

*History of the Church of Christ in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan*

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*Date*

Just Before 1955 The Woods family, headed by a father who was stationed with the U.S. Air Force at Kincheloe Air Force base (18 miles SSW of Sault Ste. Marie) provided for the church to meet in their home in Sault Sainte Marie (hereafter referred to as "the Soo" or "Soo").

1955 Nelson Bailey (brother of the well-known J.C. Bailey, missionary to India), preacher at the Eastside Church of Christ in Soo, Ontario, Canada, his son Philip Bailey, and about eight other Canadian Christian men, design and erect our first and present church building, address 1702 Davitt Street, at the corner with West Eighth Avenue. The official postal address is now 201 West Eighth Avenue. In reaction to the a cappella church's arrival, the Soo's long-established (since c. 1900) independent conservative Christian church (instrumental) added "First" to its name, being called now the "First Church of Christ;" the a cappella church was known as the "Sault Sainte Marie Church of Christ."

The first preacher was James Krumrei, from Amberg, Wisconsin. His wife is named Ruth; both are Freed-Hardeman graduates. They had four children. Attendance averaged around 20 each Lord's Day morning. Most of the congregation consisted of Air Force personnel and dependents. One of the first local converts was Edwin Eastman, who went into full-time preaching. Kay Ferris was baptized in 1960, the first of several to be converted from her family. Other local members included Daisy Burt (later withdrawn-from), and Isodore Trend. The preacher's home was part of the church building. The Krumreis left in April 1961; brother Krumrei next preached in Jackson, Michigan. In January of 1963 they left for missionary work in the Netherlands, where they remain to the present.

April 1961 Upon the Krumreis' departure, George Pennock came to preach. His wife was named Martha; they had one daughter, named Kathy. Brother Pennock, unlike brother Krumrei, was of the non-institutional or "anti" persuasion in regards to intercongregational cooperation. He was secured as the preacher because the bulk of the congregation, still drawn from Kincheloe AFB, was also of the non-institutional persuasion.

Charles Lee, a local member, painted the building's present beautiful waterfall and riverbank baptistry scene. Dianna Ferris, the mother of Kay Ferris, was baptized on the last day Brother Pennock was with the church; he even had to refill the

already-drained baptistry. Immediately brother Pennock left, and before the new preacher arrived, a church split occurred; about two-thirds of the membership left to found a new congregation, of mainstream (not non-institutional) persuasion. The new church met at Kinross, Michigan, adjacent to old U.S. Route 2, calling itself the "Cottage Park Church of Christ." Its Lord's Day morning attendance averaged around 45, in a small ranch-style home.

Approximately January, 1964 Roland Fritz (nicknamed "Todd") arrived to be the preacher for the Soo church, which was now thoroughly non-institutional, as was brother Fritz. He has been described as likeable, a good church-worker, but firmly outspoken and provocative in his non-institutional convictions. His wife's name was Donna; they had two children of their own, and three adopted. Although contact and fellowship continued between the Cottage Park and Soo churches, reconciliation to the point of reuniting was not forthcoming, due to the varying doctrinal convictions surrounding non-institutional issues. Brother Fritz was the last of the non-institutional preachers in the Soo church.

Approximately October 1966 Hershel Davis came as the new preacher. He was an older man, and has been described as very strange and emotionally disturbed, to the point of paranoia. He frequently called the police and had them conduct surveillance on members for "harassing" him, culminating in a policeman sitting-in on a service, whereupon they paid no further attention to his groundless summons. He left in March 1967, after only about a six month's tenure as preacher.

Sometime After March, 1967 Johnny Stovall came as the new preacher. His wife's name was Alice. They had marital problems; she eventually left him and they divorced. They had at least one daughter. During 1967-68, the Cottage Park and Sault churches overlooked their doctrinal differences and reunited; the impetus for this was the expected closing of Kincheloe AFB, which impressed upon the brethren the need to consolidate their resources if the church was to survive in the Michigan Soo. The church thereupon entered its greatest period of numerical strength, averaging about 100 for Lord's Day morning assemblies. Some materials from the Cottage Park church, e.g., four pews and other furniture, were used to refurbish the Eighth Avenue and Davitt Street building.

In late September 1968, Roger Rosie, a Coast Guard Warrant Officer, his wife Doris, and their three sons transferred into the Soo, where Roger served as the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Buckthorn at Coast Guard Base Soo.

Johnny Stovall was known for his exploits in roaming around Chippewa County on backwoods roads and trails and for camping-out in the church parking lot in -20 temperatures. One source said that Bro. Stovall developed doctrinal aberrations along the lines



of charismatic practice. Business meetings were contentious, because those of non-institutional persuasion frequently wished to veto activities proposed by the by now mainstream majority, e.g., Gospel meetings with outside speakers and door-knocking evangelistic campaigns. A brother Pigg from Kentucky was prevented from coming for such an effort because of this disagreement. Bro. Stovall left in 1969; eventually he went on to do missionary work in Indonesia, continuing to the present.

1969 For a time there was no regular preacher; the men of the church fulfilled this function. Later this year Philip Bailey (son of Nelson and nephew of J.C.) from the Eastside Church of Christ in Soo, Ontario became the regular preacher, holding the pulpit until 1972. Vivian Newcomb, a local resident, began attending in 1970; her husband Bud began attending in 1971.

1972 Jim Casey, an elementary school teacher by profession, became the preacher. His wife is named Betty; their daughters are Susan, Grace, and Bonnie (an adopted Korean). Bro. Casey is a graduate of Abilene Christian University. A brother John Franklin, from Tampa, Florida, came for a Gospel meeting. At his suggestion the men began to contemplate appointing elders; soon Roger Rosie and Paul Smith, an Air Force Master Sergeant in the administrative field who hailed from Kentucky, were so appointed - the only eldership in the church's history. Bro. Smith tended towards the non-institutional persuasion; he was transferred by the Air Force before the start of 1973, at which point the eldership dissolved.

September The Newcombs are baptized.  
1972

1973 Attendance averaged 65 on Lord's Day mornings. Clyde Ferris, father of Kay (who had married Philip Bailey) and husband of Dianna Ferris, was baptized.

1974 Jim Casey left to preach at the Pinehill Church of Christ in Soo, Ontario, Canada. The Michigan church continued on without a full-time preacher. Billy Steele, an Air Force enlisted man, filled the pulpit. Roger Rosie was transferred away by the Coast Guard.

1975 Kincheloe Air Force Base closed, drastically reducing the size of the church to about 15 in attendance each Lord's Day, all of whom were local people. The church was no longer self-supporting and was consequently compelled to seek outside support, which was secured from several churches in lower Michigan and Indiana. With the Air Force families gone, there were no non-institutional members left, so the church was now entirely mainstream in character.