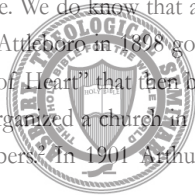


From the Archives: Arthur Greene: Pioneering Pentecostal Evangelist

Sometimes in the archives, you just stumble on treasure without even knowing it was there.¹ This happened recently while we were inventorying the archives and stumbled on an incredible set of painted images on heavy muslin used for early Holiness camp meetings. In an attempt to figure out the context for these paintings, we found one small box of additional documents from the family of Rev. Arthur Greene connected to these paintings. Then began a fascinating task of researching to find out more about this very small and obscure, but interesting collection.

Arthur Greene was born December 21, 1865 in Cranston, Rhode Island and died October 15, 1946 in Tisbury, Massachusetts, on the island of Martha's Vineyard. He married Harriet Lena Greene on December 31, 1885 in Cranston, and they ultimately had five sons. But once we get past the basic genealogical information, things become much more obscure. One of the first references to Arthur Greene comes as a pastor attending Seth Rees's Portsmouth Holiness camp meeting (Portsmouth is around 25 miles from Cranston) in 1898, where he appears as a pastor or evangelist attending the camp meeting from Auburn, Rhode Island, when he would have been 33 years old. About this time, it is highly likely that he fell under the influence of Seth C. Rees, the dynamic Holiness evangelist who emerged out of his Quaker background to become a major figure in Rhode Island as the leader of the independent Emmanuel Church in Providence, Rhode Island from 1894-1896 (Providence is about four miles north of Cranston). Around 1899, Arthur Greene was made the pastor of First Emmanuel Church in Attleboro (or Attleborough), Massachusetts, but nothing seems to indicate what kind of church this was (perhaps it was connected to Rees' Emmanuel Church in Providence), and it is no longer in existence. We do know that a small group of converts from a Salvation Army meeting in Attleboro in 1898 got together and formed a group called, "Believers in Holiness of Heart" that then became the "Attleboro Christian Crusader Band" and finally organized a church in 1899 called "The People's Free Church" with fourteen members. In 1901 Arthur Greene became their pastor,



although he also continued to serve First Emmanuel. So by 1898-1899, Arthur Greene was actively involved with the early Pentecostal-Holiness Movement. In this same year, Camp Hebron, the local camp meeting area in Attleboro, was sold to Rev. William J. Hutchinson³, and a small pamphlet on this camp in the collection notes, "During the ownership of Mr. Hutchinson, the Holiness people under Rev. Arthur Greene held meetings and built the present tabernacle."⁴ The Tabernacle was apparently built in 1902.⁵



Engraving on a small tin tray in the collection, showing Arthur Greene and the Tabernacle at the Hebron Campground in Attleboro, Massachusetts.

Kostlevy notes, "The two most important leaders of the radical holiness work in New England were Arthur Greene, pastor of the work in North Attleboro, Massachusetts, and eastern representative of the *Revivalist*, and Frank Messenger, manager of a North Grosvenordale, Connecticut, cotton mill and one of the most important lay leaders of the Holiness Movement in New England."⁶ Most likely due to his ties with Seth C. Rees, Greene became involved with Martin Wells Knapp and God's Bible School, based in Cincinnati, Ohio, which Knapp opened in 1900, and it was most likely through these ties that he became the eastern representative of the *Revivalist*, which Knapp had begun publishing in 1888.

It was also very likely that through the ties with Knapp, Seth Cook Rees (who followed Knapp as the superintendent of the International Apostolic Holiness Union), and George B. Kulp (who followed Rees), that Arthur Greene became connected with a young Oswald Chambers (the author of *My Utmost for His Highest*, and an early Holiness evangelist) on his first trip to America in 1906. In that year, Chambers travelled to America with Japanese Holiness evangelist Juji Nakada (sometimes called the “Dwight L. Moody of Japan”), and spent some of his first days in the U.S. preaching and speaking in New England and along the Atlantic Coast. One letter in the archives from H. J. Olsen relates to Arthur Greene’s son that, “The committee that ordained me was Geo. B. Kulp, Oswald Chambers, Arthur Greene, Juji Nakada, and A. E. Blann (Blaine). That was in Sept. of 1906.”⁷⁷ Olsen notes in another letter commenting on Greene’s death, “He was one of seven ministers who ordained me as a Gospel minister back in 1906. For many years we worked together along with Capt. Potter and Oswald Chambers.” David McCasland, in his biography of Chambers, notes,

Chambers enjoyed the bold, uninhibited personalities of men like Arthur Greene of Massachusetts. One day, while walking together on a main street in downtown Cincinnati, Greene shouted at the top of his voice, “I hate the devil!” Chambers yelled after him, “So do I!” Immediately after, “A man came up to us with tears in his eyes and asked us the way of salvation,” Oswald wrote to his brother Ernest. “We pointed him to the Lord. Oh, these delightful unconventional ways suit me down to the ground...”⁷⁸

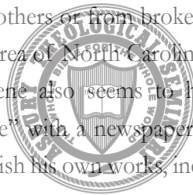




Photo of Old Orchard, Maine camp meeting, July 1910. In the back role from left to right are Capt. Charles T. Potter, Rev. Arthur Greene, Rev. Oswald Chambers, Mr. William Richardson, and Rev. H. J. Olsen. Seated to the right are Biddy Chambers and Mrs. William Richardson. (Courtesy of Discovery House)

Arthur Greene was active in camp meetings along the East Coast through the early 1900's, from Maine down to Maryland. One local note records for 1908, "The Annual Pentecostal Campmeeting will be held in Klinefelter's Grove, one-half mile from Chestertown, MD, August 21st to 30th. Rev. Arthur Greene of North Attleboro, Mass., with a number of spirit-filled evangelists and singers, will have charge."⁹ Along the way, he seems to have adapted Martin Knapp's use of visual aids in his speaking, with the use of large painted canvases to illustrate his messages. In October 1906, Arthur Greene was also one of the incorporators of The Eliada Home and Faith Cottage in Asheville, NC, along with Lucius B. Compton, S. E. Compton, Rose Fairless of Ashville, NC and Charles B. Donle of Providence, Rhode Island.¹⁰ This was a rescue home established for prostitutes, their children, and the children of unwed mothers or from broken homes, and the Eliada Home was a unique ministry in this area of North Carolina and the adjoining states.

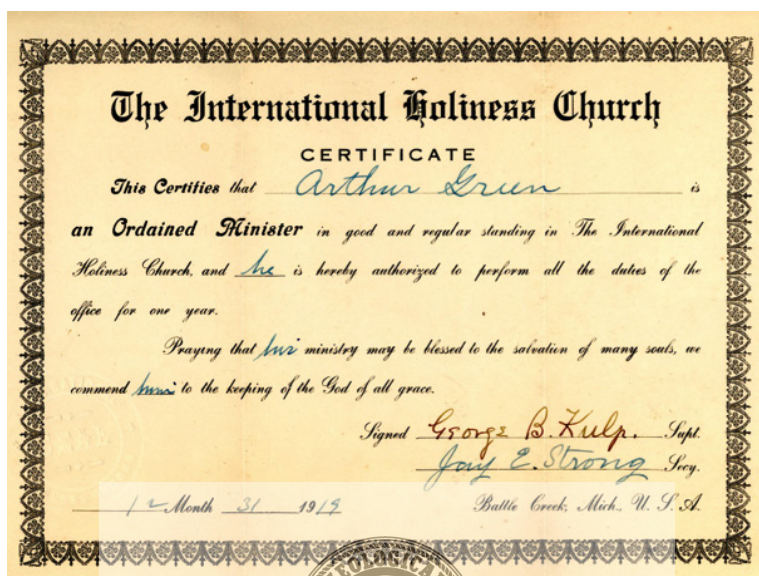
By 1909 Rev. Greene also seems to have begun a small publishing endeavor called "Pillar of Fire" with a newspaper by the same name.¹¹ It mostly appears to have served to publish his own works, including a book, *Scriptural Themes*,



and a number of tracts including: *God's Time Now*, *Two Works*, *The Church, Peace, Forever Lost*, *A Holy Life*, *A Reply to an Opposer of Holiness*, and others. In the same year, Arthur Greene refers to himself in the introduction to one of his books as president of The Bible Home and Foreign Missionary Society, an early effort at Holiness foreign mission work. On June 18, 1913, Rev. Arthur Greene along with Ruric Lawrence bought Camp Hebron and continued to hold Holiness camp meetings there. In 1915 Rev. Greene resigned from The People's Free Church, which in 1916 officially joined the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination.

One account from the *Evening News* of Providence, Rhode Island in 1912 notes,

The Hebron camp meeting opened Friday, and is in charge of Rev. Arthur Greene, pastor of the First Emmanuel Church of North Attleboro, and the series will continue until July 7. The list of workers as given out includes H.J. Olsen of Baltimore, Capt. Charles Potter of Norwich, Rev. Francis Thomas of New Jersey, who will lecture on the "Book of Daniel," and Evangelist Elwood Blaine of Northville, N.Y. who will preach each day. The Emmanuel brass band will furnish music, and accommodations will be provided for a large number of persons.¹²



Arthur Greene's Ordination Certificate for The International Holiness Church on December 31, 1919, signed by George B. Kulp. Notice that gender is a blank to be filled out, recognizing the value of women within the holiness tradition.

In December of 1919, Arthur Greene was ordained in The International Holiness Church by George B. Kulp. This church began as the International Holiness Union and Prayer League in 1898 with Seth Rees as President and Martin Wells Knapp as Vice-President. In 1900, the name changed to the International Apostolic Holiness Union, and it became more involved in foreign mission work. By 1905 it became the International Apostolic Holiness Union and Churches to provide a home for new Holiness churches emerging from the movement. By 1913 it became the International Apostolic Holiness Church. Becoming the International Holiness Church, it joined the Pentecostal Rescue Mission in 1922, and then the Pilgrim Church of California later that year to become the Pilgrim Holiness Church. The archives do not show if Arthur Greene was involved in the earlier movements (although given his ties with Rees and Knapp, he most likely was), but his name does not appear in material from the Pilgrim Holiness Church, like that of his fellow camp meeting speaker, H. J. Olsen.

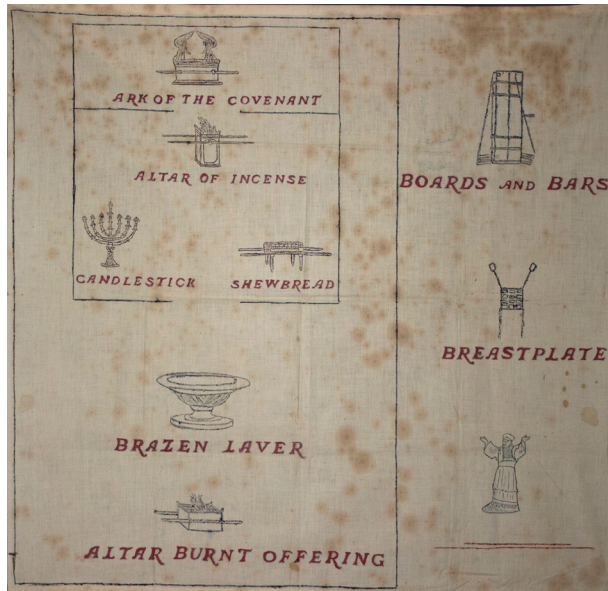


One of the large paintings from the Greene Collection, showing well-dressed and poor people alike cheerfully walking to hell and bypassing Christ and the narrow path to heaven.



In the early 1920's Arthur Greene disappears from the Holiness Movement. By 1918¹³, Arthur Greene is living on Martha's Vineyard, and by the 1920 census, he is listed as living there with his youngest son Louis, and his son's wife, Zelma. Arthur is curiously listed as a farmer on this census and subsequent census forms from 1930 and 1940 continue to list him as a farmer. His wife Harriet (or Lena as she is often called) is listed in the 1920 and 1930 census as still living in North Attleboro, and she is listed as the head of household. In 1920 she is living with two of her sons, Jesse and Paul, who work in a printing shop, and in 1930 she is living with her son, Paul and two elderly single female lodgers. Clearly some important issue split the family and caused Arthur to leave his very active roles of ministry. While there is no definite reason given in any archival material, one possibility might be found in the 1930 census record for Arthur Greene, where he is recorded as a farmer in West Tisbury, Massachusetts at age 64 living with his fifteen-year-old daughter, Phoebe Greene, and a housekeeper named Isabelle Andrews.¹⁴ Since Phoebe is not listed as one of Harriet's children and would have been born about 1915 at the height of Arthur's ministry (and the same year as his resignation from the People's Free Church in Attleboro), one can assume she might be a source of the tension. In the 1940 census, a Phoebe Sharples¹⁵ is listed as the wife of Lewis L. Sharples in Oak Bluffs, Mass. (also on Martha's Vineyard island). They are listed as living with Isabelle Andrews, who is listed as Lewis Sharples' mother-in-law. I have been unable to locate a birth record for Phoebe, or other vital records that might help explain the situation further. Arthur Greene died in 1946 in Tisbury, Massachusetts at the age of 81, while living with his son Louis, daughter-in-law, Zelma, and their daughters. His contributions to the Radical Holiness Movement have been unfortunately lost to time, but some can be recovered through determined research efforts in archives and special collections.





One of the smaller wall hangings from the Greene Collection showing elements of the Old Testament tabernacle and the Priesthood used for teaching.

The Arthur Greene material at the B.L. Fisher Library contains six paintings or drawings done on heavy muslin, which were for use in early camp meetings as visual aids. Some of the more dramatic images are a large version of Martin Wells Knapp's famous "River of Death" illustration, along with smaller charts illustrating the Old Testament articles in the temple, and a long Premillennial Dispensationalist chart. Other vivid images show the journey of life as people choose to follow Christ or enter eternal torment, and images of the sanctified and the unrepentant heart. One final image appears to be a sermon illustration of some kind, but it is not labeled and so its context is unknown. It depicts a number of strange birds within a tree, with each bird or groupings of birds numbered one to fourteen.





An enigmatic sermon illustration painted on heavy muslin used by Arthur Greene in his evangelistic Holiness camp meeting work (circa 1900-1910).

While I have not located a specific sermon to go with this illustration, this illustration or one similar to it, may be alluded to in a sermon at the Portsmouth, Rhode Island Camp meeting of 1897. This Camp meeting was founded by Rees and was very close to where Greene was born and ministered, so it is likely to have been a major influence in his ministry in New England. In a sermon by Rev. Beverly Carradine on Saturday, August 7, 1897, he speaks on the idea that the Holiness Movement was splitting the Methodist Church in a brief aside,

They say we are splitting the church, but we are not. The truth never splits the true church. God says the kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed. Of Colonel Buzzard and Judge Crow and Sister Woodpecker, President of the Ladies Aid Society, are the “fowls of the air” who are in the branches, no doubt the double-barreled shot-gun of a full salvation minister will disturb *them*, but it will not hurt the *tree*.¹⁶

The archives of the B.L. Fisher library are open to researchers and works to promote research in the history of Methodism and the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Images, such as these, provide one vital way to bring history to life. Preservation of such material is often time consuming and costly, but are essential to helping fulfill Asbury Theological Seminary's mission. If you are interested in donating items of historic significance to the archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, or in donating funds to help purchase or process significant collections, please contact the archivist at archives@asburyseminary.edu.

End Notes

¹ All images used courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary who own all copyrights to these digital images, unless otherwise noted. Please contact them directly if interested in obtaining permission to reuse these images.

² This is the background to the Faith Alliance Church (Christian Missionary Alliance) currently in Attleborough, MA, from the website: www.faithall.org/church-history.

³ Previously the camp had been set up in 1869 by the American Millennial Association of Boston, a group committed to the teaching of the premillennial advent of Christ. (This group ceased to exist in 1920.) In 1887 the Methodists would rent the campgrounds for one week each year, and at one time there were more than 60 cottages on the campground.

⁴ Grace Glover Mawney, *The Early History of Camp Hebron*, 1931, page 10.

⁵ From what I can gather, this campground passed into the hands of the Christian and Missionary Alliance on February 23, 1917, but seems to have closed and been sold sometime in the 1970's.

⁶ *Holy Jumpers: Evangelicals and Radicals in Progressive Era America*, by William Kostlevy, Oxford University Press, New York 2010, p. 34.

⁷ Most likely this event was not in September, but later in November, since Chambers and Nakada arrived by boat on November 15, 1906 in New York Harbor. Cf. *Oswald Chambers, Abandoned to God* by David McCasland, Discover House Publishers, Nashville, TN 1993, p.101.

⁸ *Oswald Chambers, Abandoned to God* by David McCasland, Discover House Publishers, Nashville, TN 1993, p.113.

⁹ *Kent News* from Chestertown, Maryland for Saturday July 4, 1908, page 5.

¹⁰ From section 8, page 8 of the National Register of Historic Places for the Eliada Home in Ashville, NC.

¹¹ This does not appear to be associated with Pillar of Fire, International, an Holiness denomination founded by Alma Bridwell White in 1902 and headquartered at Zarephath, New Jersey.

¹² “North Attleboro,” *Evening News*, Providence Rhode Island, Friday, June 28, 1912, page 3.

¹³ This is based on his son Paul Wilbur’s draft card registration of 1918 that lists Arthur as his closest relative and gives Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts as his address.

¹⁴ The census record is a little confused here, giving Isabelle Andrews age as 15 years old, which must be incorrect. The same census record also records she was a widow who was 38 at the time of her first marriage.

¹⁵ The Phoebe Sharples is listed as being born February 23, 1915, and having died December 27, 1991.

¹⁶ *Hallelujahs from Portsmouth, or, A Report of Portsmouth Campmeeting held at Portsmouth, R.I. July 23 to August 8, 1897*, Christian Unity Publishing Co., Springfield, MA, 1897, page 151.

