

THE QUIET IMMANUEL MISSIONARIES

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THE GAZETTE

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Mission Bought Garman Building in the 1930s

BY DAVE HUGHES

YOUR HUB CONTRIBUTOR

They were the quiet people. The ones who lived on West Cucharras, and everyone noticed when they ‘walked around the west side, be- cause they wore similar clothing.“ The women and girls almost al- ways wore very modest long print dresses, and always plain shoes. The men were not always as easy to distinguish, but usually wore dark suits and ties. They were obviously a deeply religious group, largely staying to themselves. Over time everyone came to know them as the Im- manuel Missionaries.

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They first appeared on the west side in 1936. It was a period of Depression in the country. Empty commercial buildings were cheap to rent and vacant lots cost little to buy. The west side offered this religious movement a permanent home at last, which it has now occupied for over 70 years. It was ironic that the place that the People's Bible College chose for their place of education and worship had been, just 20 years earlier, part of the saloon, brothel, and gambling "Old Town" district — the original wide open Colorado City — before the town voted dry in 1913, the town legally dissolved, and was annexed into Colorado Springs in 1917. Only three buildings from that era still existed on West Cucharras. The missionaries were not reluctant to use them, even though two of them had been linked by one of the infamous tunnels of Colorado City. Immanuel Missionaries had, and still have, their own values and don't worry about that of others. But who were they, exactly, these Immanuel Missionaries? Where did they come from? Sometimes they are mistaken for Mennonites, which they are not, although they welcome visiting Mennonites who often travel to Colorado for vacations. Nor were they related to the Amish. I had a wonderful opportunity to find out when the daughter, Elise Cadwell, of a longtime church member, Florence Cadwell, came into our History Center looking for some early building information for her mother. We happened to meet. This was fortuitous. I, like many other west-siders and our Historical Society really didn't know much about the Immanuel Missionaries who had been such an unmistakable part of the westside and such good neighbors for such a long time. When I learned that Elsie's mother was not doing too well (understandably at her age of 92), I knew I wanted to interview her for our Historical Society before it was too late to learn from one of the few persons alive who knew the Immanuel Missionary story from its origins. Her mother was happy to oblige. And so, helped by her son Carl, whose memories as a boy growing up in that faith and their neighborhood helped fill in gaps, I was able to have two one-hour long tape recorded interview sessions. I learned that the People's Bible College was established by the Immanuel Association, formerly known as the Immanuel Missionary Church. Its theological roots were in quiet Wesleyan Method. Missionary work was at the heart of its activities. In order to prepare its younger members for their life's work, a major task was Education. From that stemmed their four-year Immanuel Missionary Bible College. The Immanuel Missionaries' prayers for sufficient space for their college, were answered when they were able, in 1936, to buy the very large empty building at 2418 West Colorado Avenue.

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Having been once the National Hotel, and the First National Bank of Colorado City, even a Drug Store, it was then largely empty and on the market for \$80,000. But Depression times were tough. So the church was able to buy it for only \$15,000! A large sign high on the building let every west-sider know what was inside. Other existing buildings on West Cucharras were gradually incorporated into their plans. The earliest one was at 2709 Cucharras. Another, the very small old 1909 "Stone" building at 2626 Cucharras, is still standing, as is another one at 2616. That two-story brick structure was built in 1899. It became a Woman's Dormitory for the College for a time.

After the WWII 2nd Air Force headquarters east of downtown — where Ent AFB and the Olympic Center later located — was closed down and demolished in 1948, the church was able to buy government surplus building materials, enough to build a new dormitory. Butler Memorial Hall still stands today at 2713 West Cucharras. The nearby original building at 2709, was taken down in 1950. Most church members lived in private homes across the west side, gathering for church services at the Grace Tabernacle at 2703 Cucharras, which they were able to build in 1948.

That is when west-siders most noticed their parishioners on the streets gathering for services, always quiet and content in their faith and very modest way of life, shunning modern conveniences such as radio and television. Under the leadership of Reverend R. G. Finch, both church and bible college attendance grew — as the accompanying photograph in front of the Colorado Avenue building shows. . Now I had been aware of this church's existence growing up on the east side of Colorado Springs because one of their women.....