

What Ever Happened to... F. Passmore

Within United Methodism, the journals of each of central Pennsylvania's predecessor conferences contain the names of persons who were granted licenses to preach and/or admitted on trial, continued on the conference rolls for a year or two without ever accepting an appointment, and then withdrew. In the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association, one such person is "F. Passmore." For over 100 years the only notations associated with his name were

1876 licensed
1878 withdrew

In such situations the two most likely explanations for what might have happened to such a person are as follows.

- (1) He was a local person who decided for personal or family reasons not to pursue a ministerial career. In such cases he might be found later as an active layperson within a local church.
- (2) He was a local person who moved west. In such cases he might be found later on the rolls of another conference.

Florida F. Passmore

A person who would fall perfectly into the second category is Florida F. Passmore of the Colorado Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His service record in that conferences reads as follows.

1880 licensed
1884 ordained local deacon
1888 ordained local elder and admitted on trial

1884-89 Alma
1889-94 Breckenridge
1894-96 supernumerary [i.e., on leave]
1896 expelled under chargers

The 1898 story of Colorado Methodism by Isaac Haight Beardsley titled *Echoes from Peak and Plain* gives biographical sketches of conferences pastors, including this one for F.F. Passmore.

Florida F. Passmore was born in Union County, Georgia, August 12, 1844; moved with his father, when six years of age, to Polk County, East Tennessee; came to Colorado in April 1879; joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1880; licensed to preach, in November, 1880, at Alma, Park County, Colorado, by the Rev. Earl Cranston, presiding elder; admitted to Conference in 1888, and ordained to local orders as an elder at the same time, having been ordained deacon previously.

He was pastor at Alma and Breckenridge, each five years. At the latter place he made a valiant fight against rum and sin in high places, and brought out the opposition of the baser elements. August 17, 1891, an attempt was made to blow up the steeple of his

church with dynamite, and those “of the baser sort” hung him in effigy, March, 1894, ordering him to leave town, threatening his life in case of non-compliance. True to God, his own conscience, and the law of the Church, he remained at his post until relieved by the expiration of his term. He became a supernumerary in 1894-95.

He is a man of good natural abilities, firm in his convictions, and possesses an uncompromising spirit. In his recent history he has denounced unsparingly some of the prominent members of the Conference and the resident bishop, without cause, as most of the brethren think, dealing in bitter personalities. His brethren bore with him long and patiently, but to no effect. In 1896, charges having been brought against him, he was expelled from the ministry. In all that he has done, he claims to have had the Divine approval.

While this information appears to pick up the trail immediately after the 1878 withdrawal from the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association and answers some of the “what ever happened to...” questions, it demands an investigation to determine the following. What happened at Breckenridge to bring about the threats on his life? What denouncements did he make that brought about his expulsion from the Methodist ministry? What happened to him after 1898? What was his situation prior to his 1876?

Breckenridge, Colorado

The most complete account of F.F. Passmore’s days as a controversial Methodist preacher in Colorado is given in Mark Fiester’s¹ 1973 book *Blasted Beloved Breckenridge*. Passmore moved to Colorado in 1879, where he engaged in mining and lived in a tent. There he encountered a district superintendent who later reported, “His prayer was of such a spiritual kind that I recognized him as a man of strong brain force. I encouraged him to enter the ministry.”

In April 1891 a Saloon Law went into effect in Colorado that included the Sunday closing of all saloons. This statute was ignored in the rugged mining town of Breckenridge – until Passmore visited all the saloonkeepers demanding compliance with the law and threatening the law officers with legal action if they failed to enforce the statute. An editorial in the August 1st, 1891, *Summit County Journal* came out in protest.

Last Sunday was the Sunday of Sundays; all the saloons in town were closed and their usual habitués were compelled to loaf around the streets... The workings of the law here was such as to show the sheer nonsense of such legislation for a camp in the midst

¹ Mark Lafayette Fiester (1907-1996) served Breckenridge UMC 1965-72. He happens to have been born in South Williamsport PA and was licensed by the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Church in 1930. After graduating from Albright College in Reading PA and Evangelical Theological Seminary in Naperville IL, he served in the Atlantic Conference before transferring to the Colorado Conference in 1948. And so the search for the F. Passmore who withdrew from the Central Pennsylvania Conference in 1878 leads us (in Colorado!) to a Colorado pastor who started in that same Central Pennsylvania Conference in 1930.

of the mountains. The law was conceived in the brain of a fanatic, enacted by a body of imbeciles, signed by a doughface, and in a camp like Breckenridge would be enforced only by an impracticable enthusiast... Last Sunday Breckenridge enjoyed the result of silly laws placed at the disposal of any crank who may from any cause see fit to demand their enforcement.

Having thus stirred the waters, that same paper took a step backward when the church belfry was destroyed by dynamite sixteen days later.

On Monday night last [August 17, 1891] some miscreant, not having the good name of the town nor the safety of sleeping residents in the neighborhood before his eyes, ascended the Methodist Church to the belfry and there arranged an explosive that a few minutes later afterwards destroyed the bell, hurling the fragments in all directions... The unreasonable and unchristlike course of the pastor in the part he took in the Sunday closing business was calculated to develop just such retaliation in the mind of a cracked-brain opponent, but we did not believe there was one in town.

But Rev. Florida F. Passmore had only begun to fight. He then produced an obscure statute still on the Colorado books – the Gambling Law of 1866, which had only ever been haphazardly enforced, that effectively closed the gambling tables at every Breckenridge saloon. Again the *Journal* printed its opinion...

Saloons and gambling rooms are on a par with churches: those who do not wish to visit them are not compelled to; so long as our fellow citizens do not annoy or interfere with us, their going to either of the places is none of our business.

...and also an open letter to the good preacher from the Sheriff of Summit County, which read in part...

Dear Sir: While the officers of Summit County are enforcing the laws with your assistance and insistence, why do you overlook the person and shortcomings of yourself – the Rev. F.F. Passmore – why has he not been arrested long ere this for disturbing the peace?

The Conference Trial

When his appointment at Breckenridge was completed, Passmore was given “supernumerary” status at the 1894 annual conference. Today this would be designated “on leave” – he was released from receiving an appointment, but at liberty to preach within the bounds of the Conference. And preach he did. At any church (of any denomination) or public meeting where he could speak, or by any printed media which he could access, Passmore was eager to interpret the failure of any Methodist pastors, superintendents or bishops to act as forcefully as he did against saloons and gambling and other social ills as complicity in the liquor trade and the gaming industry and the corruption of society for their own personal gain and prestige.

Passmore’s criticisms and accusations did not go unnoticed, and at the 1895 annual conference he was initially “located” – which meant that he was free to

preach only on the circuit where he held his membership. But that decision was rescinded, and he was returned to “supernumerary” status. Passmore crossed a line in 1896. While holding revival services on the Rifle circuit, and continuing his criticism of Methodist leadership, he tried to lead the Grand Valley congregation and church building out of the denomination.² Finally, at the August 1896 meeting of the Colorado Conference, a trial was held and F.F. Passmore received “expulsion from the ministry, but not from the Church.” Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News* for September 2, 1896, summarized the unfolding story as follows.³

PASSMORE INDEPENDENT

Refuses To Be Read Out Of the Methodist Church

Will Imitate Myron W. Reed

In the Meantime The Heterodox Preacher

Will Carry His Case To The Judicial Conference

And Thence To The Highest Authority

Rev. F.F. Passmore may yet fill the pulpit of an independent church, organized and conducted on the plan pursued in the Broadway Temple, and located in Leadville. After his expulsion from the ministry of the Colorado Methodist Conference last Friday, he was interviewed by various citizens of the Cloud City, who desired to formulate plans for such an organization. Mr. Passmore preached to great crowds on the street every night during the conference. The erratic ex-minister has money of his own, however, and is not dependent upon a salary from a congregation for his support.

Mr. Passmore’s plan is now to carry his case to the judicial conference, which is composed of ministers belonging to the conferences contiguous to the Colorado Conference. Should he suffer a repetition of his defeat there he will carry his case to the General Conference, which is the highest tribunal of Methodism.

Passmore did indeed appeal to the judicial council in December 1896, which upheld the verdict of the Colorado Conference. He did not appeal to the General Conference, and that seemed to end the matter. Fiester’s treatment of Passmore ends with the following paragraphs.

So little is known about Florida Passmore apart from his fiery preaching and valiant crusading. Apparently he was unmarried; there is no mention of a wife and family. No pictures are available, except the newspaper sketches. Reportedly, he was a large-sized

² Templin’s 1976 *Methodist, Evangelical and United Brethren Churches in the Rockies* adds that a superintendent had to have the sheriff physically remove Passmore from a quarterly conference.

³ Present readers may need clarification for some items in the following article.

Myron W. Reed (1836-1899) was the dynamic, Christian Socialist pastor of Denver’s First Congregational Church from 1884 to 1894 before resigning to found that city’s more socially active non-denominational Broadway Tabernacle.

Cloud City is another name for Leadville, which at 10,430 feet above sea level is America’s highest incorporated city – although other incorporated towns and ski slopes include higher elevations.

man and physically strong. Breckenridge lads found him a capable boxing instructor. He was fearless; threat of physical force or power of pen and printed-page failed to cower him. The story is told of a young man, who thought himself a pug, asking a businessman if he would pay the fine if he would go out in the street and lick that preacher. The businessman replied, "Yes, I will pay your fine, but I will not pay your doctor bill."

What finally happened to Florida Passmore? Again, as in so many Breckenridge stories, the trail is lost. The independent tabernacle in Leadville did not materialize; perhaps he found another "Cloud City" for his crusading.

The only known remnant of the dynamited bell is a twenty-two pound iron hammer. It was not the clapper to sound the joyous call to worship on Sabbath mornings, but the hammer to strike the outside of the bell in funeral tolling. It is the memorial of Florida F. Passmore – "for whom the bell tolls." The way of the crusader and reformer is not easy.

The *Denver Post* for October 19, 1897, printed a moving account to inform its curious readers what had become of the once energetic and newsworthy preacher.

A HEAVY CROSS

Rev. F.F. Passmore is Bearing It Quietly and Uncomplainingly

AN AGED AND STRICKEN MAN

Expelled From the Ministry for His Bold Criticism
of What Many Considered the Apathy of the Church,
He Goes to Work as a Miner – While Thus
Employed a Greater Affliction Overtakes Him

Rev. F.F. Passmore, formerly a minister of the Methodist church working for a small salary, but now a practical miner working for \$3 a day, is in this city having his eye attended by an oculist. There is tragic history back of all this.

Nearly everybody remembers the bitter struggle Passmore had with the church, beginning with a set of resolutions introduced at a Pueblo conference and ending with his final expulsion from the ministry. The charges against him were fourfold, the principal being unchristian conduct. This consisted in going about preaching in a decidedly personal manner against the bishop and other ministers.

"I am as full of fight as ever," he said this morning. "This ugly wound on my eye has caused me intense suffering, but I expect to be a better man for it. There is nothing that makes a man out of anyone like suffering."

Rev. Mr. Passmore has had a checkered career as a minister. He has been a regular ordained minister of a local church, has served as a substitute and as an itinerant preacher.

After the final disposition of his case by the judicial conference at Omaha, Mr. Passmore found himself without a home and without an occupation, but he did not lose courage. He stuck his Bible in his pocket, shouldered the pick and shovel and started for the mining camps. In the latter part of August, this year, he began placer mining at

Alma and in September he hired himself out at the Kansas mine in the North Star mountain, where he has worked continuously ever since, ten hours a day at the rate of \$3 a day. Mr. Passmore looks as if he had seen trouble, and his share of it, too. While strong and robust in appearance, yet his clothes are threadbare, his voice weakened by exposure, his hearing impaired...

“Away back in 1879, I worked in the sampling works of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company, so I was used to hard work and took very kindly to mining. During odd hours and on Sundays I continued to preach and kept it up until I went into the mountains. I don’t mind the work in the mines. It gives me an existence and keeps my mind off my troubles.

“But I shall not spend all the rest of my life in the mines,” he continued. “I feel that God has called me for something better, to expose corruption in high places and lift a dead weight from the shoulders of humanity. I have always opposed Sunday work of every kind and if I had my way street cars, railway trains, and the carrying of mails even on Sunday should stop. I believe in the Christian Sabbath.” Mr. Passmore has been working side by side with twenty other miners during the past six weeks, patiently toiling with his hands and thinking out some plans for the betterment of the world. It is said to have been an interesting spectacle after the day’s work was over, to see this grey-headed old man – he is probably near 60 – sitting in a corner by himself, the pick and shovel laid aside and the open Bible held firmly in his hands.

One of the greatest pleasures he enjoyed was to gather his fellow laborers about him and tell them of the good things beyond, never neglecting an opportunity, however, to criticize in the most vehement language, the methods of teaching Christianity adopted by the church of the present day.

He expects to go back to the mines as soon as his eye is better and take up his improvised cross, the pick and shovel, for a season at least.

The same broadcloth suit that he used to wear in the pulpit, now threadbare and dingy, and changed from black to grey, serves also as mining clothes. He is a minister still. Upon the weather-beaten face, distorted by wrinkles, is the same clerical expression. His shoulders are now round with stooping and on account of the injury to his eye he has to feel his way along with a stick.

The Trinity Church Trial

It turns out that Florida F. Passmore’s time in the spotlight was not yet over. As a layman, his membership now resided at Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church in Denver. Just a few months after the Denver *Post* article given in the previous section, in December 1897, Passmore made an appearance at the Parachute church

on the Rifle charge, addressed the congregation without the permission of the pastor, and criticized the church's lack of holiness and spirituality – calling the pastor Austin Crooks a “smooth-faced hypocrite” and Sunday School superintendent Thomas Glover a “bad man without a single redeeming quality” and a “wolf in sheep's clothing.” On another occasion, Passmore performed a marriage ceremony as a minister of the gospel, despite the fact that he no longer had any valid credentials.

In February 1898, Austin Crooks brought formal charges against F.F. Passmore for a church trial to expel him as a member of Trinity Church. The *Denver Post* followed each day of the trial, and this article from February 14, 1898, gives the tone of the entire proceedings. The Dr. Madison assisting the prosecution is Wilbur C. Madison, superintendent of the adjacent Greely District.

A HARD ROW

Former Pastor Passmore Says He Will Continue to Hoe It

HIS TRIAL NOW IN PROGRESS

At Trinity Church the Pastor and a Body of Laymen
Are Taking Testimony on His Fitness to Remain
in the Methodist Church – Some Time Ago He Was
Forbidden to Preach, but He Continues to Do So.

Rev. F.F. Passmore believes he, like John the Baptist of old, is the voice of one crying in the wilderness of Methodist wealth and love of the money power. His trial for church insubordination and defamation is taking place today in the choir room of Trinity M.E. church. He is a member of that church and the trial is an attempt to oust him from its membership. It is proceeding before the pastor, Rev. Dr. Cobern, and five laymen of that church who are not members of the quarterly conference.....

Mr. Passmore is acting as his own counsel and Rev. A Crooks, his accuser, of Parachute, as counsel for the church. There was a voluminous mass of affidavits and depositions from Methodists at Parachute in effect that he said Mr. Crooks was a hypocrite and that Passmore preached after being suspended from exercising that privilege. Mr. Passmore denies the charges, but admits that he “spoke right out in meeting” denouncing the practices of the church as a whole and that he had also administered the Lord's Supper.

No reporters were allowed during this morning's session. Dr. Cobern said it was contrary to the Methodist discipline, but Mr. Passmore obtained from him permission for the presence of reporters tonight, when he will probably present his defense at length. Dr. Madison is assisting Mr. Crooks in perfecting the case against Passmore. The latter has asked further time to himself secure depositions from his friends at Parachute and Rifle in answer to the depositions against him. This may be granted him. He has been expelled from the conference and now it is likely Trinity church will expel him from its membership.

“What will you do if Trinity church expels you?” he was asked.

“Keep right on preaching and lecturing. Thank God they can’t stop me from doing that. I expect to be expelled, but I am going to make a defense which will show my position pretty well, and that is why I wanted the newspapers present to tell the story.

“You see, there is a good deal behind all this. I got tired of seeing the church of lowly Wesley acting as the upholder of trusts, corporations and the thousands of agencies by which gold debases mankind. I wearied of seeing our wealthy bishops hobnob with these folks and vote them, through the Methodist church influence, into office and power. So I rebelled and expected to get sat upon. But truth is mighty and will prevail. I don’t suppose my puny arm can overthrow Baal, but it is my duty to try to do it.

“We need more bishop Asburys and Simpsons. We need men who will seek to overthrow this terrible power of modern days, not men who will yield it obedience. Thank God I am a strong man physically. I worked in the mines all last summer and can do so again, preaching the truth as I can. I would like to speak in Denver, but I alone and have no backing.

“People will probably say I am crazy to thus fly in the face of a great church and its machinery and wealth, but that’s what they’ve always said about men who did the same thing. The Church of England thought John Wesley was crazy, and Luther was an imbecile in the eyes of Catholicism. I don’t compare myself to these men, but I know it is time for the great Methodist Episcopal church, which I love, to cease bowing down to Baal and Moloch and again worship the truth and the love of Christ. I am in the right to stay and I wish I had more ability to lend to it. I am now preaching and lecturing around in this state and shall continue to do so no matter what the Methodist church may or can do.”

Mr. Passmore is of herculean frame and honest, rugged features. He is not a man who will set the world afire, perhaps, but he has a pertinacity of purpose which is most effective in such a gigantic battle as he has undertaken. If Trinity church expels him he will appeal the case to the quarterly conference. He thinks it will. “My flag is not popular, my boy,” he said sadly, “and I have a hard row to hoe, but I’m going to hoe it.”

As was predicted, F.F. Passmore was found guilty and expelled from the membership at Trinity church, and he appealed to the quarterly conference.

The Quarterly Conference Trial

The quarterly conference trial was no less sensational or less covered by the media than each of the previous trials. Held in April 1898 at Trinity Church, it was presided over by Bethuel T. Vincent, superintendent of the Denver District. The

previously mentioned W.C. Madison represented the conference, but this time Passmore was represented by C.W. Everett⁴ and E.J. Wilcox.⁵

The trial began on a Monday, and the first night only 19 of the 68 pages of evidence were read before adjournment. The trial continued for three days – with Passmore himself testifying little, but closely following all the testimony with the aid of a large ear trumpet. Part of the defense argument was that Rev. Cobern had applied undue influence (called “ecclesiastical bossism” by E.J. Wilcox) on the original jury. The *Denver Post* reported that “After the jury had retired, the offending Passmore was accosted by Cobern and Madison and their followers and a hot discussion ensued – in which stronger language was used by the opposing faction than that which led to the prosecution of the hapless defendant in the first place.”

The jury began their deliberations Wednesday night and finally came back with a verdict at 3 o’clock Thursday morning. The decision of the original trial was confirmed by a vote of 11-9. When Passmore appealed the decision of the quarterly conference to the August 1898 session of the Colorado Conference, Bishop Mallalieu affirmed all previous verdicts. Finally the Committee on Judiciary at the 1900 General Conference⁶ affirmed the decision of Bishop Mallalieu.

No Longer a Methodist

As F.F. Passmore indicated he would do, he continued preaching and lecturing wherever he would be received. Newspaper accounts for the next few years indicate that among his most frequent Denver venues were the Free Methodist Church at 320 South Water Street, the Free Methodist Mission at 1853 Lawrence

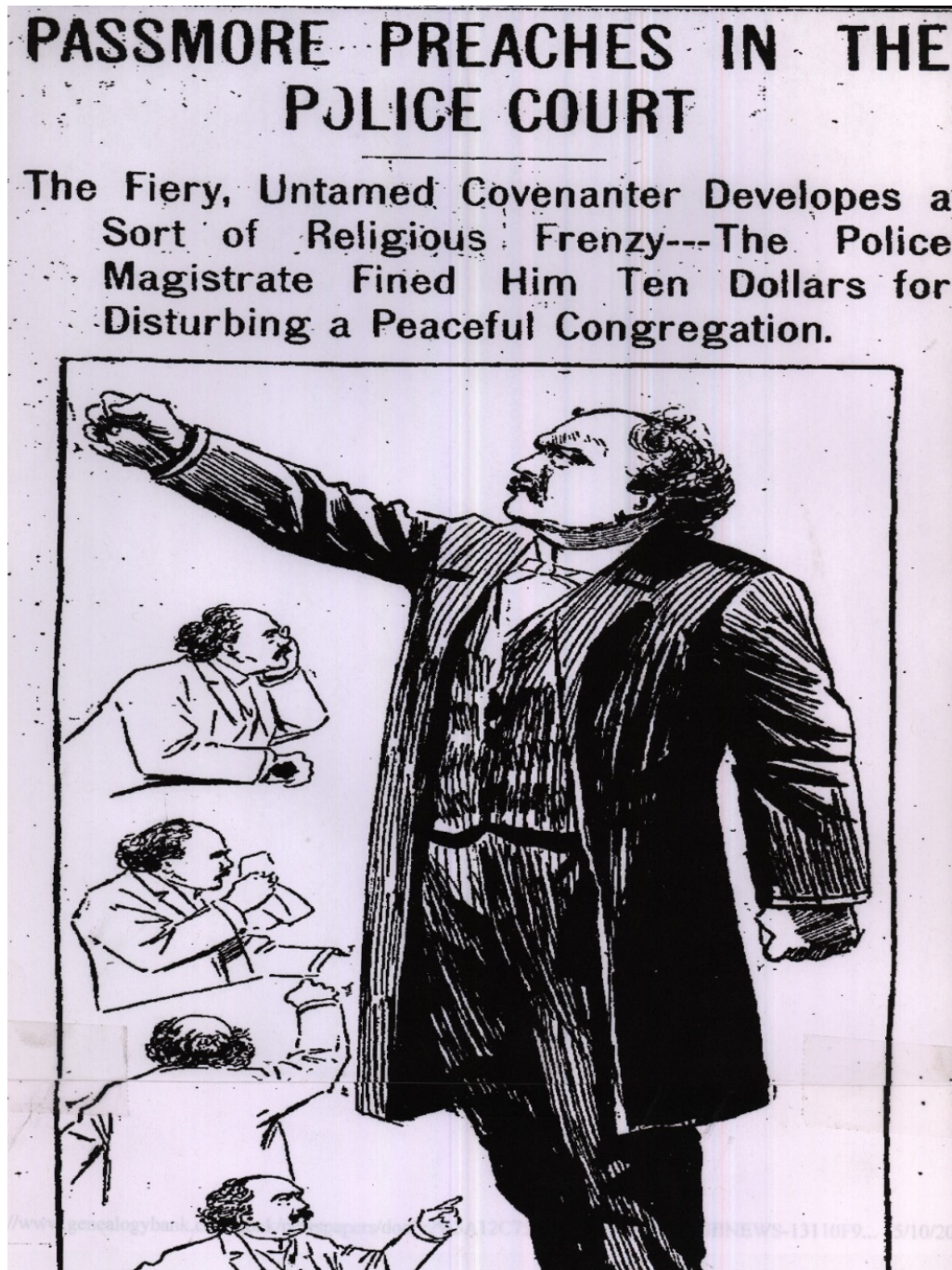
⁴ Charles Warren Everett (1863-1903) was a Denver attorney. His bar association obituary describes him as “a man of deeply religious nature” and “very prominent in all the work of the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church.” For many years the attorney for the Anti-Saloon League, and for two years its superintendent, he was once stoned and beaten for prosecuting a case against a disreputable saloon in one of Denver’s suburbs. He died at the age of 39 following a 7 weeks bout with typhoid fever.

⁵ Edward J. Wilcox was a former itinerant in the Colorado Conference who had just located at his own request at the August 1897 annual conference. He subsequently became active in the Methodist Brotherhood, serving as president of the Denver unit, and was elected a reserve lay delegate from the Colorado Conference to the 1908 General Conference. The *Summit County Journal* for January 12, 1907, includes this item: “Proved Good Man of Business. While preaching in Pueblo, Col., a few years ago Rev. Edward J. Wilcox found himself in the embarrassing position of being unable to pay his debts. Knowing that if he stuck to the pulpit he would have small chance of getting even with the world, he quit preaching and went into the mining business. Today he owns mines in Colorado worth \$3,000,000 besides a great deal of other valuable property.”

⁶ The 1900 General Conference Journal, pages 456-458 gives a comprehensive account of the case and the disciplinary issues involved.

Street, and an independent congregation at Twenty-Sixth Avenue and Clarkston Street.

But Passmore was back in the headlines and back in court in Denver on least one more occasion. The image below is taken from *Denver Post* for January 22, 1900. The lengthy accompanying article indicated that Passmore had not lost



PASSMORE DELIVERING HIS MESSAGE

any of his flair, nor had the *Denver Post* tired of giving a full account of his antics. Passmore was accused of interrupting a worship service to preach an uninvited message of criticism and rebuke. Passmore admitted, “Your honor, I did rise in Asbury Methodist church last night, and I did address those people. I felt a call to speak to that congregation – a call from God, not from man.” In his defense, however, he said that he waited until after the benediction before saying a word – and he also said that because he was almost deaf he did not realize that he was talking as loud as was claimed.

At one point in the hearing, Passmore re-preached the gist of his offending remarks about corruption and collusion within the church and government with such force and conviction that the reporter noted: “What was this? Had the enthusiast who had been set down as eccentric and unreliable struck out among erratic sputterings a great flash of truth? ... At any rate there was silence in the court.” In the end, however, Passmore was ordered to pay a \$10 fine plus court costs.

The accounts of F.F. Passmore in the west conclude with two brief 1901 mentions of Passmore from the *Rocky Mountain News*:

July 23, page 2: Cheyenne, Wyo., July 22 – F.S. [sic] Passmore, a street evangelist, was arrested in the midst of his talk tonight for abusing Rev. Benjamin Young, pastor of the First Methodist church, and Dr. E.E. Tarbill, Methodist missionary. He claims to be inspired and says his arrest is a case of Christ versus the police.

July 26, page 8: Cheyenne, Wyo., July 25 – As a result of the attack made upon Rev. Benjamin Young and Dr. E.E. Tarbill by F.S. [sic] Passmore, a street evangelist, an effort is to be made to have the city council pass an ordinance prohibiting preaching upon the streets of Cheyenne. Passmore has been released from jail and continues his attacks nightly upon the streets of the business portion of the city.

Census records list Florida F. Passmore in 1910 as aged 65, living in Clear Creek County CO and working as watchman in the silver mines and in 1920 as aged 75, living in Denver. In late 1920 or early 1921, he returned east and passed away in Knoxville TN on October 31, 1922. The physician who signed the death certificate indicated that he had attended the deceased for the past 18 months, gave the place of death as 920 Mitchell Street, and noted that the deceased was 78 years of age, a minister and a widower. He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, Knoxville TN.

The Unanswered Question

Since Florida F. Passmore is known to have been born in Georgia, can there be absolute certainty that he is the same F. Passmore who withdrew from the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association in 1878? That date certainly matches with his reported 1879 arrival in Colorado. Furthermore, the enthusiasm he displayed for things religious immediately upon his arrival in

Colorado are consistent with the mindset of someone who had been considering the ministry – and the transition from the Evangelical Association to the Methodist Episcopal Church would have been a natural choice in an area where there was no Evangelical Association presence. But this story cannot be put to rest without further investigation.

A search into the family of Florida F. Passmore indicates the family roots are in the mountainous area where North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia come together. Florida's father David was born in North Carolina in 1810, Florida was born in Union County GA (which borders the southwest corner of NC) in 1844, and the 1870 census places the family in Polk County TN (which also borders the southwest corner of NC). Florida's older brother Washington K. Passmore (1838-1887) was reportedly a Methodist circuit rider.⁷

Since the years between Florida F. Passmore's 1870 appearance in the census in Polk County TN census and his 1879 arrival in Colorado remain undocumented it may be possible that he is indeed the F. Passmore who was licensed by the Evangelical Association in Pennsylvania in 1876 and withdrew in 1878. In fact, given his spirit of independence and holiness – in combination with his inclination toward mining – it is entirely plausible that he moved into Pennsylvania to work the mines there and enthusiastically identified with one of United Methodism's predecessor denominations – especially since there were many areas in Central Pennsylvania where the Methodist Episcopal Church had no viable presence.

But a more thorough search of the census records, and a correction in a key bit of information that was here-to-fore assumed to be unquestionable, indicates that Florida F. Passmore is NOT the Evangelical Association's elusive F. Passmore. The fact is that Florida F. Passmore appears TWICE in the 1880 census:

- in District 8, Polk County TN – where he is recorded as being single, living with his parents, and working in the mines
- in Alma, Park County CO – where he is recorded as being single, living with his brother-in-law, and worker in a smelter

The only explanation for such an occurrence is that Passmore moved from Tennessee to Colorado in 1880 – AFTER the census was taken in Polk County TN and BEFORE the census was taken in Park County CO. This suggests that the future Rev. Passmore resided in Tennessee continuously during the 1870's until he moved to Colorado and that the April 1879 date for his arrival in Colorado that is

⁷ As there appears to be no official documentation of any Methodist ordination or conference membership for W.K. Passmore, he must have been a local preacher. He is also reported to have been a school teacher. His son George Washington Passmore (1883-1953) was a Baptist minister in Polk County TN for 27 years. But these facts confirm the suspicion that Florida Passmore had been raised in a strong Christian home.

given in Beardsley's 1898 biographical sketch is incorrect. The biographical information must have come from Passmore himself, and so either Beardsley made the error as he worked from his notes or Passmore misspoke when providing the information.

So far as we know, Passmore never married – and he is listed as single in every census, suggesting that the “widower” designation given on the death certificate by the attending physician was a faulty assumption. The brother-in-law designation in the 1880 Park County CO census results from his living with his younger sister Josephine,⁸ her husband William S. Ward, and their two small girls – 3 year old Fannie and 2 year old Lillie.

The Answered Question

After the bulk of the preceding material was gathered, and the information revealed in the preceding paragraph demanded a re-thinking of the situation, the “real” F. Passmore was discovered. Frederick Passmore appears in the record book at the conference archives of the Liberty circuit of the Evangelical Association, page 65, as part of the Arnot class as compiled in 1875 as follows.

name	remarks	[editorial]
Frederic [sic] Passmore	withdrew under charges	
M.A. Passmore	withdrew	[wife]
George Passmore	died	[father]
Jane Passmore	withdrew	[mother]

This F. Passmore was born in Cornwall, England, in 1838. While still in England, he married a Miss Mary Ann Thomas (1841-1930) and had a son Edwin H. Passmore (1866-1919). In 1871 the family immigrated to America with his father George Passmore (1806-1877), mother Jane [nee Polk] Passmore (1805-1896), and older brother William R. Passmore (1835-1900). Frederick settled in Arnot, Tioga County, where he was the proprietor of a shoe shop. William settled in nearby Blossburg. Frederick apparently first united with the Presbyterian Church in Arnot, where he was an elder and officer in the Sunday School for 1872 and 1873 – but within a few years he and his wife and parents joined the Arnot class of Evangelical Association's Liberty circuit. Their religious affiliation in England, or the religious affiliation of William in America, remains unknown.

In 1876, the Central Pennsylvania Conference granted licenses to preach to two members of the Arnot class: George Joseph⁹ and Frederick Passmore. While the former was given an appointment and went on to enjoy a long and successful

⁸ In the 1870 census, Josephine was listed as single, 21 years old, and living at home in Polk County TN with her parents and brother Florida.

⁹ By coincidence, George Joseph (1845-1922) was also a native of Great Britain – but he was from Wales and had come to America ten years before the Passmore family.

ministerial career, Passmore was not assigned. He may well have requested that his entering the itinerancy be delayed because of family reasons, as he and Mary had their second child Frederick C. in 1874 and would have their third child Mary E. later in 1876. In addition, the 1877 death of his father may have saddled him with additional responsibilities for the care of his mother. At any rate, Passmore withdrew from the ministerial ranks in 1878. The circuit membership book states that he withdrew from the Arnot class “under charges” but gives no date for that event.

After leaving the Arnot class of the Evangelical Association, Frederick and Mary joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in nearby Mansfield, where his son Edward was a shoemaker. Frederick continued living and working in Arnot at least until 1883 – for “Fred. F. Passmore”¹⁰ is listed in the 1883 *History of Tioga County* as the proprietor of a shoe shop in Arnot, and their youngest child Asaph was born in Arnot in 1883. The records of First UMC in Mansfield state that Frederick died and was removed from the records on February 10, 1889. He is buried in Mansfield’s Prospect Cemetery along with his wife Mary Ann and children Edwin H. [and his wife Velma Peck Passmore] and unmarried children Mary Elizabeth (1876-1925) and Asaph (1883-1935). Frederick and Mary had three other grown children which eventually settled in New Haven CT, Binghamton NY and Detroit MI.

The Lesson

It’s a small world, and the connections between seemingly unrelated people and places are quite often truly amazing. But sometimes the subconscious desire to make connections, tie up loose ends, and report the truly amazing pushes the researcher to jump to unwarranted conclusions – and this is a very real danger in genealogical investigations. In a way, it’s sad that the F. Passmore of the Central Pennsylvania turned out to be the shoe-making father Frederick F. Passmore and not the trouble-making flamboyant Florida F. Passmore – but *The Chronicle* decided that the story was worthy of publication, false trails and all. And to that end the editor wishes to thank Rev. Patricia Thompson of the Historical Society UMC and Rev. Laura Harris of the Rocky Mountain Conference UMC for their assistance and patience with research beyond the capabilities of the archives of the Susquehanna Conference.

¹⁰ This is the only known reference to a middle initial for this Frederick Passmore – and by coincidence it is the same as the middle initial for Florida Passmore.