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Countless New Bernians who are no longer among the living, and thousands of others who still remain on this sphere we call the earth, have had their hearts enriched with the spiritual beauty of "The Old Rugged Cross."

Its composer, the Rev. George Bennard, held evangelistic services here in the not-so-distant past, at the Tabernacle Baptist church and the Salvation Army. His presence didn't create much of a stir, and as preachers go, this inconspicuous little man could hardly be classed as outstanding in the pulpit.

Comparatively few folks in our historic first State Capital heard his sermons, and fewer still were emphatically impressed. This is a statement of fact. Maybe it should have been different, but that is the way it was.

Admittedly, Rev. Bennard was well along in years when he visited New Bern, and it might have been that his ability as a deliverer of the gospel had been more pronounced during his younger days.

One distinction he could certainly claim, right up to his obscure death at Reed City, Michigan, on October 11. He had written what most Protestants for almost half a century generally agreed was the moved beloved of all hymns.

Millions were enriched religiously by its melody and its lyrics. If ever words fitted music to masterful perfection, such was the case when the Youngstown, Ohio, native penned his unforgettable hymn.

Usually the hymns sung at funerals are those that were considered favorites of the departed. In some instances they are the favorites of those who are left to mourn. No other hymn, perhaps, has been used more universally in these times of bereavement than "The Old Rugged Cross."

Protestants, almost without exception, associate the hymn with their acceptance of Christ as their risen Savior. Their earliest remembrance of it came, if they were blessed with Christian parents, at their mother's knee.

Like their childhood prayer—"Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep"—and their first childhood hymn—"Jesus Loves Me, This I Know"—the moving passages of "The Old Rugged Cross" endured for a lifetime.

Rev. Bennard was a Salvation Army officer and soldier for 15 years before he wrote his masterpiece for the ages. It was composed two years after he gave up his commission as an adjutant in that highly respected cause.

Boyhood was no frolic for him. At the age of 15 he was working in coal mines to help support his widowed mother and five brothers and sisters. He joined the Salvation Army in 1895, three years later became an officer, and immediately began travelling the Midwest to conduct revival meetings.

Rev. Bennard's inspiration for his great hymn came from John 3:16, regarded by ministers and laymen alike as the most beautiful and most significant passage in the Bible.

According to Bennard, he saw Christ and the cross inseparable, while praying for a full understanding of the cross and its plan in Christianity. He started the words of his hymn while holding evangelistic services in Michigan, and completed the composition after a series of revival meetings in New York.

Bennard, like the rest of us, was not without human frailty. This writer discovered that fact in disturbing fashion while conducting a USO quiz show for service men during World War II.

The hymn writer was in the audience. We introduced him, knowing that these boys who were headed for Pacific action from which

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CHARM IN A STORM—High water along East Front Street, like we had in recent days, has its advantages for those who have a yen to go wading. These New Bern girls forgot

about glamour to make the most of their opportunity. Naturally, The Mirror had a camera on the scene.—Photo by Billy Benners.

New Bernians Are Observing Birthday of United Nations

This is United Nations Day, in New Bern and around the world. Governor Luther Hodges has so proclaimed it for the State, and Mayor Robert L. Stallings, Jr., has issued a similar proclamation for our city.

Various civic clubs and religious groups hereabouts are placing emphasis on the occasion, while schools throughout New Bern and Craven county are stressing international brotherhood in classrooms and assemblies.

Typical of the varied observances is the United Nations' birthday party that the Methodist Youth Fellowship at Centenary Methodist

church will have tomorrow.

Planned by the Intermediates, most of whom were born just about the time that the United Nations came into being, the party will have refreshments usually served in foreign lands.

Today, at their noon luncheon meeting, New Bern Civitans will be treated to a talk on the United Nations by one of its members, Ken Margolis. Monday night the Lions club, meeting in regular weekly session, heard the observance covered by a fellow Lion, Albert T. Willis, Jr.

Tonight, at 6:30, the New Bern Rotary club will present a special

half-hour program on Radio Station WHIT, entitled "A Statement of Account." This feature will recall the establishment of the world organization in 1945, during the closing months of World War II.

Starring one of America's most distinguished actors, Ralph Bellamy, the documentary will review some of the achievements of the United Nations, and set forth those things which still have to be achieved.

Whatever the failures and inadequacies of the United Nations

have been in the past, thinking New Bernians are unanimously agreed on the urgent need for such a body.

And, here in our own community, there has been ample proof for almost 250 years that people of all nationalities can live together in peace and understanding.

Certainly if they can live together in harmony in a single community, they can find mutual respect and common freedom in the world at large. Hence, any and all

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Centenary's Discarded Bell Clings to a Forgotten Past

Time has long since claimed old Centenary Methodist church, a stately wooden structure that stood on New street across from the Academy green.

Abandoned when a new edifice was erected by the congregation at the corner of New and Middle streets, a little less than half a century ago, it became in its last unlamented days an unsightly and partly dismantled storehouse for cotton.

Old timers who brought their babes there for christening, their brides for marriage, and their dead for last rites weren't around to grieve at its final passing. They too had passed into oblivion.

One relic, undaunted by the elements, remains however, and you'll find it at the rear of the Jim Blades home on East Front street. It's the grand old bell that once rang joyously and tolled mournful from the steeple of a church

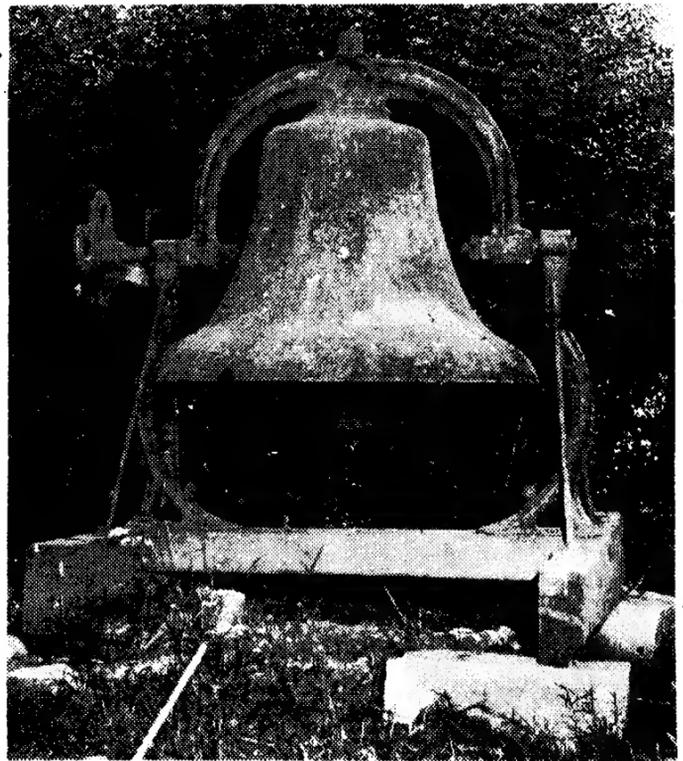
house that was doomed to die.

Church-goers of a new era weren't enthusiastic about steeples and bells. They are even less enthusiastic today, for that matter. Hence, it took no great persuasion to obtain the Centenary bell for a little Negro church that the late J. Vernon Blades endowed in Bridgeton.

That place of worship is now gone too, and the bell's only ringing today is done by children of the neighborhood, who occasionally expend their energy to make it give forth a startling peal.

Somewhere in this community, or the world, there must be someone who wants a church bell. Somewhere there must be a need or at least a yearning for the clarion call of a religious symbol such as this.

Until that day comes, an historic bell that rang at the wedding of many a leading New Bernian, and gave vent to solemn tones at his passing, will remain unwanted, un-honored and unsung.



—Photo by John R. Baxter.