

**"Everlastingly at It": The Story of Washington Street Mission
A Perspective on Society and Religion in Springfield, Illinois
Throughout the 20th Century.**

The Washington Street Mission (now located on North 4th Street in Springfield) has been a landmark in downtown Springfield for nearly a century. It was born in the aftermath of riots of 1908, the Billy Sunday Tabernacle meetings of 1909 and in the context of a changing, growing population. It developed and expanded its ministries amidst the increasing complexity of the shifting economic and social scenes of the twentieth century and now continues into the twenty first. "The Mission", as it has most commonly been identified, has maintained a significant and essentially uninterrupted presence in Springfield with changing programs and constituencies since its foundation in January of 1910. "The Mission" has met the many challenges wrought by the Wars of the 20th century, the Great Depression and the social, economic and demographic adjustments, particularly those of the last half-century with changing programs, new constituencies of support and participation, and an enforced relocation in 1974.

This story is documented by a very full set of financial, program and attendance records, brief earlier histories, the transcript of a taped oral history given by Mrs. R.O. (Mary Louisa) Miller whose father, Robert T. Brown was one of the founders of the Mission. She in turn assisted her husband, Robert O. Miller, the successor to Brown at the Mission, and following his death in 1970 administered "Mission" affairs herself. She was involved with the "Mission" in some way or another from the 1920's until her death in 1980. In addition there are newspaper accounts and photos, as well as the resource of my own first hand recollections from childhood, (being a grandson of Mr. Brown) and continuing to the most recent board meeting of "The Mission" (November 22, 2005) on which I have served the last 25 years.

Springfield at the Turn of the Century

The Sangamon Saga (a publication of the Sangamon County Historical Society) describes Springfield at the turn of the century as a vibrant, growing urban center. Much of the following information is drawn from several of these volumes. Some highlights include President McKinley's visit to the city and the organization of Sangamo Electric. The game of golf made its appearance in Springfield as it did elsewhere in the Midwest during the nineties. The incorporated area of the city increased as North Springfield was included in the city. New schools opened to serve a growing population. A permanent site for the state fare was established. There were five daily newspapers. Street cars provided local transportation around Springfield. The streets were paved with bricks. Sangamon County was identified as being "the most important coal county in the nation's most important coal state". The Sangamon County Courthouse (the old capitol) was raised up to provide additional space. Medical resources for Springfield and its environs were expanding. Springfield was clearly an up and coming urban center at the turn of the century and this pattern of growth and increased social and economic complexity continued into the next two decades.

Some supplemental data provides additional support for these generalizations. In 1902

there were seven railroads that made their way into the city. Union Station was built in 1898 to accommodate expanding railroad passenger needs. By 1904 interurban electrics were a significant presence providing transportation to the rural communities and neighboring towns. Also there were several significant industrial developments and a rapidly expanding population (doubling from 1890 to 1910 – 25,000 to over 50,000).

An enlarging African-American community was also making the capitol city its home during this era of expansion and prosperity. One writer commented "Springfield had more in common with Birmingham [Ala] than with Albany [NY]. A paternalistic attitude toward the blacks prevailed. Some would claim that there was a higher percentage of blacks in Springfield than any other city or state in the country. In 1900 it was 6.5% and increased in the years that followed. The industrial development taking place was on the east side of town where new residents from the southern United States and European immigrants resided. They competed with each other when seeking the jobs available in the mines and factories and the limited affordable housing. As some one has said (it was déjà vu all over again). In these contexts Springfield was gathering the fuel for the riots that were to come in 1908.

Edwin Russo comments in *Prairie of Promise*, "Amidst all of the corruption, vice, labor exploitation and materialism, there were many in Springfield concerned with more noble ends." (p. 41) Indeed there were other perspectives by which to take in the Springfield scene: the presence of 30 churches, 2 missions, Concordia College, the foundation of the YWCA, (YMCA had existed since 1873) and the coming of The Salvation Army in 1896. In light of later developments, it is interesting to note that J. S. Vredenburg was a Vice President of the Men's Mission Board at the 1st Presbyterian Church in 1896. The need for social services was apparent and accented by the conditions of the "levee" district, (i.e. Washington Street between 7th and 10th. Here according to some counts, there was said to be 22 saloons, "a dozen or so" brothels and many gambling houses. Incidents during July and August of 1908 led to the violence of Friday the 14th, several additional days of rioting and the presence of 4000 troops brought in to maintain order and followed by several months of uncertainty.

Springfield was facing challenges similar to those of nation at large at the turn of the century: rapid growth, increased population densities, poverty amidst plenty, and social, economic and cultural discrimination. In the midst of better times and problems of national import, these were the issues in Springfield. Springfield might well be regarded as a prototype for much of what was happening elsewhere in Illinois as well as other parts of the United States.

Following the unrest and the riots, several of Springfield's leading citizens were anxious to identify, and provide economic and social remedies as well as discovering sources for healing and renewal. They observed that in several Midwestern locations, including Bloomington, Illinois, where Billy Sunday had held his extended preaching ministries, there was a strengthening of resolve by the citizens to clean up the communities in a variety of ways and to lay new foundations for growth and development. This usually meant dealing not only with the problems arising out of immoderate use of alcohol but also the social and economic and issues (some of which were alcohol driven) of unemployment, poverty and the their impact upon

families. An invitation was extended to the evangelist, a date was agreed upon and arrangements followed. A tabernacle (a large, temporary, wooden structure to house the anticipated crowds) was constructed. Assignments were made and over the next several months regular planning meetings were held.

Billy Sunday came in the spring of 1909. A total attendance of 460,975 with 4,721 conversions was reported in the Illinois State Journal. In the assembly at a Sunday afternoon men's session, was Robert T. Brown, a young Springfield business man, who along with some others of similar background, considered that the message that Billy Sunday was proclaiming was for them. Bob Brown had been born on a farm just north of Springfield in 1875. Brown had been associated with the Vredenburg Lumber Company of Springfield since the early 1890s. His success in collecting outstanding debts had resulted in frequent promotions and expanding responsibilities. In 1909 he held the position of Secretary of the Vredenburg Lumber Company and had supervised the lumber supply for the Tabernacle building used by the evangelist. Also in the number of men responding to Sunday's invitation for a new life, was George Coe, then a City Commissioner. He along with Brown and several others met frequently for prayer and Bible study over the next several months. On one occasion, as Mrs. Miller (one of Brown's daughters) recounts in her taped oral history, George Coe challenged his friends, "We can't continue to be sponges, we must give out, and here is \$500. I think Springfield should have a rescue mission." The idea was well received and broadly supported by several elements of the citizen body, but most importantly by the business community and many of the churches. Although it was readily apparent that something needed to be done to secure and upgrade the business district, these businessmen discerned opportunities for service and support for the people of Springfield who had the greatest material needs. These included men, women and children; individuals and families as well as transients. The concept of "The Mission" from its inception included a Christian outreach and Bible teaching ministry as well as meeting physical, social and economic needs. From the beginning the responsibility for underwriting these projects was deemed to rest with the businessmen, the churches and other citizens of Springfield.

In a few weeks a building was secured and "The Mission" opened its doors in January, 1910 at 713 E. Washington Street, in the notorious "levee" district of Springfield, Here one could find a variety of persons with extreme physical, social, economic and spiritual needs. The efforts of "The Mission" were so successful that within a few months "The Mission" then known as "The Springfield Rescue Mission" moved a block east to 812 E. Washington and over the next five years expanded into the neighboring building, at first leasing and then purchasing the buildings. Men and their families were supplied with food, clean clothes and basic medical needs. They earned their food and lodging by working either at "The Mission" or elsewhere, sometimes scrubbing floors, washing clothes and dishes or later in cutting and delivering wood or most any other task that one might think of. Those who could work were directed to employment opportunities either near by or in another part of the state. Mission people (usually men at this time) found work in other areas throughout the community as well as neighboring towns. Men without families were often directed to more distant locations where workers were in demand.

During these early months there was a steep learning curve for those who were involved

in the day by day administration of "The Mission" as well as laying the foundation for ongoing financial support and administration. The demands for the services of "The Mission" were great and its personnel used their creative abilities to meet these human needs with the sometimes inadequate resources supplied by churches and civic leadership of Springfield.

"The Mission" was organized under a Board of Trustees to oversee its operations and to develop a program of financial support throughout Springfield. In 1914, the members of the Board in addition to the founding group, previously noted, included some of the leading businessmen of Springfield. I. E. Spaulding, Louis Coe, R. F. Botts, W.A. Orr, Dr. Knudson, Logan Coleman were some as well as Robert Brown. Others who would serve later included F. M. Legg, Mark Evans, Dan Deal, George Wright, Frank Drake, John Maldener and A. A. Orr.

The Board of Trustees was pleased with the success of their venture and the larger community of Springfield rose to its support, both financially and by active, volunteer participation. John Astra was hired as Superintendent, to oversee the several aspects of the mission work. The responsibilities of the Board and administration were not taken lightly as outside resources and models were regularly considered and reviewed. Mr. Astra frequently traveled to meetings of rescue mission administrators and The Pacific Garden Mission of Chicago served as the primary model for the Springfield Rescue Mission as it had done and continued to do for many other missions throughout the country.

An illustration of the rapid growth of the responsibilities of the "Mission" is demonstrated by the Superintendent's report for the month of April, 1915. just five years after opening:

- 632 men given shelter for a fee
- 188 men given free shelter
- 333 baths provided
- 190 suits fumigated
- 198 men furnished employment
- 9 women cared for
- 54 calls to poor and sick
- 1335 meals served
- 4000 pieces of clothing distributed
- 40 persons prayed with
- 45 New Testament portions of the Bible distributed
- 14 cases treated in the dispensary
- 1 man taken to the hospital
- 3 children taken to the hospital

Thus, within five years, the "Mission", in a city that had a population of slightly less than 52,000 in 1910 had become a major provider for indigent persons and families, supported by the citizens and churches of Springfield and addressing the basic physical and spiritual needs of local families and individuals as well as transients on their way to employment and living elsewhere. An interesting footnote to these early years is that some of the Board members would meet both

informally and formally at Maldender's. John Maldener at that time served on the Board of Trustees.

The spiritual ministry continued along with services that provided for physical needs. There were regular evening Bible teaching and evangelistic ministries, personal counseling and mentoring. Bible classes in Italian and Spanish appear on several occasions when the need arose along with citizenship classes. Within the next 20 years a large Sunday School program for children and families developed. It was held on Sunday afternoons so as not to conflict with the regular programs of the Springfield churches. It attracted not only children, but also families and older adults. It grew to a regular attendance in excess of 300. Participation declined after mid-century and the program was dropped by the 1970s. The changing character of Sunday afternoon activities, the increased spread of the Springfield community, the changing color of the Springfield population, and the demise of public transportation all contributed to these and other adjustments in the activities of "The Mission" in more recent decades.

Finances were a recurring matter of concern, a common characteristic for these types of service organizations. In the decade following the founding of the "Mission" several different approaches were attempted, such as cooperative ventures with other social service agencies, direct mailings, door to door solicitation, church contacts, personal challenges to Springfield businesses as well as the contributions of the board members and their associates.

In 1917 John Astra resigned from his responsibilities as Superintendent of "The Mission". Mr. Brown was at that time Vice-President of the Board of Trustees, (the Board at that time included Mr. Blackstock, President; W.A. Orr, Secretary; Logan Coleman, Treasurer). Brown was asked to take charge until a full time replacement for Mr. Astra could be secured. He accepted this temporary responsibility noting that at the noon hour and in the evening he could look after matters at "The Mission" except for fund raising, which was at this time, and as already noted, a recurring problem. Brown was to receive \$50 per month for his temporary role in maintaining the work of the "Mission". An assistant was hired, the lease on the buildings was renewed, a janitor secured and plans for a major fund raising effort were developed.

Robert Brown had some business college education and the experience with Vredenburg Lumber Company since he was 16, according to his daughter's recollections. From this business experience, he had gained an understanding of business finance and administration, contacts with the growing Springfield business community and the strong desire to ameliorate the conditions of the needy persons and families of Springfield. He also had spent a short time in Chicago working with his uncle in a business venture. He had nothing but raw experience (always a good teacher) in social work or matters related to it. From the outset, Washington Street Mission was committed to a specifically Christian ministry. Brown, a member of The First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, had not received any specific religious education and was to a large extent self taught. As the new superintendent he looked for additional support in this area and found it in the person of Miss Lavinia Smith who had attended the Moody Bible School in Chicago and frequently traveled to Mr. Moody's summer camps in Northfield, Massachusetts. Brown's sermons reflected these influences as evidenced in the sermon notes that he used for his nightly

preaching at "The Mission" as well as on other occasions. He later extended his ministry to include regular Sunday morning radio and jail preaching.

Due to the significant increase in numbers of the population being served by the "Mission" not only had the responsibilities increased, but also the need for increased fiscal resources and regular support. The broad based enthusiasm of 1909 and 1910 had declined. The successful ministries had been passed along to others and there were increasing numbers of people seeking assistance from the "Mission" not only in material ways, but also as a source of spiritual mending and healing. These were not only the residents of Springfield, but also included also the transients who were passing through Springfield, often searching out employment on their way north or south. Although the "20s" were prosperous times for many, the shifting and uncertain character of the economy in different areas of the country continued to have a negative impact on those persons towards the bottom of the economic and social ladder.

The Board sought to strengthen the Mission and renew its popular and financial support by going back to the original impetus for the work, the voice of an evangelist be it Billy Sunday or another. The Board of "The Mission" invited Sunday on several occasions and Paul Rader, a popular evangelist of the era, (as well as others) to come to Springfield. These efforts were to no avail. It should be noted that later "Ma Sunday" came to celebrate the 35th anniversary of "The Mission" and other lesser lights on the evangelistic circuit did come on several occasions. However, a citywide fundraising activity brought additional support for a short while. During the months of World War I, the Board looked at buildings on 8th Street just south of Washington as a site for relocation. The purchase of two buildings that shared a common wall and included a third structure as well, was approved and in 1918 the doors of the "Washington Street Mission" opened at 111 S. 8th Street. These buildings (which all shared common walls and seemed like one, housed "The Mission" until the buildings were condemned in 1974 by the city to facilitate the building of the Convention Center and the parking garage. Although now located on North 4th Street, "The Mission" has continued to retain its identity as the Washington Street Mission.

Early in 1919, Robert T. Brown, now 43 years old and who had served on the Board since the inception of the mission project, was asked to become a full time Superintendent. His business acumen and heart for the "Mission", its goals and purposes, fitted him excellently for his new vocation. He was to receive \$187.50 in monthly salary for his services. Within a few years after accepting this job, Brown moved to town from his earlier residence, a small farm, located near the southwest corner of what is now the intersection of Jefferson Street and Bruns Lane. His new residence was located on S. Eighth Street a 10 block walk to the new Mission location. The Mission became his life and abiding interest until his death in 1940. [As a boy this walk from Grandfather's house to the "Mission" past Lincoln's home and the smelly tavern at 8th and Adams left indelible impressions on this writer.]

The extent of the outreach of "The Mission" is well documented in the periodic and annual reports given to the Board of Trustees. Another example follows. The annual report for 1919 contains the following attendance figures:

14,758 Evening services attendance (365 days) (an average of about 40) 192 Sunday School Attendance (weekly average)

3,853 Men sheltered
1,028 Baths given
398 Suits fumigated
1184 Men sent to employment
269 Free meals
6506 Pieces of clothing distributed
148 Persons prayed with
389 Calls made
418 Attendance at 38 mothers' meetings
300 Attendance at June Picnic
325 At Mission Program
6000 Copies of "Mission news" distributed

Coal, Groceries, medicine, furniture, and bedding were distributed to many families as there was need at the new location on 8th Street, there were adjustments made in the operations of the "Mission". Although there was an effort to maintain the previous services, the facilities were not readily adaptable to some of the previous patterns of activity. Nonetheless, for more than a decade, lodging was still provided for men. A soup line was available for the penniless. Other basic human needs were met insofar as the Mission was able to do so. There continued to be citizenship classes, instruction in English, and religious instruction in Italian. These were all aspects of the continuing activities of Washington Street Mission in the 20s. There were an increasing numbers of Italian families and others whose providers had lost their jobs or their lives in the mines. (Descendents of some of these folk continue to reside in Springfield to this day.)

The Mission rented houses furnished them and then sub-let them to many of these needy families. Other ethnic groups likewise were assisted by "The Mission" sometimes in rather unusual ways. Creative programs were devised to provide work for the unemployed and in turn for them to provide assistance to others. For example, when Lake Springfield was to be developed, there was a wooded area that was to be flooded. Permission was granted to "The Mission" to cut down the trees and to transport them to vacant lots. There they were cut into firewood and distributed to the needy to warm their houses. For this work the men would receive meals and housing. It was a principle of "The Mission" that the "handouts" were not given without some work or effort on the part of the recipient. Sometimes there were little jobs for a sack of groceries sometimes it was something that maybe took several hours. Scrubbing the stairs at 111 S. 8th Street was always a challenge since they were more than twice the length of a normal residential staircase.) There were always plenty of housekeeping jobs waiting to be done, errands to be run that anyone might be able to do. Not all were as large and as organized as the firewood program. Some of those who did their jobs well eventually became employees of "The Mission".

In the new buildings on 8th Street increased emphasis was given to the Sunday School program. From the 30's through the 60's the Sunday School often attracted over 300 people,

mostly children and youths. Regular evening services were held 7 days every week including most holidays. This regimen was continued well into the 60's and was the concrete expression of what long had been "The Mission's" motto, "Everlastingly at it since 1910" There was great pride in the statement that the doors of the Mission were never closed. This was to be the case with only a very few rare exception until the last 25 years.

Washington Street Mission, while on 8th Street, did not become like the antiques that furnished many parts of those buildings. During the decades between the great wars of the 20th century, there were two new approaches to youth ministries at "The Mission" that in many respects were ahead of their times. The efforts of the 20's took the form of a house for "wayward girls" and in the late 30's it was a summer camping experience for youths of Springfield.

Washington Hall was organized in 1922 in response to a pressing social problem of the era. Its charter explicitly stated the following purposes:

- ◆ To carry on benevolent and charitable work
- ◆ To maintain a home for women and delinquent girls in which home may be conducted educational, vocational, and religious training and instruction and to operate a similar home for men and boys and to do all things necessary and proper to carry out the foregoing objects and purposes.

The Chief of Police in Springfield pointed up the need to the Mission for such an institution. Police were arresting women were for prostitution and other "disorderly" behavior, but were frequently released without any effort to bring about behavior modification. "The Mission" accepted this responsibility. (An article in the Illinois State, Register of November 12, 1922 described the efforts of Washington Street Mission as "one of the finest institutions in the whole country to undertake the handling of such girls..." An old mansion (part of the Colby estate) on Clear Lake Avenue (now the site of the Chesapeake Seafood House) was purchased, prepared and for several years housed 24-30 girls until it was closed in 1926 in part due to a breakdown of communications and understandings with the police and the city government. Perhaps there were some persons, maybe even public officials, who were finding ways to avoid sending people to Washington Hall, at least according to some reports. Washington Hall was sold in 1926. Although there was consideration of the possibility of sale of the 8th Street buildings due to fiscal exigencies, those buildings remained held by "The Mission" for its continuing operations. A house for "boys or young men" (although considered) never became a part of the program.

In the ensuing decade other challenges were to come and opportunities to be accepted. It was clear also that "The Mission" was a family project Mrs. Brown had assisted with the women and children's work and was at times assisted by her two daughters and a girl who had lived with the family following the untimely death of her mother some years earlier. Mary Louisa Miller, the Brown's oldest daughter, indicated in her oral history, that conversation at home was

frequently about the Mission and that the work of the Mission was a family project

The Mission impacted Springfield society beyond the buildings on 8th Street and the people who came there to have their needs, both material and spiritual, met. As early as 1930 radio broadcasts were begun and continued for the next 25 years. They became regular opportunities to tell about the work of the Mission to its Springfield constituency and to also bring to the people of Springfield the Christian message that was presented nightly to the regular audiences of the Mission. A preaching ministry to the prisoners at the jail was also a regular Sunday morning responsibility for Brown and his successor. Mr. Brown did this in addition to his other duties, but it clearly indicated the larger social role in the community of "The Mission". The radio and jail work was to be continued by Brown's successor and son-in-law, Robert O. Miller until these opportunities no longer were available.

A report from 1930 indicated 400 decisions for Christ and 150,000 men were assisted. A literature piece of the 30's stated "The Mission is your church in overalls downtown; A friend to the friendless, hopeless, discouraged..." The report also mentions an "Italian" Department" that included education in English and instruction for citizenship as well as counseling and religious instruction.

The annual report for 1932 includes the following attendance figures:

- ◆ Total attendances 72,189
- ◆ Sunday School, Evenings, Bible Classes Miscellaneous
- ◆ Jail meetings 6,586
- ◆ Evening 32,850

Perhaps the most significant and forward looking opportunity of the pre-WW era was the attempt at a summer camp ministry. Church camps and camps for inner-city youth became a major activity in the later 20th century, but Washington Street Mission made an early attempt to provide an alternative set of activities for the youth of the city that would provide regular and sufficient food, fresh air and exercise, Bible teaching, disciplined activities and individual counseling.

Beginning in 1936 with an experimental session and expanding in the years that followed, the Mission operated a camp, at a site just east of Springfield that was donated by Sherman Woodruff, of Rochester, a great uncle of James Woodruff, Springfield photographer and historian. There were separate sessions for boys and for girls. Occasionally a mix was tried, but it was very awkward and hence infrequent, given the nature of the accommodations. The camp was simple and basic: water from a hand pumped well, outhouse privies, no electricity

(Coleman lanterns were a necessity) ice (large blocks) carried out from the city, bunk beds, and hand churned ice cream and too many stories to relate here. Mr. Brown built a summer cottage for himself on this property that provided a break for him and his wife, from the heat of the city.

For the youth there were Bible classes (everyone had to recite a Bible verse to be excused following the dining hall meals and Mrs. Miller had a way of challenging you if you used the same short or overly familiar Bible verse too many times. There were homemade recreation devices such as vine, rope and tire swings. There were marshmallows and bon fires. It was an escape from the city in appropriately monitored surroundings. As many as 250 inner city, children and youths had a camp experience in a given summer. I wonder how some of these folks would remember their camp times to day? Camp Woodruff (as it was called) came to an end due in part to staffing issues at the Mission in Springfield following Mr. Brown's death in 1940. Also the coming of the war after 1941 made food supplies and other necessities for the camp difficult to acquire. Times and resources had changed by the end of the War, and the camp project was not renewed.

Although very young at this time, I recall a couple of interesting incidents. It had been warm and apparently the need for showers was evident. Shower stalls had been built, but there was no running water, only the hand pump and perhaps some water in the small creek that ran around the perimeter of the camp. It was determined to gather all the buckets together and fill them from the pump and carry them to the shower stalls. A ladder was placed against the shower stall and buckets would be passed up the ladder and then poured over the person below. My impression (that of a young boy) was that although it helped, not everyone came out as clean as might be desired. But the boys seemed to have fun in doing it and it kept them busy on a hot afternoon.

On another occasion, it seemed as though the big boys had been teasing and picking on the younger ones and perhaps threatening them regarding the notion of wildlife in the woods. There was an old caretaker on the site and he had the skill to make a whistle of sorts with his knife and a piece of wood. One evening after dark the whole group took a walk down the heavily wooded road that led into the camp. There were no lights or lanterns. A strange sound now and again came from the woods, first on one side of the road and then the other. Various suggestions were made by Mr. Miller. Was it a wolf, a bear, a panther, or some other beast? These "brave" older boys soon became very frightened themselves. They would not go into the woods to search out the source of the sounds. The lesson was successfully taught. The clever caretaker had used his skills well to assist in a discipline issue at the camp

Robert Miller was asked by the Board of "The Mission" to assume the leadership of Washington Street Mission following the death of Robert T. Brown and had previously volunteered or assisted in several capacities at the Mission. His previous employment had been with a Springfield bank. His wife was the older daughter of the Browns and he had become very familiar with the operations of the Mission and he, his wife and their son had been living on the premises for several years. Until 1970 Miller served as the Superintendent at the Mission and following his death and until 1980 his widow, the former Mary Louisa Brown continued to

administer the affairs of the Mission.

Although leading "The Mission" on her own, Mrs. Miller marshaled the resources of volunteers and a few part time staff persons and the doors of "The Mission" continued to remain open. Evening activities, a playtime for children and youth and a "church" service continued as before. In the absence of public transportation, there was a nightly routine of taking people home as well as maintaining all of the other necessary activities. Her loving, yet sometimes stern manner in contra distinction to her rather small stature, allowed her to properly respond to the needs of mission administration and leadership. For those seeking assistance she possessed an uncanny sense of who was truly needy. Mrs. Miller was able to serve not only the young and the elderly at the regular meetings, but lent authority in negotiating with tradesmen, the Mission Board, and those seeking assistance (she could see through the false stories of some and empathized greatly with the honest tales of woe). The Sunday afternoon program that had been declining was dropped, but an increasing number of volunteers from a wide variety of backgrounds maintained the evening program and other activities of "The Mission" as well as a supportive Board that kept the doors of "The Mission" open and "Everlastingly at It"

The later 20th Century brought another round of changes in American society and to Springfield. How has Washington Street Mission responded to them? Today, along with many other churches and agencies, "The Mission" fills a niche in addressing the social and spiritual needs for many of Springfield's neediest folk. Tutoring young folks, Monday —Friday morning Coffee Halls, occasional Saturday morning breakfasts, clothing distribution, occasional youth outings, a summer camp opportunity in Wisconsin, counseling, a Transition House for former offenders, and providing space for a young church.

Some numbers from the report for October, 2005:

- ◆ Children and youth attendance 117 average 19
- ◆ Clothing shop clients 466
- ◆ Clothing items distributed 9,223
- ◆ Coffee Hall Clients 1448 average 69 each day
- ◆ 2 Breakfasts 250
- ◆ A Bible Study for senior ladies
- ◆ And a long list of personal contacts and individual assistance by the Staff of the Mission

The numbers may not be as dramatic in contrast to those of years ago, but Washington Street Mission remains an integral part of the Springfield community, responding to the spiritual, physical and social needs of some of its citizens with changing formats and activities addressed to meet the changing social settings of an ever changing metropolis.

Perhaps it is appropriate to conclude this paper with the words used to answer the telephone over many years —

"This is The Mission." Thomas O. Kay, Wheaton, Illinois 2006

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