticket out.

But Aimee did not escape before romance entered her life.

A young Pentacostal preacher named Robert Semple came to town for a revival meeting and Aimee, then 17, saw the light.

The two were married on the home farm in Salford six months later and headed to China where Semple felt he had been called as a missionary.

Soon afterward, Aimee was left a widow when her husband died of malaria. His death had a tragic effect on Aimee, for she loved him very much.

A month later her first child, Roberta was born and Aimee returned to North America where she met and married her second husband, Harold McPherson.

He fathered Aimee's second child, a son, but the inspiration her first husband had given her for religion would not leave.

In 1914, Aimee packed up her two children, her mother, a tent in the car and, leaving her husband behind, began a whirlwind tour of revival meetings across the United States and Canada.

Seven years later, McPherson divorced her, saying he would rather never see his son again than have anything to do with the wildcat Aimee.

Through her tours, Aimee became known as a faith healer and throngs of people gathered to hear her speak, no matter the place or circumstance.

DEDICATED TEMPLE

In 1923, she dedicated the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, her now-permanent home, and managed to keep its 5,000 seats constantly filled.

Her worship, called the Foursquare Gospel, was fun and her following continued to increase.

Garbed in a white robe, Aimee would inspire the crowd with her words and the huge choir, brass band and pipe organ which enhanced the services.

Her radio broadcasts from the temple were heard the continent over.

Aimee was famous and the money continued to roll in. She had everything her dreams had imagined. But Aimee was also impulsive.

In 1926, at 35 years of age, scandal reached the high walls and illuminated rotating cross of the Angelus Temple.

Aimee disappeared.

She was sitting on a deserted ocean beach writing a speech one minute, and the next minute, Aimee was gone.

The incident made front page news and thousands gathered on the beach to search for their inspirational leader.

Three people died there while the crowd vainly waited for a miracle appearance. A heart-broken girl committed suicide, a loyal follower fled to the ocean to save Aimee and was drowned and a diver died of exhaustion.

The crowd on the beach dwindled and all hope was lost.

REAPPEARED

But 32 days later, Aimee reappeared, saying she had been kidnapped from the beach by three men. Los Angeles welcomed her as from the dead.

However during her absence, newsmen delving into her disappearance found several unanswered questions and a seed of doubt blossomed leaving some very skeptical about Aimee's reported abduction.

Aimee insisted her case be proven and the alleged kid-nappers be brought to justice.

It was then that the facts behind her mysterious adventure became apparent.

Aimee had fallen in love again.

And although never verified, rumors ran wild that Aimee had actually run away with her former radio station manager Kenneth Ormiston.

Ormiston had disappeared the same time as Aimee. Investigations resulted in eyewitness reports and testimony that the two had spent many a hotel night together and during the month of Aimee's "capture," they were actually at a seaside cottage.

If true, Aimee had broken every rule she had laid down in her Foursquare Gospel.

Ormiston was married and Aimee had proclaimed that no member of her faith could remarry while the former spouse lived.

The facts of the case indicated Aimee had forsaken her religion for her lover, but found it impossible to continue living in sin.

For unknown reasons, the investigation into the sordid details suddenly stopped in 1927.

Immediately Aimee began a rehabilitation tour to regain her following but numbers of believers had dwindled considerably.

For the faithful leader was now burdened with the after effects of a dubious past.

The stock market crash and the Depression that followed turned peoples' attention to other matters. Aimee never again held the eminent position she once had.

MARRIED AGAIN

At the age of 40, she once again found love, this time in the roly-poly Dave Hutton. The two were married for two days before disaster struck again.

Hutton was sued by another female for breach of promise.

When Aimee heard the news, she fainted, cracking her skull. But upon her recovery, she soon divorced her fickle third husband.

Aimee continued on and her faith was still active into the 1940s. The faithful few stood by her at the Angelus Temple but bills, lawsuits and legal affairs poured into her office.

In September, 1944, Aimee spoke to a crowd of believers in Oakland, California.

The next morning, she was found unconscious in her hotel room and soon died.

OVERDOSE?

A coroner's jury decided she had taken an overdose of sleeping pills.

Aimee had gone to glory, the place she had so often spoke of as full of sunshine and love and the basis of her gospel.

Most likely, the decision was her own.

Was Aimee Semple McPherson really the woman newspaper reports indicated? Did she deserve to be labelled

charlatan and hypocrite?

Or was Aimee the victim of circumstance?

No matter, Aimee had turned thousands to her Foursquare Gospel, giving them strength, food, clothing, counselling and a reason for faith.

The religion she began at the Angelus Temple is still strong in many parts of Canada and the United States.

Sentinel Review

November 29, 1976

McPHERSON
Aimee Semple

Community Impressions

Supplement to Tillsonburg News, Norwich Gazette and Ingersoll Times
MAY 25, 1977

INSIDE

Hand in Hand
with Christ

Arts
in Ontario

Farm Scene

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Gardener

Food Basket

TV Listings

May 26-June 1

Flamboyant, Salford - born evangelist is still remembered

BY RIC DOLPHIN

About one and a half miles west of Salford, stands an unpretentious house overlooking the fields and hills in the pretty rural area where it was built at the beginning of the century. At the moment, it is owned by Donna and Wayne Robertson and their young family, but it still bears the name "Kosy Kot" from when Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy and her parents used to live 70 years ago.

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Aimee, the Jazz Age evangelist, was to make her mark in the newspapers and scandal tabloids of the '20s and '30s because of her blantly showbiz approach to preaching the good word. In the pages of such publications, it is hard to distinguish from truth and rumor, but it seems safe to say that Aimee was not the pious creature she would have liked people to believe. She had three husbands, one died, the other two divorced her, and her fair share of affairs.

Byron Jenvey, 96, remembers when Aimee was born on October 9, 1890. He has kept a surprisingly complete record of newspaper clippings and magazine articles, old and recent, dealing with the life and work of Aimee Semple McPherson.

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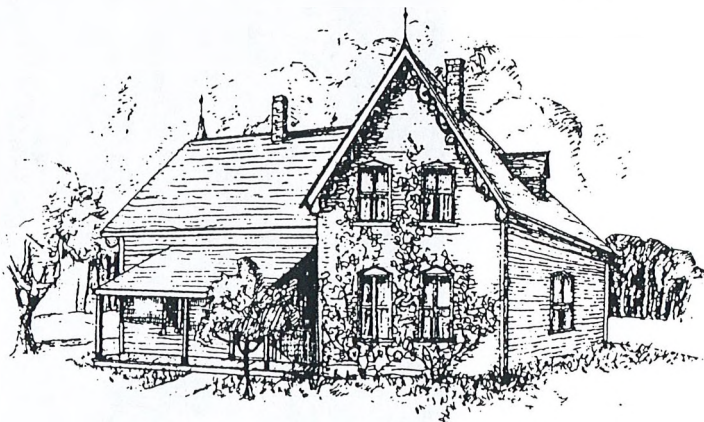
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(Continued on Page 2)



Aimee's birthplace. No longer standing, it was destroyed by fire when Aimee was a girl.

Evangelist still remembered

(Continued from Page 1)
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Aimee didn't approve of the coverage she was getting. "The newspapers," she wrote, "anxious for any sensation, picked up what anybody had to say, magnified it to suit themselves and flung it out over the wires."

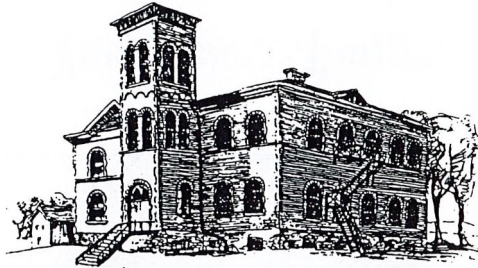
But following this questionable publicity, Aimee's followers increased in number. Aimee married Hutton, but it only lasted three years even though, Mr. Whitwell said, she loved him "right until the very last."

Aimee's faith-healing sessions attracted throngs of people. In nine out of 10 cases, Mr. Whitwell said, the person was cured of the symptoms of

his disease, but in nine out of ten cases, the symptoms returned in a few days.

Following her death, or as a Foursquare Gospel propaganda booklet says "finished her earthly ministry," she was

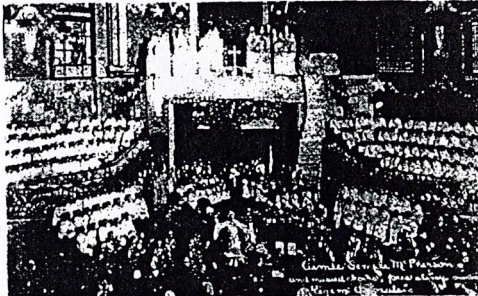
buried in an ornate marble sarcophagus after a spectacular funeral in keeping with the revival meetings she was renowned for. She was 53 and had only \$10,000 left to her name.



The old Ingersoll Collegiate where Aimee attended her senior years in school. Drawings courtesy of Harry Whitwell, Ingersoll.



The school where Aimee spent her early years. It no longer stands. A new school was constructed in the '20's.



The interior of the Angelus Temple, Los Angeles. It is valued today at two million dollars. It was built almost entirely from donations.



Kosy Kot, the house Aimee's father built after fire had destroyed the first. It originally had a wooden fascia. It is situated one and a half miles west of Salford.

LIFE...
Community Imp...
May 25

Flamboyant, Salford - born evangelist is still remembered

BY RIC DOLPHIN

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Of course in her later life, Aimee went a lot further than banging a tambourine. Her tactics were embodied in such incidents as stopping the traffic on main streets and preaching to the drivers, distributing pamphlets from the air, converting prostitutes in brothels and putting on a really big show at the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles with spotlights, loudspeakers, scarlet robes, a monster Bible and, as Aimee puts it in one of the two autobiographies she wrote, "incense, nonsense and sex-appeal."

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Times May 25 '77

Flamboyant - remembered

McPHERSON
Aimee Semple

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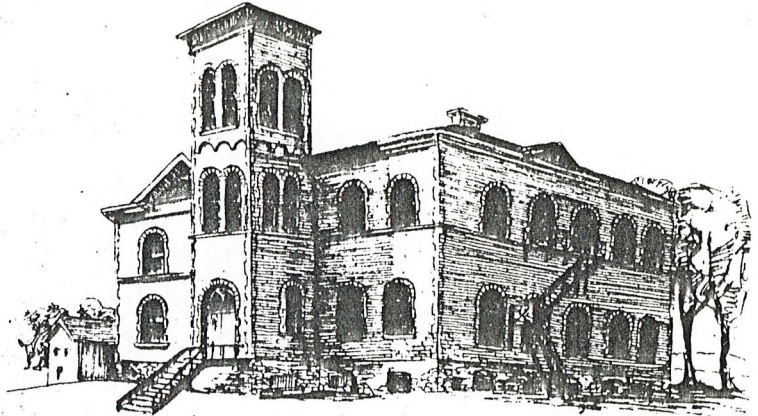
But following this questionable publicity, Aimee's followers increased in number. Aimee married Hutton, but it only lasted three years even though, Mr. Whitwell said, she loved him "right until the very last."

Aimee's faith-healing sessions attracted throngs of people. In nine out of 10 cases, Mr. Whitwell said, the person was cured of the symptoms of

his disease, but in nine out of ten cases, the symptoms returned in a few days.

Following her death, or as a Foursquare Gospel propaganda booklet says "finished her earthly ministry," she was

buried in an ornate marble sarcophagus after a spectacular funeral in keeping with the revival meetings she was renowned for. She was 53 and had only \$10,000 left to her name.



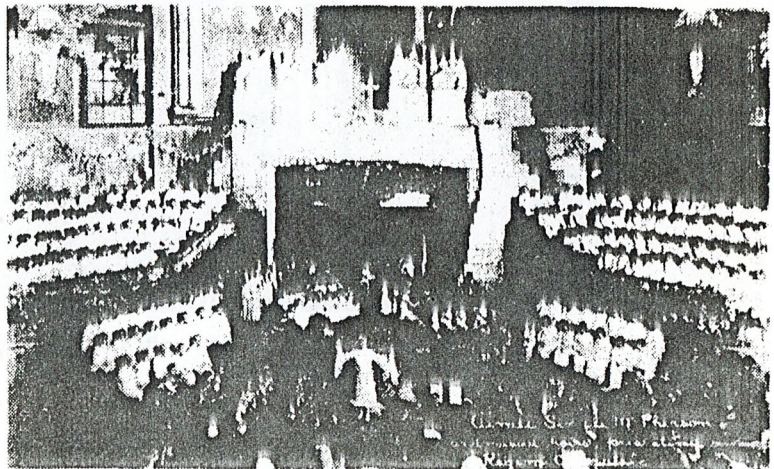
The old Ingersoll Collegiate where Aimee attended her senior years in school. Drawings courtesy of Harry Whitwell, Ingersoll.



The school where Aimee spent her early years. It no longer stands. A new school was constructed in the '20's.

INGERSOLL TIMES

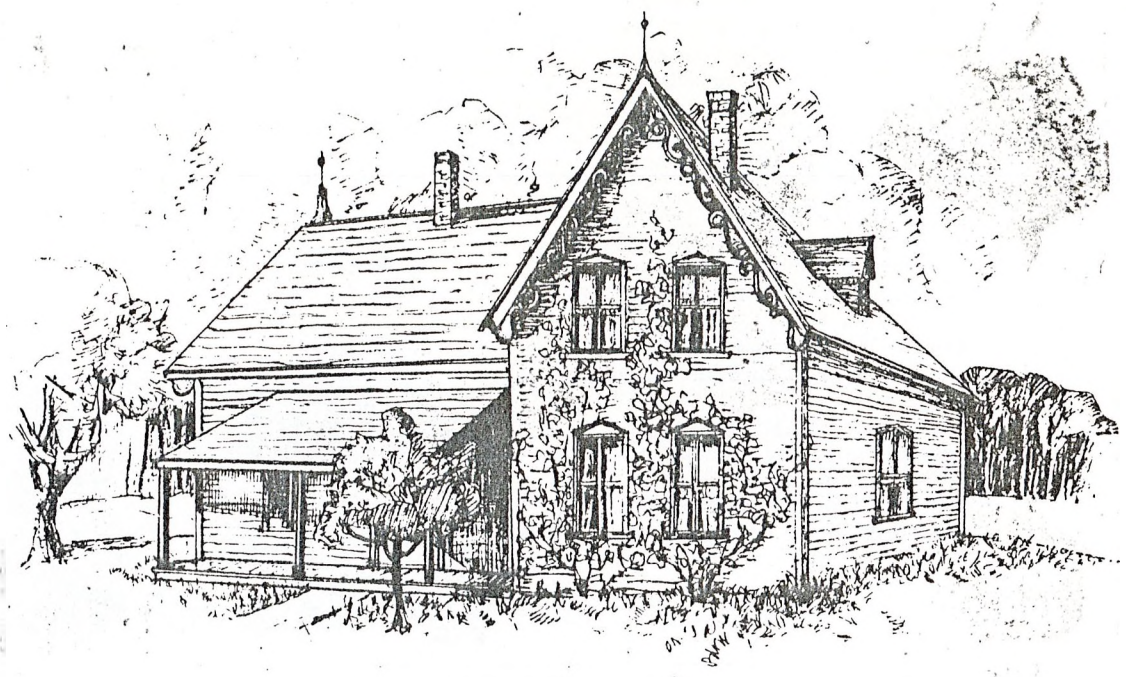
May 25, 1977



The interior of the Angelus Temple, Los Angeles. It is valued today at two million dollars. It was built almost entirely from donations.

Illustration of Aimee's Birthplace

Ernest Jones
May 25 '77
"Clamboyant - remembered"



Aimee's birthplace. No longer standing, it was destroyed by fire when Aimee was a girl.



Kosy Kot, the house Aimee's father built after fire had destroyed the first. It originally had a wooden facia. It is situated one and a half miles west of Salford.

Flamboyant evangelist remembered

BY RICK DOLPHIN

About one and a half miles west of Salford stands an unpretentious house overlooking the fields and hills in the pretty rural area where it was built at the beginning of the century. It still bears the name "Kosy Kot" from when Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy and her parents lived about 70 years ago.

Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy was to become Aimee Semple McPherson, the most noted female evangelist the world has probably ever known.

Aimee, the Jazz Age evangelist, was to make her mark in the newspapers and scandal tabloids of the '20s and '30s because of her blantly showbiz approach to preaching the good word. In the pages of such publications, it is hard to distinguish from truth and rumor but it seems safe to say that Aimee was not the pious creature she

would have liked people to believe. She had three husbands, one died, the other two divorced her, and her fair share of affairs.

The late Byron Jenvey remembered when Aimee was born October 9, 1890. Mr. Jenvey kept a surprisingly complete record of newspaper clippings and magazine articles, old and recent, dealing with the life and work of Aimee Semple McPherson.

He described her as "a nice looking girl with reddish hair and with lots of vitality in her." He remembered a speaking contest which she entered while attending the old Ingersoll Collegiate. Did she win? "You bet she won," Mr. Jenvey said.

In an interview with Mr. Jenvey in May 1977, he would not reveal any of the tales of Aimee that used to fly around Ingersoll, saying "I remember quite a few stories but they're not fit to print."

Aimee was suppose to have been an excellent athlete, swimmer and horse-woman with a penchant for exhibitionism that made her entirely suited to evangelical preaching. The young Aimee wanted to be an actress but was magnetized to the Gospel when she saw a young preacher called Robert Semple preaching in Ingersoll.

Robert Semple was an Irishman, standing six foot two.

This was the embryonic start of Aimee's life that would take her all over the world. She married Robert Semple on the back lawn of Kosy Kot.

Aimee's mother Margaret, was probably relieved to see her daughter finally legitimize her relationship with Semple as there had been tongues of gossip wagging.

Margaret Kennedy was a Salvation Army woman described by Mr. Jenvey as "a big, stout English girl." It is said Aimee hated her domineering mother but loved her father, James Kennedy, who was a quietly religious farmer and Bible scholar.

Although Aimee would probably have been loathe to admit it later in life, she had inherited some of her mother's evangelical zeal. Her mother was an outspoken proponent of the Salvation Army and used to bang her tambourine at revival meetings in Ingersoll.

Of course in her later life, Aimee went a lot further than banging a tambourine. Her tactics were embodied in such incidents as stopping the traffic on main streets and preaching to the drivers, distributing pamphlets from the air, converting prostitutes in brothels and putting on a really big show at the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles with spotlights, loud speakers, scarlet robes, a monster Bible and as Aimee put it in one of the two autobiographies she wrote, "incense, nonsense and sex-appeal."

Aimee's early life was spent living in the farm house near Salford. The house she was born in was destroyed by fire and Kosy Kot was erected on the same property. Originally finished with wood slats, the house now has a brick stucco finish. The old apple tree Aimee used to play on has blown down but even when it was lying on the ground, souvenir hunters would come to get a piece of the holy tree.

Her life with God took Aimee first to mission houses in Southwestern Ontario and later to China with her husband, on missionary work.

McPherson, A.S.

Semple died of malaria and Aimee was left with a daughter Roberta, who is still alive.

On her way back from China, Aimee preached to the people on the boat and received donations of food, clothing and money. From this experience she learned her preaching for dollars. Accepting donations never humiliated Aimee.

Shortly afterwards, she met a young grocery clerk, Harold McPherson. Seeing the assurance of three meals a day in this unob-

trusive man, Aimee Elizabeth Semple became Aimee Semple McPherson, the name she was to keep until she died from an overdose of sleeping pills in an Oakland, California hotel room in 1944. Her son from McPherson, Rolf, is now the boss of the Foursquare Gospel.

McPherson couldn't keep pace with Aimee's scooting around America in a beat up jalopy and preaching in an old tent. He divorced her in 1921.

Ingersoll Times
July 22, 1981.

McPherson, A.S.

Aimee's fame and to a certain extent her family, increased after McPherson left the scene. While others preached hellfire and damnation, Aimee's approach was more saleable; she talked of sunshine and goodness and put on a show that outshone vaudeville.

At the time of the divorce, McPherson said he'd rather never see his son again than have anything to do with the "Wildcat Aimee."

It was said Aimee had a spell binding presence and an uncanny sense of timing with the collection box. Indeed, the 5,000 person capacity Angelus Temple, today valued at about \$2 million, was built with donations of money and labor from Aimee's enraptured congregation - she started with just \$5,000 cash.

Aimee preached the virtues of purity while she drank champagne and had face lifts. She pleaded for universal brotherhood but kicked Roberta out of her

house and sent her to live with her mother.

Then came the scandal. Aimee fell in love with the voice of the man who was the loud speaker announcer for her services. His name was David Hutton. He was married but he and Aimee were supposed to have spent many a night together.

The pressure was on from the tabloids of the day and also from Aimee's mother. It was then that Aimee decided to disappear.

On a crowded beach she went for a swim. A person in a boat who is suspected to have been in cahoots with Aimee, reported that he'd seen her disappear.

For five weeks Aimee could not be found. One devout female follower committed suicide in her anguish.

Finally Aimee was discovered, after a spectacular funeral had been held, wandering along the Mexico-Arizona border and claiming to have been kidnapped and held in a shack. The shack was never located and it is suspected she spent the five weeks with Mr. Hutton.

What followed was a legal

battle which proved fruitless but which provided the newspapers with the sensational copy they craved.

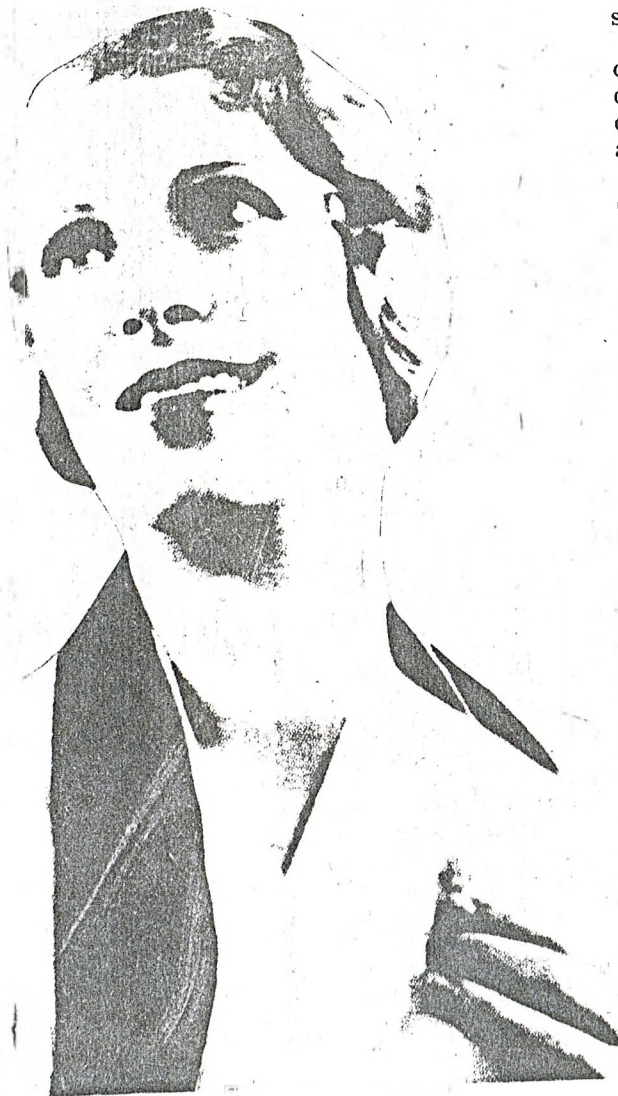
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AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON

Aimee puts Ingersoll on the map again!

In far away Prince Edward Island, the Charlotte-town Festival opened a new musical July 3 titled Aimee! The show is about none other than the famous evangelist from Ingersoll, Aimee Semple McPherson. It has received rave reviews from a number of newspapers and stars Maida Rogerson as the self-proclaimed woman of the church.

The musical hit also stars

Elizabeth Mawson as her mother and William Hosie as Kenneth Ormiston, a man with whom she apparently spent a period of her life in a seaside love nest. Alan Lund is festival artistic director.

Co-authors of the musical, Patrick Young and Bob Ashley, claim their show is not a documentary, but follows what is generally known about the Ingersoll area native.

AIMEE:

She didn't
practise
what she
preached

By JANICE VANSICKLE
Sentinel-Review Staff Writer

If Aimee Semple McPherson had practiced what she preached, her life story would have meant little to historians.

But her Jekyll and Hyde existence made her one of North America's most prominent headline grabbers, not only throughout the sensationalistic roaring '20s, but until her death in 1944.

A biography compiled by Ed Bennett, president of the Oxford Historical Society, depicts the Salford native as a self-styled evangelist, who, although thrice married preached against marriage after divorce.

But the hypocrisy was only part of a torrid life-style that reaped Aimee Semple McPherson huge profits through mass soul-saving.

In a presentation of the biography to members of the society, Wednesday night, Bennett revealed how a local farmer's daughter became the world's most famous woman evangelist.

SALFORD NATIVE

Brought up on Bible stories instead of fairytales, Mrs. Semple McPherson was born to James and Minnie Kennedy on Oct. 9, 1890 at a farm one mile west of Salford.

A model student with a Salvation Army background, Mrs. Semple McPherson was a natural leader, popular with her fellow students.

But her education came to an abrupt end at the age of 17, when she met a travelling Pentecostal teacher who was to become the first of her three husbands.

Her marriage to Robert Semple in 1907 lasted two years, ending with his death while living in China.

Left with a small child, Mrs. Semple McPherson learned of her oratorical prowess while panhandling her way home from the Orient.

Practising the art of collection taking, she learned to live on whatever the tongue could extract.

MARRIED GROCER

On her return to the United States she married Harold McPherson, a grocery clerk, who fathered her son Rolf.

That marriage, too, was short-lived when Mrs. Semple McPherson packed up her two children and, along with her mother, Minnie, set out as a travelling revivalist.

As her talents matured, the troupe headed west, arriving in Los Angeles in 1918.

A week after her arrival, she was able to fill an auditorium capable of seating 3,500.

In 1921 she went to San Diego, a trip that opened the door to fame.

While Mrs. Semple McPherson was speaking at an outdoor rally, a crippled woman

rose from her wheelchair and made her way to the platform.

Others, followed and Mrs. Semple McPherson became known as a faith healer.

With her fame drawing more attention than the Charleston, she was able to dedicate the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles in 1923.

HUGE STRUCTURE

A huge, ugly structure, topped with a large, rotating, illuminated cross, the Angelus Temple was built from \$1,250,000 donated by followers.

Mrs. Semple McPherson, famous for putting on a good show, became known as Sister Aimee, keeping the 5,000 seat Angelus Temple full.

Her services were described as "supernatural whoopee" complete with a huge choir, brass band and pipe organ.

Her service also included such special effects as thunder, lightning and wind.

The temple also housed a "miracle room" where crutches, wheelchairs and braces were abandoned after faith cures.

A broadcasting station sent her sermons around the world. And the operator of the temple radio station, Kenneth Ormiston, a married man, became her lover in an affair that eventually led to a decline in her career.

During their romance, Mrs. Semple McPherson disappeared during a swim in the ocean.

BELIEVED DROWNED

It was believed that she had drowned. Thousands of followers camped on the shore, with one girl committing suicide. Two men also met death trying to find her body.

Despite the discovery by officials and newsmen that Ormiston disappeared at the same time, her mother believed the drowning story.

Even though she received a telegram saying her daughter was safe, Mrs. Kennedy reiterated the drowning theory nightly at the temple.

On June 4, 1926, Mrs. Kennedy turned a "ransom note" over to police, although she had received it on May 25.

Yet, June 20 Mrs. Kennedy presided over a memorial service for her daughter, netting \$36,000.

One June 23, Mrs. Semple McPherson phoned her mother to say she was safe after escaping from kidnappers who supposedly held her in Mexico.

While the truth has never been known, Mrs. Semple McPherson stuck to her story despite evidence that she and Ormiston had been together in a seaside cottage during the month she claimed to have been held captive.

The ensuing publicity and legal battles turned Mrs. Semple McPherson from an evangelist



Aimee Semple McPherson, photographed on a visit to Ingersoll in September, 1934 with Ingersoll reporter J. Ferris David.

to a defender.

SELLING STORY

She set out on a rehabilitation tour, but she spoke to half-filled auditoriums. She was not out to save souls but to sell her kidnapping story.

The next few years presented a rocky road as she broke ties with both her mother and daughter, Roberta.

She also became involved in a series of promotional schemes, such as, "buy a grave and go with Aimee," that resulted in a tangle of lawsuits.

In 1931 she married again. Her third husband was David Hutton, a baritone in the temple choir. The marriage ended in divorce in 1934, with Mrs.

Semple McPherson vowing to never marry again.

In September, 1934, during a revival tour, she returned to Ingersoll and Salford for a visit.

Over the next few years she experienced sessions of illness but continued her work during periods of good health.

In January, 1944, however, it was rumored she might retire and she appointed her son permanent vice-president of the temple.

In September, 1944, while in Oakland, Calif. to dedicate a new branch church of the temple, she was found dead, by her son, the morning after giving a dedication service.

The coroner's verdict was an

accidental overdose of barbitual compound.

Her body laid in state for three days and 50,000 mourners passed before the bier. The cost of floral displays was estimated at \$50,000.

Six hundred cars made up the motorcade to Forest Lawn Memorial Park, where she was buried.

She was buried on her 54th birthday.

But the Angelus Temple continues on today under the direction of Rolf McPherson.

It has continued to grow and in 1970 property value alone was estimated at \$59,000,000. Membership in 1969 stood at 193,000.

'Hi-de-hi-de-hi-de-ho'

'Aimee McPherson that wonderful person'

By GREG ROTHWELL
Sentinel-Review staff writer
"They say it's going to be rough, but don't you believe it. If you have peace in in your hearts your stomachs will look after itself, and remember if you do feel queer - sing. There's nothing like it."

....The evangelist "Mrs. Melrose Ape" in Evelyn Waugh's Vile Bodies.

Six hundred cars made up the motorcade enroute to Forest Lawn Memorial Park the day Aimee Semple McPherson was buried.

The date was Oct. 9, 1944 - Aimee's 54th birthday.

The woman who had risen from a farm girl in Oxford County to become the first, and greatest, woman evangelist of all times south of the border had succumbed to an overdose of sleeping tablets, but a generous coroner allowed that the act may have been just as accidental as self motivated, and so her so the faithful were allowed to believe what they would, just as they believed what they would of the scandal in her lifetime which showed the vulnerability of those who have been made larger than life itself.

Her story was one of the most colorful in a color filled era, the Roaring 20s. The tale remains a fascinating one, as those who have been a new musical at the Charlottetown Festival, entitled simply Aimee!

Sister Aimee never really forgot her home, in 1934, eight years after her piety was tarnished by revelations of her extracurricular activities, during a revival tour she paid a visit to Ingersoll and Salford.

For it was on a farm located just a mile west of Salford that she was born, on Oct. 9, 1890, to Minnie and James Kennedy.

Woodstock historian Ed Bennett, in a biographical paper he prepared for the Oxford Historical Society in 1978, said young Aimee learned Bible stories like other children learned fairy tales. "By the time she was five," Bennett said, "she



AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON, despite everything that happened in her life never forgot her roots at the Oxford County farm. This picture of her was taken in 1934, with Ingersoll Chronicle reporter J. Ferris David.

'Where the liquor was expensive and the lovin' was free'

'And the dents in the mattress fitted Aimee's caboose'

Heads from the song
Aimee McPherson
as sung by
Pete Seeger

SENTINEL REVIEW
August 24, 1981

'The grand jury started an investigation'

could recite whole chapters of the Old and New Testament."

When it came time for her education, proved a good student at both the Salford Public and Ingersoll High schools.

But her schooling ended when she was 17; she had met a travelling Pentecostal teacher, Robert Semple. He would be the first of her three husbands.

The marriage lasted for two years, until 1909, when he was left her widowed in China a month before the birth of their daughter, Roberta.

It was the trip home from the Far East that gave her practical experience for her future life - she learned that she needed a quick tongue to panhandle her way back to the United States.

She married again after her return home, to Harold McPherson, a grocery clerk. That marriage lasted until 1921, when McPherson

'Uncovered alot of spicy information'

charged desertion. Before that Aimee had acquired the preaching instinct.

With her mother and two children she set out with a tent and car as a revivalist on the roads along the American east coast. In 1918 she was in California for the first time. Within a week of her arrival in the City of Angels, Los Angeles, she had filled to capacity a 3,500 seat stadium.

It was in San Diego, Cal., in 1921 that she was to receive the mantle of fame. At an outdoor revival rally a crippled woman arose from her wheelchair and tottered toward the platform. Hundreds of other "faith healings" followed.

On the first of January, 1923, Aimee dedicated the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles.

Bennett aptly describes the round temple, on L.A.'s Glendale Boulevard as "an ugly structure, topped by a

large rotating illuminated cross visible for 50 miles."

But the building had been constructed with \$1,250,000 in donations from

'Found out about a love nest down at Carmel-by-the-sea'

her legions of followers. The 5,000 seats were always filled.

With a vulgarity which no doubt would have warmed the hearts of such cynics as H.L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis, the temple boasted a "miracle room," which housed wheelchairs, braces and crutches from those whose faith had supposedly healed them.

Hollywood director Busby Berkeley must have taken a cue from her in is 1930s extravaganzas, with their music and hoopla which lead one critic to note that it all added up to "supernatural whoopee."

It was making whoopee outside the Temple though

that brought Aimee into disgrace.

By 1925 she had reached a pinnacle. But she had been divorced for four years and, as Bennett said, was a "lonely, vulnerable woman."

The man who came into her life was Kenneth Ormiston, who operated the Temple's radio station.

Using a term much admired by the tabloid press of the time, she and Ormiston retreated to a "love nest" at Carmel-by-the-sea.

It was the complications of that rendezvous however that lead to problems.

Having preached that a divorced person could not remarry while his or her spouse were living, her affair made things difficult.

To facilitate the circumstances in which to carry out the romance away from the public eye, she disappeared. Last seen by her secretary sitting in a swimsuit on the beach at Venice, Cal., it was presumed that she had drowned.

Her followers came in droves to the seaside to pray for her, while boats searched the waters. One young grief stricken woman did herself in; a man who said he was "going in after her",

drowned; and a diver died when overcome by exhaustion.

Suspicious became to come to light when officials and news people found that Ormiston had disappeared about the same time. Her mother, however, stood firm in her believe that her daughter had drowned, and on June 20, 1926 she presided over a memorial service which brought in \$26,000.

Thirty-two days later Aimee reappeared in Mexico.

She told the police that she had been kidnapped from the beach, and while skeptics noted that it was strange that there were grass stains on

'The slats was busted and the springs was loose'

her shoes since she proclaimed she had been taken across the desert, the faithful were just happy to see her return.

For reasons known only to herself, Aimee did not allow the incident to blow over. She insisted that her kidnappers be captured and tried, a move which proved to be her undoing. The evidence gathered overwhelmingly showed that she had indeed been with Ormiston at a seaside cottage during the month of her alleged kidnapping.

It was not the end of Aimee Semple McPherson and her Foursquare Gospel however.

She again set out on the revival trail, but found that in cities where once people thronged to hear her, seats were half empty. The onset of the Depression also turned people's minds to other concerns.

In 1931 she married a third time. David Hutton was a baritone in her choir, but the pair squabbled and were divorced three years later.

Although she was plagued

by unpaid bills, broken contracts was false arrests, the faithful stood by her. By the 1940s her Temple services remained a show to see.

When she died of the drug overdose on Sept. 27, 1944 she was far from forgotten.

More than 50,000 people passed by her coffin as her body laid in state for three days.

In a letter in last Saturday's Globe and Mail, in response to a previous letter about the Charlottetown play, David Cobb of Toronto wrote: "It's impossible to believe that Aimee - beautiful, charming, magnetic - would have been obscure even if she'd spent her life studying the mating habits of the glowworm instead of being constantly enmeshed in her own."

From farm girl to famous evangelist

BY MIKE WALSH

Aimee Semple McPherson created a sensation wherever she went

One of the world's most noted female evangelists came from the Ingersoll area, she was Aimee Semple McPherson.

Born October 9, 1890 on a dairy farm located about a mile and a half west of Salford, Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy was the only daughter of James Morgan Kennedy and Minnie Peirce. Brought up with a strong religious background, Aimee, in her autobiography, 'The Personal Testimony', recalled her early childhood as being "associated with good, old fashion hymns and Bible stories. Daniel in the lions' den, the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, and other Bible stories were so interwoven in my life that by the time I was five years of age, I could have repeated them word for word as they had been told to me."

Ingersoll in those days had a population of about 1,000 and had seven churches with the largest and most prominent being the Methodist church. Aimee's father attended this church but her mother, known to everyone as "Happy Minnie" was brought up by a Salvation Army couple. Therefore, she continued to follow this denomination. Records don't indicate what church Aimee attended.

Bibliography accounts indicate Aimee as being imaginative and outgoing in Public School and credits her wit and courage for allowing her to make friends at the Ingersoll High School. In fact, she was so well liked, she was the winner of a popularity contest.

She's described as being athletic, intelligent, beautiful, and well-liked, although her aggressive behaviors and high ambition set her apart from other girls.

At one stage in her life Aimee had desires of becoming an actress but this changed when she was 17. One evening, prior to taking Aimee to her play practise, Mr. Kennedy and Aimee went to listen to a travelling evangelist.

Robert Semple's subject matter, "Repent", spoke to Aimee in such a way that she began skipping classes to attend his services. What resulted from attending these revival service? "Aimee's old life was over." She was "born again" and "in love," as written in a bibliography by Allyn Austin.

The evangelist and Aimee became close and even though he moved on to preach, they corresponded. However, he did return shortly afterwards, this time, taking Aimee with him. They were married and on their way to China to work as missionaries.

Even before he began to learn the Chinese language, Mr. Semple was struck with a



her head for silent prayer. Without opening her eyes she was aware that a large crowd was gathering. At just the right moment Aimee raised her head and shouted "Follow Me!" then tore down the street to the chapel.

"When everyone had gathered inside, she ordered the doors to be locked until she had finished. After that, her meetings were filled to overflowing. The church that she started continues to this present day."

Encouraged by her reception in Ontario, Aimee left with her two children and mother for California. In Los Angeles, she rented a large hall and eventually the 3,500 seat auditorium was filled to overflowing. Her abilities to travel without a man and to undertake plans which would be ambitious "even for a male preacher", was remarkable in the audiences eyes.

Many people were being healed at Aimee's services. One bibliography said during a service in San Diego, "a crippled woman rose from her wheelchair and walked to the platform, followed by hundreds of other invalids who were miraculously "cured." Said Aimee, "I am not a healer, Jesus is the healer, I am only the little office girl who opens the door and says come in."

Aimee was often referred to as the Jazz Age Preacher, because of her showbiz approach to preaching the Gospel. She drew thousands of followers. In fact, with their donations and support, the Angelus Temple was built in 1923.

The 5,000 seat building was always filled with an audience who came to hear Aimee speak. "not of the old gospel of fear, but rather what she called her "Four Square Gospel" based on being born again, divine healing, the Second Coming of Christ and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit."

During the depression, Aimee and her Four Square Gospel were highly respected for serving the needy by supplying food to the hungry and unemployed. Also during this time, missions were established all over the world.

The booklet, Outstanding Women of Oxford County, says that Aimee had a very dramatic life, and outlines one account that still remains a mystery. "Because Aimee lived in an age where scandals and sensational stories filled the newspaper, it is hard to try to find the truth about the events and people that surrounded her. Unfortun-



Aimee Semple McPherson, one of the most noted female evangelists, was called from a milk pail, as she illustrated in the lower left photo, on her farm near Salford, to preaching the Gospel from a world pulpit, top photo. Aimee began "preaching the Gospel of Christ," with her first husband, Robert Semple, bottom right, when she was 17. Mr. Semple died of malaria a few years after their marriage, while they were serving as missionaries in China.



severe case of malaria which resulted in his death. Two months later Aimee gave birth to a daughter, Roberta Star Semple. Frightened about living alone and supporting her child in a foreign country, Aimee moved back to Ingersoll.

Shortly thereafter, she married a grocery clerk, Harold McPherson. They had one son Rolf. Aimee, being a very active type of person, would be gone for a day, week and even longer to preach. Even though he promised her before they were married that he would not stand in the way of her work, Mr. McPherson could not take her being away all the time, and divorced Aimee in 1921.

Aimee's first meeting was in Berlin, now known as Kitchener. She was not invited to preach, therefore she did everything else she could to be helpful. She did the dishes, cooked food and played the piano at the meetings.

The first meeting she conducted was in Mount Forest. Aimee was faced with a challenge because the people of this town, weren't interested in her message. She overcame this when, "she stood on a chair at the main intersection of town and bowed

ately, Aimee was a victim of this "sensationalist" publicity, and today there are mixed feelings about her. In 1926, Aimee was at a beach, swimming, and suddenly disappeared! Where she had gone was a great mystery. When she returned 32 days later, she claimed to have been kidnapped, and the newspapers picked up the story. There are fascinating but complicated accounts of Aimee's mysterious disappearance but no one knows the real truth," according to the book.

In 1931 Aimee married an Angelus Temple baritone, David Hutton. That same year she divorced him for mental cruelty.

Aimee died September 26, 1941. She was 53. An autopsy revealed the cause of death was an overdose of sleeping pills but a jury later ruled it was not suicide, that she had taken the overdose accidentally.

The International Church of the Four Square Gospel is still in existence. Aimee's son, Rolf, took over the organization after her death and remains as its president. The denomination has several churches throughout the United States and Canada and supports hundreds of missionaries sent to many countries in the world.

ING. TIMES
July 25, 1984

Ingersoll native's life featured on CBC Radio

McPHERSON, Aimee Semple

This Sunday September 14, CBC Radio will be featuring a drama series about one of Ingersoll's most well known native citizens.

The Sunday Matinee will be telling the life story of Aimee Semple McPherson, the famous evangelist from Ingersoll. This will be aired on CBC Radio 740 AM at 4:05pm after the 4:00 o'clock news.

Aimee Semple McPherson rose from the obscurity of a rural Ontario farmlife to fortune in the glitter city of Los Angeles, California. Yet she did not become an actress in the normal meaning of the word. She was 'Sister Aimee, the Evangelist.'

She was born on a farm about one-and-a-half miles west of Salford. She was known as Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy. She became involved with religion when she married a Pentecostal preacher named Robert Semple, she was 17 years old.

Shortly after their marriage, they travelled to China to work as missionaries. Robert caught malaria and shortly afterwards died. Aimee then returned home with her baby girl who was born in China.

Aimee then married a New York grocery salesman, Harold McPherson. Together they had a son but the marriage was a disaster.

Aimee then fled back to Ingersoll with her two children. She later joined a group known as 'the Sawdust Trail,' a group of wandering evangelists. Her mother then joined her on the road in what would become a famous relationship known to millions.

Later Aimee and her mother set out on their own with ten dollars and a tambourine for California. Shortly after Aimee and her mother were given a free house there by devoted followers. She began preaching around the country in order to raise money for a new church.

Four years later, in 1923 Aimee dedicated the Angelus Temple, at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million. It is now known as the Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

For those of you who do not know who Aimee Semple McPherson is, be sure to tune into CBC Radio 740AM, at 4:05pm for this tribute to Aimee Semple McPherson.

INGERSOLL
Times

September 10, 1986

Con artist or evangelist?

CBC Radio drama rates Sister Aimee less than saintly

By Noel Gallagher
of The Free Press

WAS AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON an honest-to-God religious leader or a money-mad con artist?

Clay In The Potter's Hands, to be aired on CBC Radio's Sunday Matinee, (4:05 p.m.), clearly endorses the negative image of its central character.

The one-hour presentation, written by John Douglas and produced by Stephen Katz, puts an unflattering focus on Sister Aimee, who was born in Ingersoll in 1890, and became a famous and controversial Pentecostal evangelist and radio preacher in the United States during the 1920s, '30s and '40s.

The dynamic and attractive Aimee founded the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel which brought her wealth, notoriety and devoted followers numbering in the tens of thousands.

"It's Sister Aimee, the Loretta Young of the Bible bashers, the queen of hot gospel, scandal sheets and lawsuits!" quips glib radio announcer Baston (Al Waxman), introducing a 1944 McPherson broadcast from Oakland, Calif.

For her congregation of listeners, the charismatic evangelist recites the "gold-plated version of her life," talking of how the good Lord brought her from "the darkness of Ingersoll in cold, far away Canada" to the Angelus Temple, the church she built in Los Angeles and home base for McPherson during her 20 years in the public eye.

Behind the flowery rhetoric of Sister Aimee (Denise Fergusson), Clay In The Potter's Hands offers the gritty facts of its clay-footed subject. We meet Minnie Kennedy (Charmion King), the "beloved" mother Aimee didn't like, Emma Semple (Jill Frappier), the abused daughter who turned against her famous mother.

"The more you serve the Lord," grunts Aimee in a private moment, "the more your family is there to stab you in the back."

Her sanitized version of the past describes McPherson's hard-but-honest rise from life as a pious, young girl "banging a tambourine for the Salvation Army in Ingersoll" to her role as a world-famous preacher "selling shares in heaven" and asking multitudes: "Where will you be when God's clock strikes 12?"

The central issue of the docu-drama is Aimee's mysterious disappearance in 1926 when she vanished and was presumed drowned. McPherson reappeared, six weeks later, claiming she had been a kidnapping victim. The authorities took the preacher to court on charges of promoting a hoax but they failed to prove their charges — that Sister Aimee had run off for a clandestine affair with her (married) radio station engineer.

McPherson couldn't substantiate the kidnapping story either but that mattered little to her followers who remained loyal to Aimee even after her death (from an overdose of barbiturates) in 1944 when son Rolf took over his mother's soul-saving mission.

Clay In The Potter's Hands ends its cynical recollection of Aimee, her career and her motives with a brutally funny sequence speculating on where the famed faith healer is spending eternity.

The McPherson profile is part of Cranks, a CBC Radio series recalling Canadian misfits, eccentrics and colorful personages. Among those spotlighted by Cranks are Indian poet Pauline Johnson, Andy Nordenmark the "transcontinental barrel roller," Henry Wentworth Monk "perhaps Canada's only prophet," William (Bible Belt) Aberhart, United Empire Loyal-



Aimee Semple McPherson started in Ingersoll but ended up an international celebrity.

ists John and Frances Wentworth, and John Robert Radcliffe, this country's first official hangman.

The show's producers claim subjects qualify for inclusion on Cranks by being "mesmerizing, perverse, driven, scandalous, astonishing or amusing." Those are all adjectives applied, at one time or other, to Sister Aimee of Ingersoll.

London
Free
Press

September 13, 1986

Sister Aimee — purveyor of gospel

IN AN age of ostentation, her flamboyance was never really out of place.

But while others were showy for their own gratification, Aimee Semple McPherson used the avenues of show business to instill the gospel's good news into the hearts of her multitudinous following.

The Roaring Twenties produced no shortage of larger-than-life personalities, and Sister Aimee certainly stood among that pantheon.

From her rural roots in turn-of-the-century Oxford County to the stage at the monumental Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, Aimee was dedicated to the philosophical underpinnings of her Church of the Four Square Gospel: regeneration, divine healing, the Second Coming and baptism through the Holy Spirit.

Woodstock playwright Bill Butt, who has been ensnared by the magnetism of one of the greatest of all times, is working on the story of Aimee's life, forming it into a drama which will be the opening production of the Woodstock Little Theatre fall season.

"She really was the first person to put evangelism and show business together," said Butt, who continues to labor away at his script.

"I THINK she's one of those people we're fairly familiar with who have the pressures of stardom plus the difficulties of trying to live a normal, personal life."

When she died in Los Angeles in 1944, at the tender age of 54, Sister Aimee had firmly established a



AIMEE VISITED her homestead and the town of Ingersoll, where he father is buried, in the 1930s. This photo shows her with J. Ferris David, who was then the Ingersoll bureau reporter of *The Sentinel-Review*.

Woodstock playwright William Butt figures Oxford's own Aimee Semple McPherson was first to blend evangelism and show business, and she pulled it off as smooth as satin

religious institution which thrives to this day, and she left behind a life story as outsized and colorful as a Hollywood epic.

Butt, who has already successfully staged plays on the escapades of Klondike Joe Boyce and *The Swamp Murderer*, Reginald Birchall, is toying with the title *God's Hall of Fame* for his drama, taking his cue from a line in Aimee's eulogy.

The tale of a controversial evangelist who successfully fended off hints of a sex scandal could be culled from today's newspapers, but the playwright says contemporary preachers pale in comparison to Sister Aimee.

"I think she would have blown Jim and Tammy off the stage," Butt proclaims. "She'd have taught them a thing or three about religion as well as presentation."

AIMEE WAS "vastly more interesting" than the Tammy Bakkers of today, Butt added, "because she had some personality, some depth and some complexity."

In fact, the dramatist contends, she was more interesting than many of the other overblown personalities of the Jazz Age, an era which had no shortage of vivid, not to say picaresque, characters. Aimee even outshone her evangelical counterparts, the playwright says.

"They originally called her the female Billy Sunday, which didn't go down to well with her," said Butt. "I'd say she much surpassed him. Accounts from people who heard them both speak say she had it all over all of them."

Aimee "didn't do hellfire and brimstone stuff. She had this brilliant idea that people liked to feel upbeat, so she stressed joy and I think that was part of her popularity. People don't want to be nagged about sin all the time."

In 1907 a young evangelist, Robert Semple, appeared on the streets of Ingersoll to preach in the daytime and deliver nightly sermons in an old grocery store on the main street.

One of those who came to town to hear Semple's *Holy Ghost Revival* was 16-year-old high school student Aimee Kennedy, who was born at a farm a few miles west of Salford in October, 1890.

Even during her school days Aimee was making a mark. She won a county-wide elocution contest sponsored by *The Sentinel-Review* and took a free trip down the St. Lawrence River.

Aimee and Robert shared a kinship in oratory. They soon fell in

love and the couple were married. They were soon on their way to the mission fields in China. But in 1909 Robert succumbed to malaria and Aimee was left with in a foreign land with a baby daughter, Roberta.

She was able to make her way back to North America, but the prospect of fending for herself, with a newborn, was too daunting and she soon remarried. Her second husband was a New York grocery clerk, Harold Semple. Domestic life proved too gloomy, however, after her overseas adventures and once again she turned to the world of travel and preaching. Leaving Roberta, and a new son, Rolf, with her mother, she set out as a travelling revivalist.

HER RECEPTION in small town Ontario boosted her courage, and she struck out with her mother and children for the greener pastures of California. An auditorium in Los Angeles was rented and Aimee began drawing crowds as large as 3,500. She was on her way.

In 1921 she was preaching in San Diego when a wheelchair-bound woman rose and approached the stage. Hundreds of other invalids followed, seeking a miraculous cure. Aimee said the healing was not her work, but that of Jesus. "I am only the little office girl who opens the door and says come in."

The Angelus Temple was built in 1923 from the \$1.5 million raised at Aimee's gatherings. The 5,000 seat forum was soon filled with enthusiastic followers who came to hear her preach.

Butt travelled to Los Angeles in December to research his play, and he spoke to Aimee's son, Rolf, who still runs the Church of the Four Square Gospel.

"It's bigger than it ever was," said the playwright. There are hundreds of congregations across the United States and a number in Canada, including one in London.

The radio network Aimee

pioneered is still popular, and thousands of the faithful still attend meetings at the Angelus Temple.

Aimee had become a major celebrity by 1926 when an event occurred which propelled her from the religion pages to the front page.

The evangelist was swimming at a beach at Venice, California one quiet day and she vanished.

When she reappeared 32 days later, in the scorching Arizona desert, she informed an anxious world that she had been kidnapped. Inquisitive reporters, however, had different thoughts about the mysterious disappearance, and soon stories were being retailed about Aimee's alleged liaison with her radio operator, Kenneth Ormiston.

THE INCIDENT was the most scandalous of her life. But far from killing her career, Aimee was welcomed back by her supporters and her popularity continued unabated.

Butt will include references to the disappearance in his drama, but does not intend to dwell on it.

"I think I'm going to let people make up their own minds. It's just one item in her whole life story, one that gets a lot of publicity, and it's important, but I think it's best understood in the context of her whole life."

Aimee's church maintains to this day that she was kidnapped, and the church has been leery playwrights and authors because of the various dramatizations of her life that have been undertaken over the years.

Once again Aimee was mounting the stage of the Angelus Temple and resuming her illustrated sermons, reconstructing Solomon's Temple or the Pit of Hell.

"It was real Cecil B. De Mille stuff."

Her days in Oxford County were far behind Sister Aimee after she established her church in the

United States, but she never forgot the place of her birth. She returned to Ingersoll and again in Salford area in 1929 and again in 1934, to visit her homestead and her father's grave. During the Depression she provided assistance to the unemployed and the destitute, and during the Second World War she was involved in bond drives. "She did a lot of good really," Butt explains. "She's often thought of as simply a glittery, showman type, but she did a lot of social as well as spiritual good."

Aimee was a strong and forthright female minister, a trailblazer who was subjected to more than her share of scrutiny.

"SHE FACED the same kinds of controversy in her day," as some evangelists face today. Butt believes. "There were accusations that she was essentially a show biz person and was in it for

the money. But the fact is, she did it all back into the church."

While she did live comfortably, Butt maintains "she had to, because it was expected of her. It was part of her appeal."

When Sister Aimee died, exhausted, 45 years ago she was still in control of the religious dominion she had created.

A photo spread in *Life* magazine details the thousands of faithful who turned out for her funeral and attended at her grave at Forest Lawn cemetery.

Butt has spent countless hours studying the life and times of Aimee Semple McPherson and has drawn some conclusions.

"The more I read about her, the more I tend to admire her."

"I think she had a genuine gift, and there's no doubt she was sincere about her calling," he's decided. "She wasn't perfect, but then who is."

SENTINEL
REVIEW

February 11, 1989

RELIGION

Sister Aimee's mix: showbiz and evangelism

By Greg Rothwell
Special to The Star

WOODSTOCK, ONT. — The Roaring Twenties produced no shortage of larger-than-life personalities, and evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson was right up there with them.

From her rural roots in turn-of-the-century Oxford County to the stage at the monumental Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, Sister Aimee blazed a trail to stardom in an era without television or today's sophisticated mass-marketing techniques.

"I think she would have blown Jim and Tammy (Bakker) off the stage," says Woodstock playwright Bill Butt whose play based on Aimee's life will open the Woodstock Little Theatre's fall season. "She'd have taught them a thing or three about religion as well as presentation.

"She really was the first person to put evangelism and show business together. I think she's one of those people we're fairly familiar with who have the pressures of stardom plus the difficulties of trying to live a normal, personal life."

Butt, who has already successfully staged plays on the escapades of Klondike Joe Boyle and the Swamp Murderer, Reginald Birchall, toyed with the title *God's Hall Of Fame* for his drama, taking his cue from a line in Aimee's eulogy but is now leaning towards a the more explanatory *Sister Aimee*.

The 40-year-old playwright has lived in Woodstock almost all his life and is a part-time English professor at the University of Western Ontario and an executive member of the Oxford County Historical Society.

The tale of a controversial evangelist who fended off hints of a sex scandal could be culled from today's newspapers. But the playwright says contemporary preachers pale in comparison to Sister Aimee.

Butt said Aimee was vastly more interesting than the Tammy Bakkers of today, because she "had some personality, some depth and some complexity."

"They originally called her the female Billy Sunday, which didn't go down too well with her," he said. "I'd say she much surpassed him. Accounts from people who heard them both speak say she had it all over all of her contemporary evangelists.

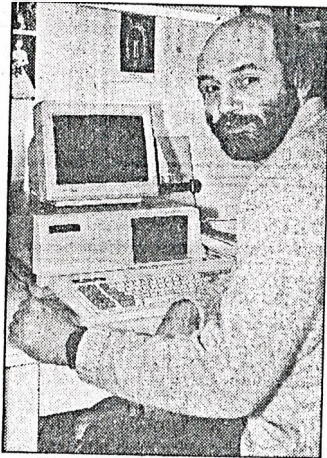
"Aimee didn't do the hellfire and brimstone stuff. She had this brilliant idea that people liked to feel upbeat, so she stressed joy and I think that was part of her popularity. People don't want to be nagged about sin all the time."

Aimee's message, her theatrical pulpit techniques and her show-biz personality were a winning combination, making her the most publicized revivalist in the world. The faithful thronged to hear her speak and she developed a devoted following.

When she died in Los Angeles in 1944, at the age of 54, Sister Aimee had firmly established a religious institution which thrives to this day. She left behind a life story that was as outsized and colorful as a Hollywood epic.

It really all started in 1907 when a young evangelist, Robert Semple, appeared on the streets of Ingersoll to preach in the daytime and deliver nightly sermons in an old grocery store on the main street.

One of those who came to town to hear Semple's *Holy Ghost Revival* was Aimee



Woodstock playwright Bill Butt

Kennedy, a 16-year-old high school student, who was born on a farm a few miles west of Salford in October, 1890.

Even during her school days Aimee was making a mark. She won a county-wide elocution contest sponsored by the *Sentinel-Review* and took a free trip down the St. Lawrence River.

Aimee and Robert shared a kinship in oratory. They soon fell in love, married, and were on their way to the mission fields in China. In 1909, Robert died of malaria and Aimee was left in a foreign

land with a baby daughter, Roberta.

Aimee was able to make her way back to North America, but the prospect of fending for herself, with a newborn, was too daunting and she soon remarried. Her second husband was a New York grocery clerk, Harold McPherson, whom she later divorced.

But after her overseas adventures, domestic life proved too constricting and she once again turned to the world of travel and preaching. Leaving Roberta, and a new son, Rolf, with her mother, she set out as a travelling revivalist.

Her reception in small-town Ontario boosted her courage, and she struck out with her mother and children for the greener pastures of California. An auditorium in Los Angeles was rented and Aimee began drawing crowds as large as 3,500.

She was on her way.

In 1921, she was preaching in San Diego when a wheelchair-bound woman rose and approached the stage. Hundreds of other invalids followed, seeking a miraculous cure. Aimee said the healing was not her work, but Jesus'. "I am only the little office girl who opens the door and says come in," she used to say.

The debt-free Angelus Temple of the

Foursquare Gospel was built in Hollywood in 1923 from the \$1.5 million raised at Aimee's gatherings. The 5,000-seat forum was soon filled with enthusiastic followers who came to hear her preach.

Aimee became a major celebrity by 1926 when an event occurred which propelled her from the religion pages to the front page.

She was swimming at a beach at Venice, California, one quiet day and she disappeared, presumed drowned. When she reappeared 32 days later, in the scorching Arizona desert, she told an anxious world she had been kidnapped.

Inquisitive and skeptical reporters, however, had different thoughts about the mysterious disappearance. Soon stories were circulating that Aimee's "kidnapping" was a cover-up for an affair with her radio station manager.

The scandal did not finish her as an evangelist. Aimee was welcomed back by her supporters but her public image never fully recovered. Later in her life she was connected with moral and financial scandals, including divorce from her third husband. Her health deteriorated and she died of an apparent accidental drug overdose.

Butt travelled to Los Angeles in December to research his play, and he spoke to Aimee's son, Rolf, who still runs

the Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

"It's bigger than it ever was," Butt said. There are hundreds of congregations across the United States and a number in Canada, including one in London. The radio network Aimee pioneered is still popular, and thousands of the faithful still attend meetings at the Angelus Temple.

Aimee's church maintains to this day that she was kidnapped, and the church has been leery of playwrights and authors because of the sometimes less than flattering dramatizations of her life.

Butt includes references to Aimee's disappearance in his drama, but does not dwell on it.

"I think I'm going to let people make up their own minds," he said. "It's just one item in her whole life story, one that gets a lot of publicity, and it's important, but I think it's best understood in the context of her whole life."

Butt said that during the Depression she provided assistance to the unemployed and the destitute, and during World War II, she was involved in bond drives.

"She did a lot of good, really," Butt said. "She's often thought of as simply a glittery, showman type, but she did a lot of social as well as spiritual good."

Greg Rothwell is a reporter with the *Daily Sentinel-Review* in Woodstock.

SISTER AIMEE

She's come long way from rural Salford!

By SYLVIA PUTZ
of The Sentinel-Review

As a child growing up on a farm a mile and a half west of Salford at the turn of the century, famous evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson was already polishing her natural dramatic skills by giving *practice* sermons to a captive audience of barn animals.

When she began preaching to a human audience, she was a smash hit.

A woman with strong religious convictions, Aimee's theatrical style of preaching was so persuasive, she gathered up devoted followers wherever she went. Her success was so great, she established the worldwide Church of the Foursquare Gospel, based in Los Angeles, circa 1923.

("The church cut no spiritual corners," explained Woodstock playwright Bill Butt, whose play based on Aimee's life opens Oct. 18 at the Woodstock Museum.)

Remains strong

Today, close to 50 years after her death in 1944, the church remains 2,000 congregations strong, and is spread throughout the United States, Canada and Asia.

Aimee was also a faith-healer, the writer of operas, hymns and sermons and an early feminist.

She is Oxford County's most famous person, said Butt. He is also

an executive member of the Oxford County Historical Society.

"Her character was exuberant, dramatic, colorful and controversial," he said.

Her highly successful *show-biz* methods of praising the Lord, and especially of raising money for the church, led to suspicion and disapproval from some people, he maintained.

She was sincere

As well, her mysterious disappearance from a California beach in 1926, her reappearance 32 days later in the Arizona desert, and her explanation that she had been kidnapped set the rumor mill into motion, furiously grinding out a story of a love affair.

But she is not like disgraced evangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker, Butt maintained.

"She was sincere," he said.

Her estate, when she died, was only worth \$10,000, indicating that she must have pumped most of the money raised by the church back into its operations, he explained.

Sister Aimee, a joint production of the Woodstock Museum and the Oxford Historical Society, is scheduled to run for eight shows, on Oct. 18 through Oct. 21 and Oct. 25 through Oct. 28.

Tickets, at a price of \$8.50, are available from the Woodstock Museum or Norman Galleries, on Dundas Street.

SENTINEL REVIEW

October 13, 1989

25B

THEATRE

Life story of Salford's most-famous 'farm girl' on stage

The life of evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson is the subject of a new play that premieres in Woodstock Wednesday.

By Stephen Northfield
Woodstock Bureau

WOODSTOCK — On Wednesday, evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson will be back in the spotlight here where she belongs.

The life of Oxford County's most famous citizen is the subject of Sister Aimee, a play written by Woodstock playwright Bill Butt that will be performed for the first time this week at the Woodstock Museum.

McPherson's life began on a dairy farm near Salford, a small village south of Ingersoll and ended 54 years later in a hotel room in Oakland, Calif., from an accidental overdose of sleeping pills.

In between, she founded a church which today boasts 783 congregations in Canada and the U.S., more than 2,000 foreign missions, 30 schools, 32 bible colleges and a radio network which still broadcasts daily in 27 countries.

She authored books, religious plays, more than 200 hymns, hundreds of sermons and started a magazine.

She also drew the ire and perhaps jealousy of established religions who watched as McPherson's show-business approach to preaching — which consisted of acting out sermons on stage with sound and lighting effects, dry ice, even animals if they were called for — drew thousands of people to her mission and made her known throughout the world.

Add in a bit of scandal — rumors of an affair and a 32-day disappearance after being kidnapped — and you've got the stuff that headlines are made of.

But don't lump the sister in with those who have followed in her footsteps and fallen from grace — Aimee wasn't in it for fame and

fortune.

"It seems clear from her life that she was dedicated to it as a religious cause," says Butt. "Her lifestyle was just one more instrument she used to advance her church."

She died with only \$10,000 in her estate — the millions she had raised while spreading the word were funnelled back into her church.

Her sermons were homey, often dwelling on her experiences growing up in Oxford County. Through all the fame and glory "she remained a farm girl from Salford,"

says the 40-year-old Butt who teaches English part time at the University of Western Ontario. He travelled to Los Angeles to research the play last December and wrote it during the winter months.

Though biographers have tended to focus on the scandal and glamor surrounding McPherson, Butt says he wanted to put the evangelist's life in a broader perspective. "We were interested in her whole life, her ministry, her music, her Oxford roots — these were the sides of her that weren't interesting to other writers."

AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON

- 1890: Aimee Kennedy born on a dairy farm near Salford.
- 1907: Met travelling evangelist Robert Semple. They married and went to do mission work in China where Robert died of malaria in 1909. Soon after returning to Canada she married Harold McPherson. They divorced and McPherson set out as a travelling evangelist, honing her craft across Ontario before packing up her two children and heading for California. She struck gold in Los Angeles where thousands began flocking to hear her preach.
- 1923: The 5,000-seat Angelus Temple of the Foursquare Gospel was built in Hollywood, financed from money raised by McPherson.
- 1926: McPherson disappears for 32 days from a beach in California. She turns up in Arizona and she says was kidnapped. Rumors suggest the kidnapping was staged to cover up for an affair.
- 1944: Found dead in a hotel room in Oakland, Calif., the night after a sermon. Cause of death was an accidental overdose of sleeping pills.

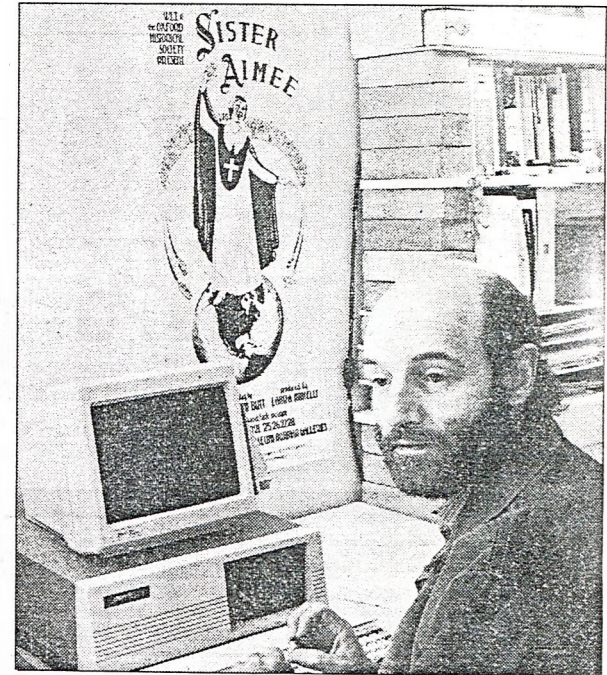
IF YOU GO

WHAT: Sister Aimee, presented by Woodstock Little Theatre and the Oxford Historical Society.

WHERE: Woodstock Museum, Woodstock City Square.

WHEN: 8 p.m., Oct. 18, 19, 20, 21 and Oct. 25, 26, 27, 28.

COST: \$8.50 per person.



Stephen Northfield/The London Free Press
Woodstock playwright Bill Butt says his play, Sister Aimee, isn't just about controversies surrounding the famed evangelist, but about her life's work.

LONDON FREE PRESS

October 17, 1989

W.L.T. &
the OXFORD
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
PRESENT

SISTER AIMEE

By BILL BUTT, playwright
special to The Daily Sentinel-Review

Aimee Semple McPherson is
one of Oxford's Own.

The world's most famous evangelist, Los Angeles friend of Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin, author, musician, show-business personality, founder of the Foursquare Church with branches literally around the world then and now, Aimee remained all her life a product of Oxford County. Her father's father cleared the farm she was born on, on the first concession of Dereham township. (The house of her birth burned down in 1947). People remember her riding on the farm wagon with her father delivering milk to the cheese factory near Salford. Her father, also a carpenter, built a floating bridge across a deep swamp just east of Salford, although now the road curves around it. (That swamp, by the Salford landfill site now, gave her one of her most famous sermons, about the bottomless bog of sin.) She belonged to the Methodist church in Salford (now United) and the Salvation Army in Ingersoll, where seniors still remember her as a girl with a tambourine standing on an apple-box on Ingersoll street corners.

SHE WENT to public school in Dereham and in Salford. She was known for leading children in parades around the playground, Aimee beating on a cheese-box the rhythms of Salvation Army hymns. During high school in Ingersoll she travelled in by train from the Salford station. Oldsters still remember her as a typically sociable high school girl, fond of popular music of the day (*Down By the Old Mill Stream, In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree*) — and fond of joining other girls and boys in the woods behind

what was then a Negro church.

One of her main achievements as a teenager was winning a county-wide popularity contest sponsored by *The Woodstock Sentinel-Review* in the summer of 1907. The contest — which naturally the paper gave front-page coverage to for several weeks — involved votes that each young lady earned for each subscription she sold. A two-year subscription (\$6) earned 2,500 votes, a one-month subscription (25 cents) earned 40. *The S-R* gave the winner an all-expense-paid trip by train and steamer to Toronto to the Canadian National Exhibition, to Montreal, and to Quebec City. Aimee won by a landslide of over 100,000 votes — a lot of subscriptions sold. That same sales ability showed up later in the enormous crowds she attracted (and funds she raised) to her Temple in Los Angeles.

AS A girl Aimee started her preaching career with sermons to the animals on the farm. Her published sermons all her life are filled with references to the farm back home. Watching the barnyard hen protecting her chicks in a thunderstorm gave a sermon on God's protective love. A miller at the Ingersoll flour mill who left white dust wherever he passed gave a sermon on the spreading power of the Holy Spirit. Los Angeles audiences in her day were mostly from the farming Mid West, and she stressed her rural Ontario roots to show she was one of them.

Her 5,300-seat Angelus Temple in Los Angeles features a shrine-museum with, among other artifacts, Aimee's Salvation Army tambourine, her ice-skates, wallpaper from her bedroom at her birthplace, her certificate of marriage (she was married — the first time — in a Salvation Army



ceremony on the farmhouse lawn). Frank and Jean Wilson who live on the farm report that each summer a dozen or so carloads of pilgrims arrive in Oxford, most wanting to take away Canadian maple leaves as souvenirs.

AIMEE CAME back three times that we know of to Oxford, once for her father's funeral in 1921, once to place the granite stone on his grave which still stands in the Harris Street Cemetery on Highway 19 south of Ingersoll, and once in 1934 on a pilgrimage to the grave, the school, the farmhouse, with Gordon Sinclair.

Each time she visited old

friends in Ingersoll and Dereham. Her writings all stress how it was Oxford that made her. Despite glamor and scandal and worldwide travel and fame she remained the Oxford girl who was converted to Christ and a lifelong mission during a vision in a snowstorm while travelling in her sleigh on Highway 59 from Ingersoll to Salford. She said there was no better place for a girl to come from, so it's appropriate that this fall on her 99th birthday we celebrate her roots.

□ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** Bill Butt is the author of the play *Sister Aimee* which opens tomorrow night at the Woodstock Museum. It is a joint production of the Woodstock Little Theatre and the Woodstock Historical Society.

McPHERSON'S DAUGHTER AT PLAY

Famous mom was 'ahead of her times'

By MARILYN SMULDERS
of The Sentinel-Review

Being in Oxford County for the weekend was like *deja-vous* for Roberta Semple Salter, Aimee Semple McPherson's only daughter.

The Ontario architecture reminded her of her grandparents farmhouse that used to stand near Salford. The cheese she bought reminded her how her mother would rave over the cheddar made in Ingersoll at the turn of the century. The service she attended Sunday morning at the Methodist Church in Salford reminded her of her grandfather, James Kennedy, who used to be the organist there.

And most of all, *Sister Aimee*, the play now on at the Woodstock Museum, reminded her of her mother.

"Her whole life flashed before my eyes," said Salter, who attended the Friday night performance.

"I'm delighted that the Canadian community is recognizing my mother as a unique person. She really was a pioneer," continued Salter, a stylish woman looking much younger than her 80 years. "When my mother was active, the idea of a woman preacher was shocking. It's taken all these years for the church to think about ordaining women. Aimee simply went ahead and did it."

And while she enjoyed the play, written by Woodstock resident Bill Butt, she found it unnerving to see herself portrayed.

Salter was born in Hong Kong, a month after her father Robert Semple, a missionary in China, died of malaria. In the play, Aimee relates to her daughter's birth as "a light against the dark." Comparing herself to "Hagar with her baby in the wilds," Aimee returned to North America where she began to preach from the front seat of her jalopy, travelling from city to city.

After the play ended and the actors took their bows, many people who knew of Salter's famous mom through stories their relatives had passed down to them crowded around her, eager to share their tales.

Salter admits her childhood was far from ordinary. While her mother

established her reputation as a preacher common folk could relate to, she travelled extensively with her children. Salter and her half brother, Rolf McPherson (born during Aimee's second marriage in 1913), got much of their education on the road.

At 12 years of age, Salter remembers being enrolled in Grade 3. But with the background her mother gave her, she passed three grades in a matter of months.

And the McPherson homestead was also unusual, relates Salter. Once the Angelus Temple was opened, the family lived next door at the manse. The people that Aimee was constantly helping filled out their household.

"Like a lot of moms today, mother was very busy," said Salter. "When she spent time with us it was what they refer to now as 'quality time.'"

Salter refers to her mother as a "woman ahead of her time." She said Aimee was often approached by young pregnant women turned out of their homes with no place to go. Aimee worked on reconciling the women with their families, and if that didn't work, finding them jobs. And, at a time when the problem of wife battering was barely acknowledged, Aimee took bruised and scared women into her own home, said Salter.

Aimee was driven largely by common sense, said Salter. For example, when the San Francisco area was demolished by an earthquake in 1925, Aimee took to the air waves of the radio station she established to broadcast her worship services to the housebound. She called for co-operation from churchgoers and it wasn't long after that a convoy of trucks was filled with clothes and food for the stricken 100 miles away. Salter said Aimee specifically required that if eggs were to be sent, they should be hardboiled. "The practical farm girl always remained a part of her," laughed Salter.

Salter, whose career was launched on that very radio station as the character, 'Aunt Birdie,' said with the scandals that touched her mother's life, people would often forget about the heart of gold beneath the glamorous exterior.

Referring to her mother's disap-



ROBERTA SEMPLE SLATER visited the home of playwright Bill Butt Saturday. Butt penned a play chronicling the life of her famous mother, Aimee Semple McPherson, the Depression-era internationally-known evangelist, who grew up in the Salford area.

(Staff photo by Marilyn Smulders)

pearance in May 1926, Salter said she developed "extra-phobia." When newsboys would shout "Extra! Extra!" from street corners.

Salter would become agitated. The headlines were about her family.

Salter attended most of the services her mother conducted, "sitting

in the front row like a good little girl." Her brother Rolf, however, now heads the International Church of Foursquare Gospel. Salter herself went to New York City, where she married and enjoyed a successful career in radio broadcasting and television.

SENTINEL REVIEW

October 23, 1989

Lead actress says Sister Aimee role was "wonderful"

BY LIZ DADSON

Energy and enthusiasm flow from the slender woman on stage as she puts every fibre of her being into preaching the Word of God.

The character is Aimee Kennedy Semple McPherson, a well-known evangelist of the 1920s and 1930s. The role is the focus of the play "Sister Aimee," currently being shown at the Woodstock Museum.

Behind the captivating and energetic portrayal of this dynamic character, is Carol Butt of Woodstock.

Butt uses marvelous facial expressions to evoke emotion and the audience easily gets caught up in her powerful display, shaking hands with her and clapping to the music.

How does it feel to depict a woman who accomplished so much in a time when the female gender was mainly keeping house and raising children?

"It feels wonderful," Butt said in an interview after the performance last Thursday night. "She was a fantastic woman. I was honored to take her part. She accomplished so much in her lifetime."

Butt said she was preparing to go into the seminary. She had enrolled at the University of Western Ontario in London but at the last minute, decided against it.

"The next day, the part in 'Sister Aimee' came up for audition," she said. "I prayed on it and I'm here."

In order to play the part of Aimee Semple McPherson, who founded the Church of the Foursquare Gospel and the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles and was the first internationally-known female evangelist, Butt listened to a lot of her tapes and read many of her books.

"Her faith was phenomenal," Butt said. "Near the end of her life, she got really sick but then bounced right back."

The play, "Sister Aimee," written by William Butt (no relation to the actress), chronicles the life of the evangelist from age 12 right through to her death. Born in Salford, near Ingersoll, she was a very controversial figure. She died in Oakland, California, at the age of 54, from an overdose of sleeping pills.



Taking centre stage in the play, "Sister Aimee", is Aimee Kennedy Semple McPherson, played by Carol Butt. Here, Sister Aimee prays to the Lord for guidance. Surrounding her are chorus members John Furry (left), Helen Kovarcik (centre) and Rupert Wilcock. The play is being performed at the Woodstock Museum tonight through to Oct. 28 and Nov. 1 and 2, beginning each night at 8:00 p.m. (Liz Dadson photo)

Carol Butt has the experience to bring such a controversial character to the stage. She has appeared in a number of musicals and other plays, including "Joseph of Arimathea," "Annie Oakley" and "The Music Man."

This is her first role for the Woodstock Little Theatre. She lives in Woodstock with her husband, Ralph, and three children.

The cast and crew began work on the play in early May, with rehearsals in May and June. They quit for the summer and returned to it on Labor Day.

Backing up the central figure and playing a multitude of characters throughout the performance, is a seven-member chorus.

Two are high school students. Rupert Wilcock has lived in Woodstock for six years and is in his final year at Woodstock Collegiate Institute. He is most familiar to enthusiastic audiences as the tenor with the acapella quartet, "The Chordsmen."

Helen Kovarcik is a Grade 13 student at Huron Park Secondary School, making her Woodstock Little Theatre debut. She was involved last March with Huron Park's production of "Grease".

Bev Cofell has lived in Woodstock for two years and been involved in Woodstock Little Theatre, first in the cast of "Oliver" and most recently last spring in "Arsenic and Old Lace." He belonged to the Grey-Wellington Theatre Guild in Hamilton for four years. He and his wife, Jean, have two children.

Karen McSpadden teaches language arts and music at North Norwich Public School and has appeared in two Woodstock Little Theatre productions. She and her husband, Dan Cohoe, live with their two children on a farm near Burgessville.

Nancy Hazeleger is making her Woodstock Little Theatre debut in "Sister Aimee." She has worked on several drama productions for the Junior Farmers and Embro Fair

Board. She and her husband, John, and three daughters operate a dairy farm near Embro.

John Furry is a native of Port Colborne and graduate of McMaster University and Divinity College in Hamilton. A clergyperson by profession, he is married and the father of two teenagers. He sang in the chorus for McMaster Operatic Society's production of "Faust," and is a member of the Woodstock Fanshawe Singers.

Nancy Hawkins is a native of Woodstock and last appeared for Woodstock Little Theatre in "Oliver." She has two children and made her Woodstock Little Theatre debut in "Jesus Christ Superstar."

"Sister Aimee", a joint production by the Woodstock Little Theatre and the Oxford Historical Society, will be performed tonight through Oct. 28 and Nov. 1 and 2, beginning each night at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$8.50 and are available at the Woodstock Museum or Norman Galleries.

INGERSOLL TIMES

October 23, 1989

A review

Evangelist's life well-told in continuous narrative of a play

BY LIZ DADSON

Old, familiar hymnal music fills the packed hall at the Woodstock Museum as a young woman graces the stage, gesturing animatedly and speaking fervently about the Word of God.

This is Aimee Kennedy Semple McPherson, the famous Salford-born evangelist of the 1920s and 1930s, as portrayed by Carol Butt.

Brought to the stage in this historical setting, the dramatization inspires as much, if not more than the woman did while she was alive.

The story begins with Aimee Kennedy at the age of 12 and while it deviates from the typical idea of theatre, meaning there is a noted lack of significant plot formation

and dialogue, this does not detract from the overall power of the play.

It appears as if playwright William Butt (no relation to the lead actress) and Director Brian George have set out to tell the story of Sister Aimee without making her the entire focus of the play.

The use of continuous narrative to portray the infamous evangelist's life from age 12 to her death at the age of 54, works well. The never-ending sound, energy and enthusiasm, displayed by all the characters, was a major part of Sister Aimee's life and is a fitting medium through which to tell her story.

Born in Salford, just south of Ingersoll, in 1890, Sister Aimee was a very controversial character. She

Continued on Page 7

Sister Aimee gets a good review

Continued from Page 6

was always in the press and she liked it that way.

The play aptly depicts her powerful ministry, her closeness to her God and the struggles and obstacles she had to overcome to do her life's work. To the atheists and cynics of the world there may have appeared to be too many references to the Bible and Scripture. And the voice of God, spoken by Constantine Meglis in the play, may have seemed a bit too hokey.

But Sister Aimee had a strong belief and she was an inspiration to everyone she knew and brought to believe in the glory of God. And this is evident in the dramatization of her life.

The actors and actresses surrounding Butt play a multitude of characters, including Sister Aimee's parents, her followers, the chorus members, and those who scorn her.

This seems somewhat confusing at first until its effectiveness is realized. Just as it is necessary to pay close attention to the action going on, it is also a priority to maintain whether these people around Sister Aimee are friends or foes. Often in

her life, this may have caused confusion for her as well.

Her fiery evangelistic style permeates the storyline from her stories told in the courtyard at school to her travels with husband Robert Semple, who died in Hong Kong, to her marriage and subsequent divorce to Harold McPherson, through the doubts about her story after she disappeared for 39 days, and finally to her death in Oakland, California.

Adding extensively to the play with music and narrative were the members of the chorus, including Bev Cofell, John Furry, Nancy Hawkins, Nancy Hazeleger, Helen Kovarcik, Karen McSpadden and Rupert Wilcock.

As the central character, Carol Butt demonstrated well the movie star quality Sister Aimee was famous for. She also displayed the artful use of examples from the woman's down-home background in her sermons, playing the evangelist with extensive force and energy.

The play incorporates many local references to Canada which went over well with the local audience. One in particular saw Sister Aimee

walking up to a boxing ring in Los Angeles and stating: "This is worse than an Ingersoll barroom."

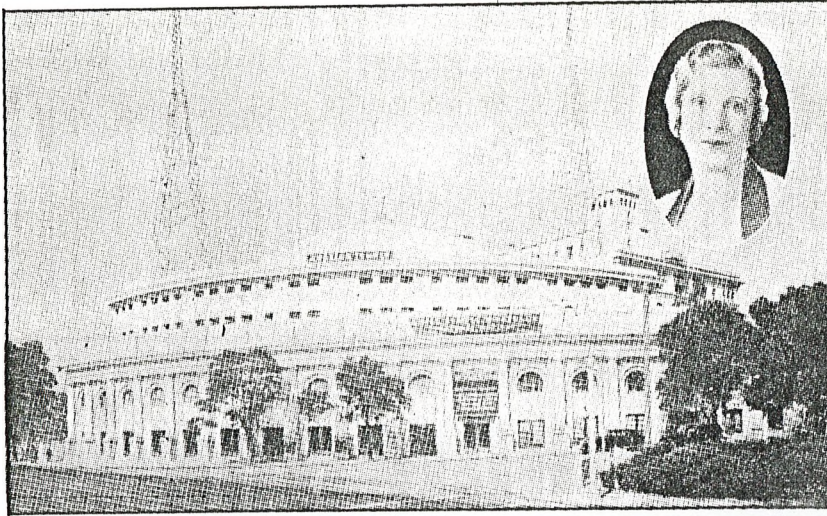
Obvious throughout the play, over and above the tremendous musical talent of the group, was its ability to portray events with a limited number of props. The arrival of a Model A Ford car, compliments of the museum, startled the audience but was used effectively. Unfortunately, a megaphone did not have the same effect as it muffled more than it enhanced Sister Aimee's voice.

The action and energy never laps from beginning to end. However, the second act seems to go faster as the audience prepares for the death of the central figure.

This is emphasized by the stage being built up with steps, higher and higher, until Sister Aimee stands on a pseudo-pedestal on top of four steps in the final sermon of her ministry, the night before she was found dead from an overdose of sleeping pills.

The play runs for six more nights, tonight through to Oct. 28 and Nov. 1 and 2, beginning each night at 8:00 p.m.

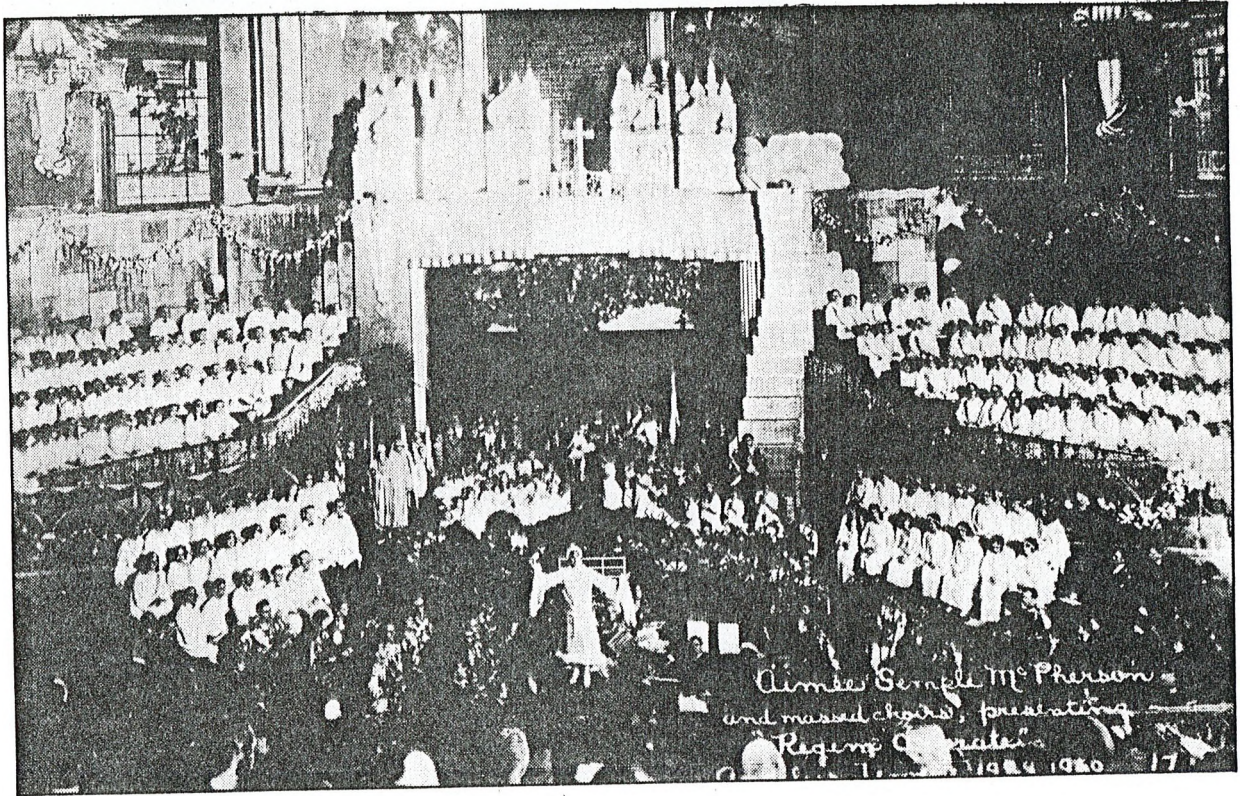
INGERSOLL TIMES
October 25, 1989



SISTER AIMEE

A long-time Ingersoll area resident visited Angelus Temple one week after founder and Pastor Aimee Semple McPherson delivered her sermon, *The Story of My Life* in October, 1939. The event was in celebration of her birthday, and included the famous evangelist walking down the isle, milk pail in hand and wearing a gingham dress. While a notorious figure to some and a near-saint to others, Aimee Semple McPherson remains a part of Oxford County history. Tonight is the final showing of her story, in the play *Sister Aimee*, produced by the Woodstock Little Theatre and the Woodstock Historical Society.

(Photos courtesy Ingersoll bureau)



SENTINEL REVIEW

November 4, 1989



ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE

On Sunday Ingersoll honored her most famous and beloved daughter Aimee Semple McPherson with the official celebration of evangelist's 100th birthday. Present at the Cheese Museum to assist with the unveiling of Aimee's cradle

were Janice Bromberg, Aimee's great-granddaughter; Victoria Elizabeth Salter, Aimee's granddaughter; Nora Quenby Bromberg, great-granddaughter; and Roberta Salter, Aimee's daughter. See story, page 3.

McPherson, Aimee
Semple

Local famous evangelist's cradle to be unveiled

In celebration of the birth of well-known local evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, this Sunday at 2 p.m. the Ingersoll Cheese Museum is unveiling her cradle which was recently purchased by the museum.

The cradle, along with several other artifacts were acquired with the assistance of a \$33,023 grant from the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications, said Shirley Lovell, curator of the museum.

Ingersoll resident Jessie Robins had possession of the cradle which will be unveiled by the Salford-born world-wide evangelist's daughter, Roberta Salter, of New York. Salter, her daughter and two granddaughters will attend the ceremony.

Other artifacts have been borrowed for the Aimee Semple McPherson display but the cradle is now part of the permanent collection, Lovell said.



Ingersoll Times
August 8 1990

Aimee's cradle unveiled

Aimee Semple McPherson, born near here 100 years ago, was the most famous evangelist of her day.

On Sunday Ingersoll paid tribute to Aimee with the official unveiling of her cradle, part of the permanent collection at the Ingersoll Cheese Museum.

Among the people who participated in the ceremony at Centennial Park were Charlie Tatham, Oxford MPP, and Jack Warden, deputy mayor.

"We have to reflect and remember our roots," Tatham said. "We have a heritage here in Oxford we should cherish."

Beneath gathering storm clouds, local historian Everett Wilson told the story of the evangelist.

Aimee Kennedy was born on a farm near Salford 100 years ago in October. On Aug. 12, 1908, she married evangelist Robert James Semple and went with him to China to do missionary work. Robert contracted malaria and died shortly after his arrival. Daughter Roberta Star Semple was born one month later.

A few years after, Aimee married Harold Stewart McPherson and they had one son, Rolf.

Aimee went on to become an evangelist, teacher, faith-healer, and writer of operas, hymns and sermons, founding Angelus Temple in 1923. In 1927, the Inter-

national Church of the the Four Square Gospel was incorporated in Los Angeles.

Aimee died in 1944, leaving behind an organization which flourishes today, with 2,000 congregations in the United States, Canada and Asia.

Wilson was able to provide one appropriate tidbit of information — Robert and Aimee's wedding day was remarkably similar to the day of her anniversary tribute. Then too, guests watched as storm clouds gathered. And then, too, well-wishers grabbed chairs and ran for cover just as the ceremony finished.

The cradle was unveiled by Aimee's daughter Roberta Salter, granddaughter Victoria Elizabeth Salter, and great-granddaughters Janice Bromberg and Nora Quemby Bromberg.

Jessie Robins, from whom the cradle was acquired, was able to provide a detailed and entertaining account of how this precious piece of local and world history came to be part of the permanent collection at the museum.

Soloist Lois Bradfield, accompanied by Grace Nancekivell, sang *Castle of Broken Dreams* and *Just a Cup of Cold Water*, both written by Aimee. Josie Shelton read *Aimee's Reflections*. Also on hand were several members of the Ingersoll Pipe Band.

Daily Sentinel Review
Ingersoll This Week
August 14 1990

Aimee Semple McPherson's cradle unveiled at museum

BY LIZ DADSON

About 50 people watched as Roberta Salter of New York, daughter of famous Salford-born evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, unveiled her mother's cradle at the Ingersoll Cheese Museum Sunday afternoon.

Most of the ceremony was completed before heavy rain forced the crowd indoors. With Salter were her daughter and two granddaughters.

The cradle is now part of the permanent collection at the museum after it was purchased with the assistance of a grant through the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications, said curator Shirley Lovell. Other artifacts were borrowed for the display to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Semple McPherson.

The museum bought the cradle from Jessie Robins of Ingersoll who first spotted the fine example of early Canadiana filled with books in the den of town resident Stanley Smith.

For years, Smith had collected memorabilia about the notorious evangelist. He bought the cradle in the 1940s for \$25 from the Piper family who lived across the road from the Kennedy farm where Aimee was born in 1890. They bought the cradle after Aimee's parents, James and Minnie Kennedy, knew they would have no more children.

When she spied the cradle at Smith's, Robins offered to buy it but Smith refused, telling her to come back when she had her first grandchild. Twenty-five years later, Robins became a grandmother and he sold her the cradle.

Now the cradle that held baby Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy is permanently on display at the museum in Ingersoll.

Aimee, later dubbed Sister Aimee, grew up on a farm one mile west of Salford. She attended Ingersoll's high school to the age of 17 when she

met traveling Pentecostal teacher Robert Semple. They married and became missionaries to China.

Two years later, Semple died from malaria and Aimee, left with a small child, learned of her oratorical prowess as she panhandled her way home from the Orient.

A marriage of convenience to Harold McPherson, a grocery clerk, produced a son, Rolf. But, unsatisfied with domestic life, she set out as a travelling revivalist.

She went on to build a following called the Church of the Four Square Gospel which culminated in the building of the Angelus Temple in 1923 in Los Angeles. Her son continues to run the church.

Far more scandalous than the recent televangelists, the most memorable event occurred in 1926 when she vanished for 32 days, reappearing with a story of being kidnapped. Inquisitive reporters dug deeper and soon stories were being retailed about Aimee's alleged liaison with her radio operator, Kenneth Ormiston.

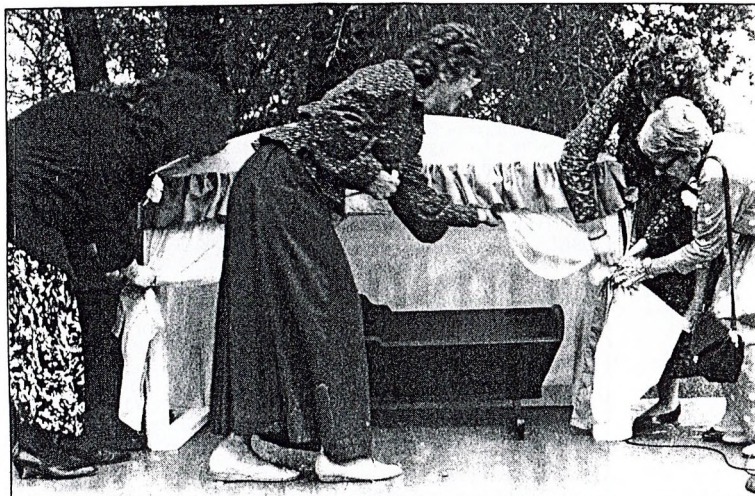
However, her followers welcomed her back and her career continued, with just a small decrease in numbers.

Always mindful of her roots, she returned to Ingersoll and the Salford area to visit her homestead and her father's grave in 1929 and again in 1934.

In January, 1944, it was rumored she might retire and she appointed her son permanent vice-president of the temple. Nine months later, while in Oakland, California, to dedicate a new branch church of the temple, she was found dead by her son, the morning after giving a dedication service.

The coroner's verdict was an accidental overdose of barbitual compound.

She was buried on her 54th birthday.



Famous Salford-born evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson's descendants were in attendance for a ceremony to mark her 100th anniversary, at the Ingersoll Cheese Museum, Sunday. Aimee's daughter, Roberta Salter, (right) and her great granddaughters Janice Bromberg (left) and Nora Bromberg (second from right) unveiled the cradle Aimee used to sleep in as an infant. Museum curator, Shirley Lovell, also helped with the unveiling. (Ellwood Shreve photo)

Story on Page 6

INGERSOLL TIMES
Aug 15, 1990

Aimee Semple McPherson's cradle unveiled at museum

BY LIZ DADSON

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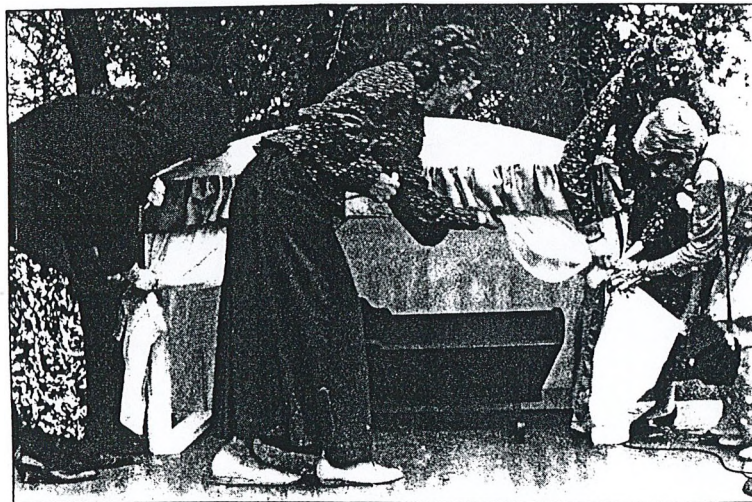
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Story on Page 6

INGERSOLL TIMES
Aug 15, 1990

Famous evangelist honored by her hometown

BY LIZ DADSON

It took 50 years, but finally there is a plaque in Salford, denoting it as the birth place of famous evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson.

At a ceremony Sunday afternoon, about 85 people listened as Bill Butt, representing the Oxford Historical Society, spoke of "Sister Aimee" who was born in 1890 and died in 1944.

"She died in California right after she finished one of 1,000s of sermons and revivals that she had conducted," Butt said.

Born and raised on a dairy farm just two miles from where the plaque is located just off Highway 19 in Salford, Aimee became a famous evangelist in the United States.

However, she never forgot her roots, and Butt used her own words to describe how proud she was to come from Oxford County. From a sermon called "From Milk Pail to Pulpit," Aimee notes that she was proud of her time as the only boy and only girl on the farm.

"We were brought up on oatmeal porridge, . . . that's the only way to bring up a child."

She had a Methodist and Salvation Army background, but when the Pentecostal religion came to Ingersoll in 1906, she joined it.

She married Robert Semple, a Pentecostal minister and they were called to be missionaries in China. He died there and she bore a daughter, Roberta, and later, by a second marriage, a son, Ralph.

Aimee became an itinerant minister. In 1919, she crossed the continent to Los Angeles where she built the Angelus Temple in 1923. It was the largest concrete dome in North America and it is still flourishing.

She wrote dozens of hymns and



It was a special day with a special guest as the historic plaque honoring Aimee Semple McPherson was unveiled Sunday afternoon in Salford. Roberta Salter (left), Aimee's daughter, joins Shirley Wilson and Harold Fishback of the Salford Heritage Museum, in the unveiling. Shirley's late husband, Everett, was also a member of the Salford museum. (Liz Dadson photo)

sacred music and thousands of sermons.

The Four Square Gospel, which she founded on the stability and values of rural Ontario, now boasts 25,000 congregations in 75 countries.

She was an early feminist, full of creativity and a sense of humor, Butt said. And she often wrote her sermon on a popular theme of the day, relating it to religion.

On hand for the unveiling was special guest Roberta Salter, Aimee's daughter.

"My brother and granddaughters regret they couldn't come today," she said. "My brother gave me an official speech, but I'm not making it.

"Every time I come to Canada, someone comes up and says they knew my mother."

Pointing to the group congregated for the ceremony, she stressed, "You made this day possible. You are her heritage."

Other dignitaries included Oxford MP John Finlay, Oxford

MPP Kimble Sutherland, South-West Oxford Township mayor Ernie Hardeman, Ingersoll museum curator Shirley Lovell, Dorothy Way of the Salford Women's Institute, Dr. Christopher Ellis and Paul Bator of the Ontario Heritage Foundation, Gene Raymond of the Four Square Gospel church, and Alvin Austin of Toronto, the author of a book on Aimee's history.

Speakers congratulated the Salford Heritage Museum and the Oxford Historical Society for their joint efforts on this project.

Hardeman noted that it took three years for the government to finally get a sign put up in Salford in honor of Aimee, but "it took 47 years for this community to decide this sign was required."

Pastor Bruce Tombs gave the dedication and special music was supplied by Rev. John McDonald and the Hi-Way Pentecostal choir, and Lieutenant Ian McDonough of the Ingersoll Salvation Army.

Vol. 1

No. 9

**Ingersoll
B.I.A.
Monthly Markdowns
for May '92**



AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON

Aimee, nee Kennedy, was born near Salford on October 19, 1880 and received her highschool education at Ingersoll Collegiate. In 1908 she married Robert Semple, a young evangelist. Two years later they travelled to China on Missionary work. Shortly afterward Robert contracted malaria and died, leaving Aimee with a young daughter. Returning to the U.S.A. she continued her evangelical work, establishing the International Church of the Four Square Gospel in Los Angeles in 1927. She died in 1944 but the organization that she founded continued to flourish worldwide.

1910 JANUARY 1910