

# BOUND FOR GLORY

a story of railroads and faith



# The Wild West

The bridging of the continent by rail, a dream begun in the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and completed in the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant, brought Civil War veterans, farm boys, former slaves, failed eastern business men, and immigrants to the American west.

- *They came by the droves to the tent saloons, poker tables, and brothels in railheads like Truckee, Dutch Flat, Winnemucca, North Platte, and Cheyenne.*
- *The end-of-track moveable tent towns, aptly labeled “Hell on Wheels,” were filled with gamblers, gunmen, thieves, and whores—but no churches.*

Hell on Wheels,  
Cheyenne,  
Wyoming  
1867

*The railroad workers were a mixture of Irish immigrants, Civil War veterans from both the north and south, and former slaves, along with prostitutes, laundresses, cooks, gamblers, and merchants.*



*On May 10, 1869, the Central Pacific, working eastward from Sacramento, and the Union Pacific, working westward from Omaha, met at Promontory Point, Utah, where the ceremonial spike was driven.*

**At 12:40 PM, the telegraph operator tapped out the message: "WE HAVE GOT DONE PRAYING. THE SPIKE IS ABOUT TO BE PRESENTED."**



The common saying of the day...

“There is no law west of  
Kansas City, and west of  
Fort Scott, no God.”

# Chapel on Wheels

In Europe, moveable chapels became a precedent for American versions.

*In Ireland, the “little ark,” a wooden box on wheels, plied the roads north of the Shannon River.*

*Built by priests in 1852, the box was only 6’ long, 5’ wide, and 7’ high.*

*From this traveling box, the local priest could say the Mass for the faithful.*



drawing of the Irish movable chapel, ca. 1852



In the late 1880s, an Orthodox priest conducts a service at a railroad chapel car on the West Siberian Railway.

Anton Chekhov  
Collection

# American Chapel Cars

**Thirteen Chapel Cars would be built in America, three by Episcopalians, seven by Baptists, and three by Roman Catholics.**

- *While there were varied doctrinal beliefs between these Christian denominations, they all shared the vision that these cars would be valuable instruments for mission service in remote areas.*
- *Especially in sparsely settled communities, where there were no churches and travel by horseback or wagon was difficult, at best, the railroad Chapel Cars offered a solution to the challenges of the day.*





# The First American Chapel Car

**Drawing on European precedents, Episcopal Bishop William David Walker of North Dakota contracted with the Pullman Palace Car Company to build the first railroad chapel car. It was put into service in November 1891.**

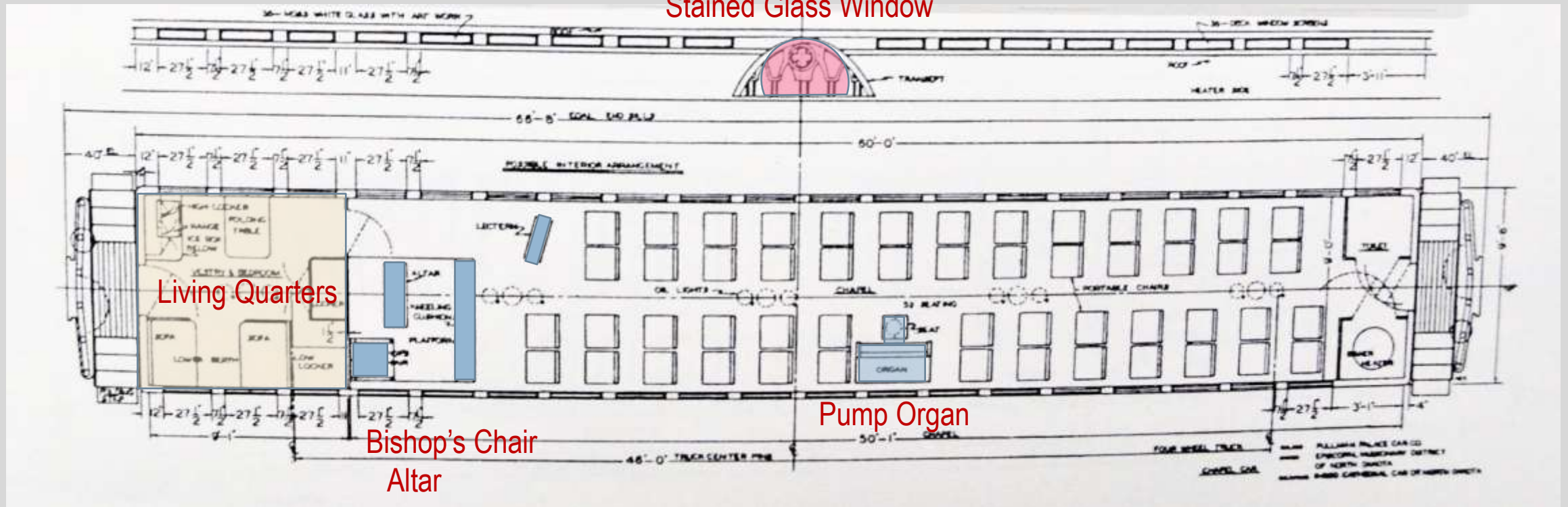
- *Measuring 60' in length and seating 80 congregants, it had two sections, one for worship (complete with a pump organ) and the other for living quarters for Bishop Walker.*
- *Called "The Church of the Advent," this car began to ply the North Dakota diocese on the local railroads.*
- *The bishop would notify locales in advance of his arrival, the car would be spotted on a siding near the depot, and he would then conduct services.*
- *Altogether, the Church of the Advent car traveled some 70,000 miles before retirement.*

Parked at the Pullman shops in Chicago, November 1890, the Church of the Advent car is ready for delivery to Bishop Walker.



# Church of the Advent Floor Plan

Stained Glass Window



Living Quarters

Bishop's Chair

Altar

Kneeling cushions and altar rail

Lectern

Pump Organ

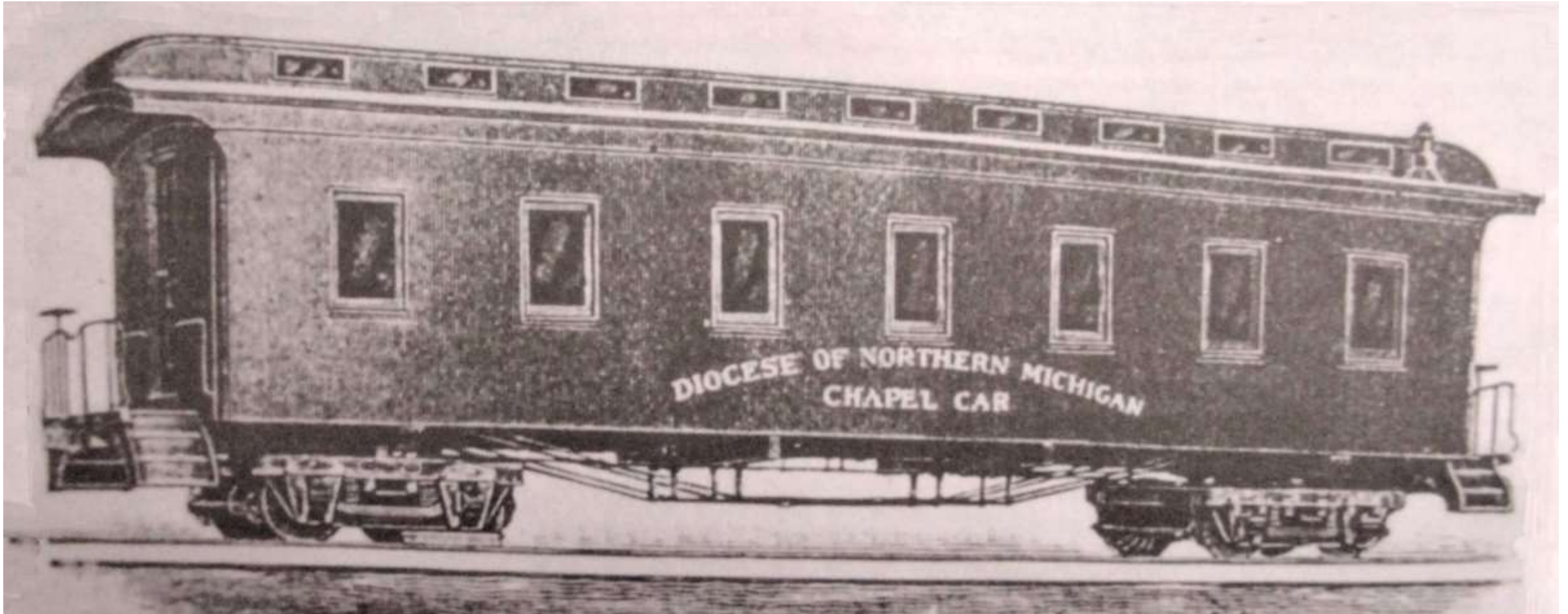
FOUR WHEEL TRUCK  
LUMBER CO.  
PULLMAN PALACE CAR CO.  
EPISCOPAL WAREHOUSE DISTRICT  
OF NORTH DAKOTA  
MILWAUKEE BRASS CASTING CO. OF NORTH DAKOTA


# Other Episcopal Chapel Cars

**Perhaps inspired by his fellow clergyman, Bishop G. Mott Williams of the Northern Diocese of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, employed two chapel cars.**

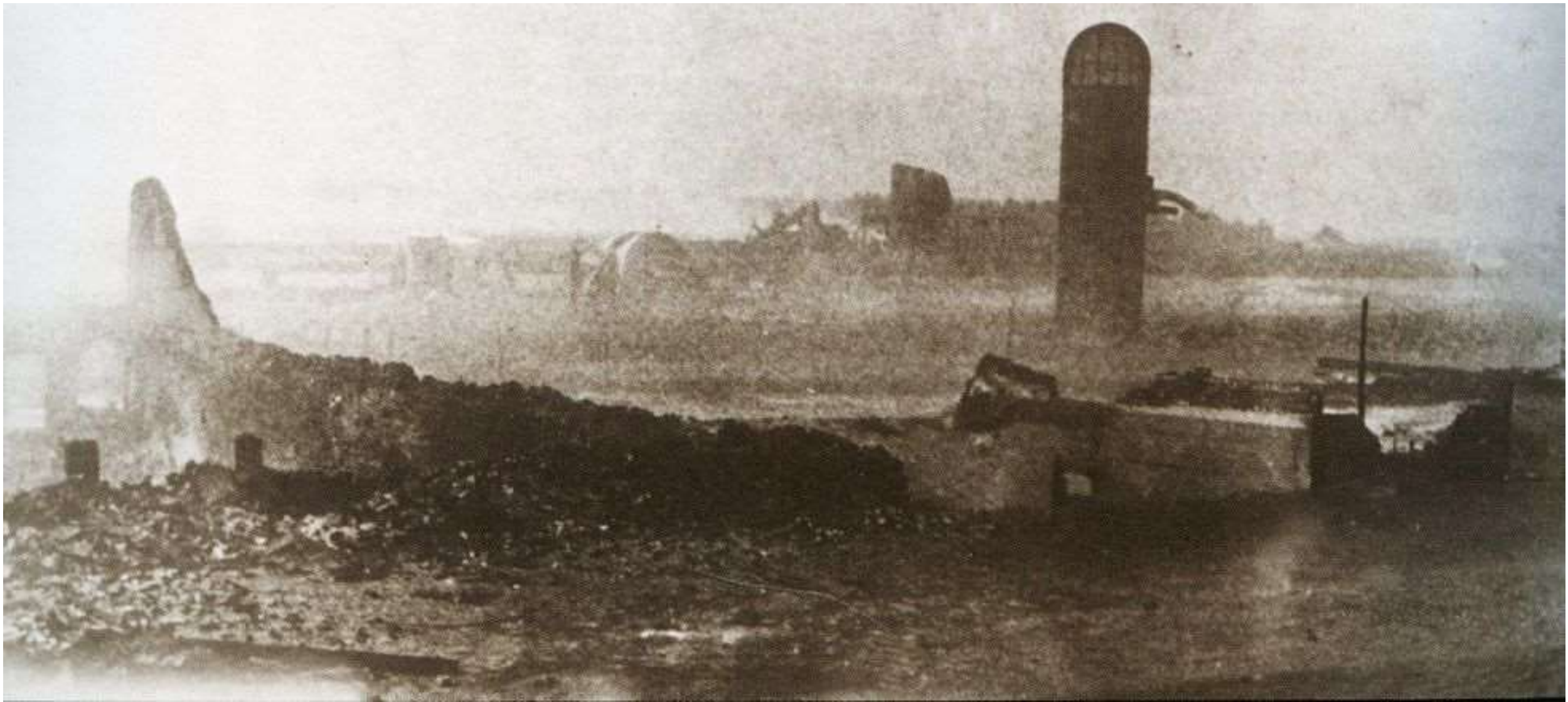
- *Neither car was officially named, though the second came to be called "The Bishop's Chapel Car."*
- **FIRST CAR:** *a loaned car, probably an oversized caboose (1891)*
- **SECOND CAR:** *repurposed from a wooden truss passenger car, open platform, 9' 7" wide and 45' long, with four-wheel passenger trucks*

# Sketch of the Michigan Episcopal Diocese Second Chapel Car



A historical black and white photograph showing an industrial facility, likely a match factory, situated near a waterfront. The foreground is dominated by large stacks of lumber and wooden planks. In the middle ground, there are several large, dark wooden buildings with gabled roofs. A prominent feature is a tall, cylindrical smokestack with a dark, domed top. To the right, a large sailing ship is docked at a pier. In the background, more industrial buildings and a tall, thin chimney are visible against a hazy sky. The overall scene depicts a busy industrial site from the late 19th century.

Ontonagon Diamond Match Company, 1885. See next slide taken from approximately the same location in 1896.



On August 25, 1896, the entire town of Ontonagon was wiped out by fire. The second chapel car of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan came to serve as the religious center for the community as they were rebuilding.

# The Baptist Chapel Cars

**If the Episcopal Bishop William Walker was the first to create and use a railroad chapel car, it was the Baptists who capitalized on the idea. They built no less than seven chapel cars.**

- *Evangel* (1891)
- *Emmanuel* (1893)
- *Glad Tidings* (1894)
- *Good Will* (1895)
- *Messenger of Peace* (1898)
- *Herald of Hope* (1900)
- *Grace* (1915)



# The *Evangel* Chapel Car (1)

**The first of the Baptist Chapel Cars, the “Evangel,” was the dream of Boston Smith (affectionately “Uncle Boston”), who commissioned the Barney & Smith Co. of Dayton, Ohio to build it.**

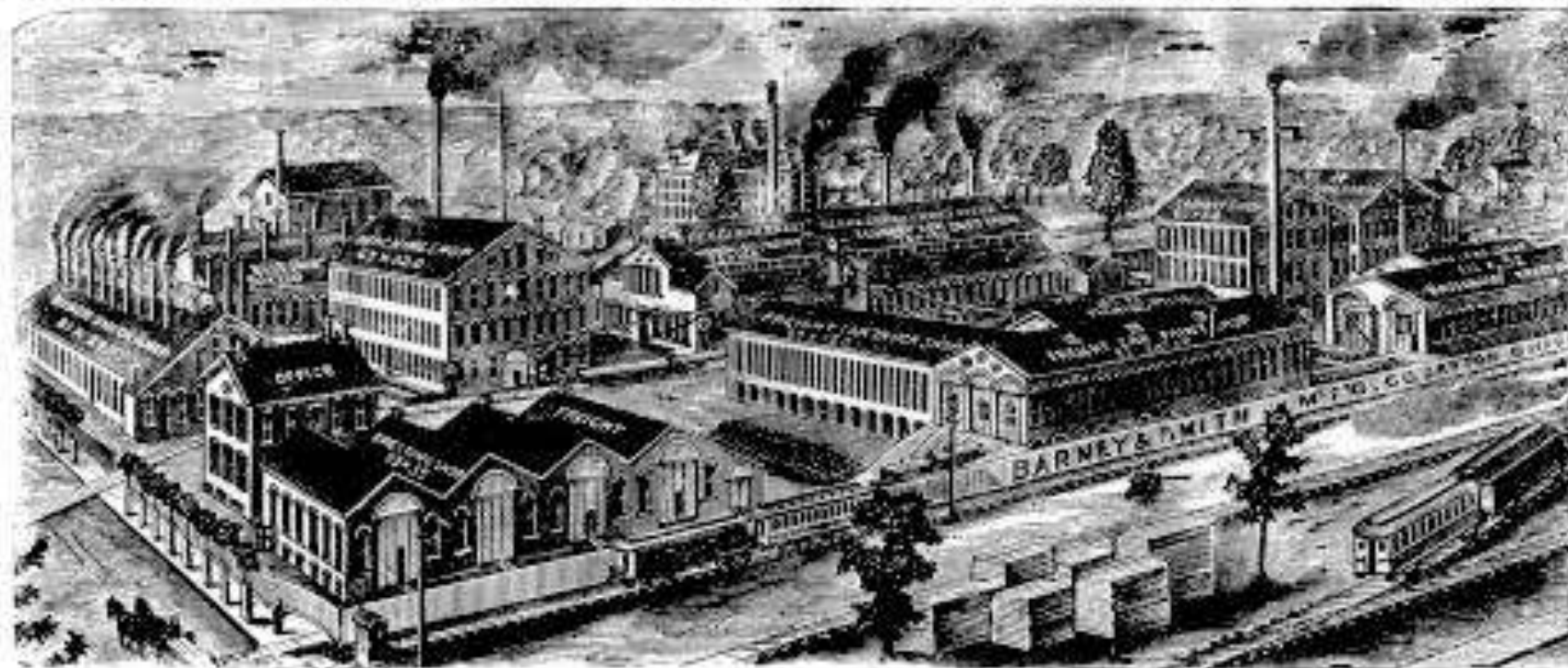
- *Financed by several railroad tycoons and wealthy Baptist businessmen, the Evangel was dedicated in Cincinnati and began its journey into the American West from St. Paul, Minnesota.*
- *The Northern Pacific provided unlimited free passage on all its lines.*

BARNEY & SMITH CAR CO.

BUILDERS

DAYTON, OHIO.

BARNEY & SMITH MANUFACTURING CO.,  
Manufacturers of Rolling Stock for Railroads, Frogs, Car Wheels and all Kinds of Castings.



ESTABLISHED 1849. DAYTON, OHIO.

Capital Stock, \$750,000. Grounds occupied, 18 Acres. 10 Passenger and Burgars per month. Employ 1,000 men. Capacity, 15 Freight Cars and 100 Car Wheels per day. Six Million feet Lumber in Store. SPECIAL ATTENTION GIVEN TO NARROW-GAUGE WORK. PHOTOGRAPHS OF WORK SENT ON APPLICATION.  
E. E. BARNEY, Pres't. E. J. BARNEY, V. Pres. & Supt. J. D. PLATT, Treas. F. E. SMITH, Sec'y. EDWARD R. BARNEY, Ass't Supt.

# Letter to Superintendents and Conductors of the Northern Pacific RR

*“You will pass Mr. Boston Smith and one attendant, with chapel car Evangel over our lines. You will arrange to take the car on any train he desires; you will sidetrack it wherever he wishes. Make it as pleasant for Mr. Smith as you can. Signed:  
Wm. S. Mellen, General Manager.”*

# Evangel



Boston Smith (and others) on the platform of the *Evangel* car, Minneapolis, MN.



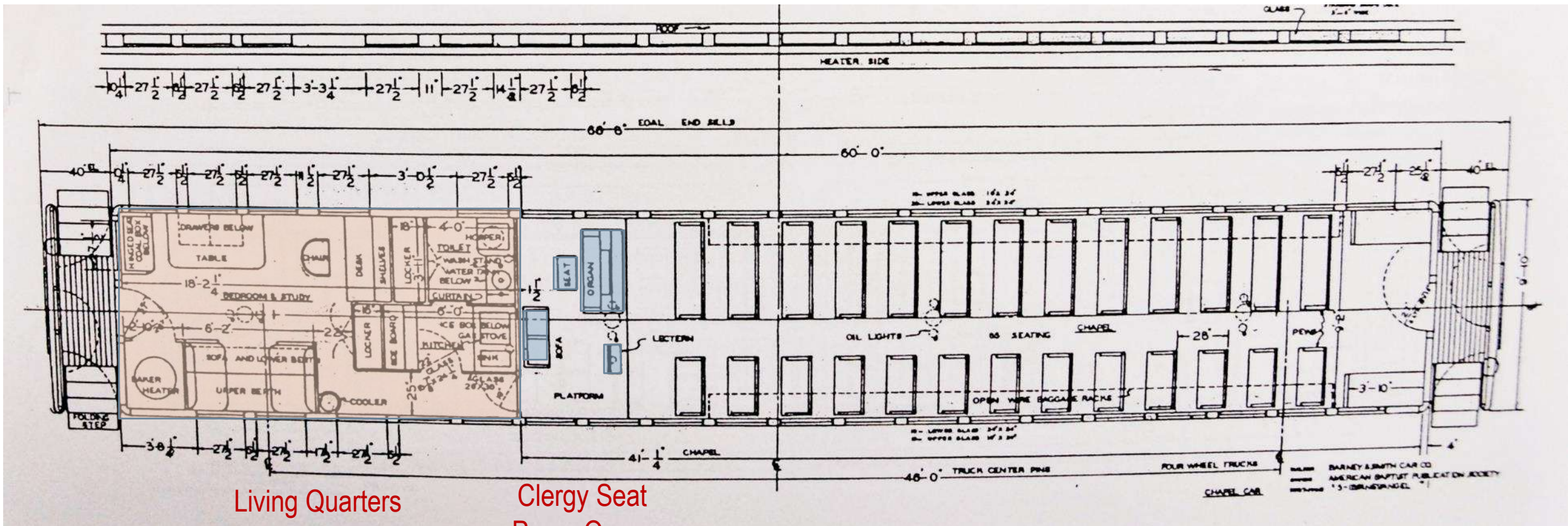
# Interior of *Evangel*

Measuring 10' x 60',  
*the Evangel* car had a  
living compartment  
fitted with a writing  
desk, wardrobe,  
upper and lower  
berths, a kitchen, and  
bookshelves.

The chapel section  
consisted of a brass  
lectern, an organ, a  
deacon's bench, and  
offset pews, seating  
two on one side and  
three on the other.



# Evangel Floor Plan



Living Quarters

Clergy Seat  
Pump Organ  
Lectern

# Other Baptist Chapel Cars

**With the success of Evangel, the American Baptist Association would build six more chapel cars.**

- *Similar in style to Evangel, all were constructed by the Barney & Smith Car Company in Dayton, Ohio.*
- *Each was dedicated to mission service and then sent out with a missionary couple aboard.*

# The *Emmanuel* Chapel Car (2)

**The second Baptist car, as it turned out, would be the longest running (1893-1938).**

- *In the financial panic of 1893, the Barney & Smith Co. built only four passenger cars—but one of them was the Emmanuel.*
- *At 70', it was 10' longer than Evangel.*
- *It could seat 150 congregants, 94 in “pews,” another 10 in study seats, and 35 or more on camp stools.*
- *It was equipped with Westinghouse Air Brakes.*





*Emmanuel* at Santa Barbara, CA

The interior of *Emmanuel* with Reverend G. B. Jacques and the organist.

The portrait on the door to the left is of the Rev. E. G. Wheeler, who was killed in a train accident while the car was in the shop at Sacramento.





Children's  
service on  
Chapel  
Car  
*Immanuel*

When first seeing the *Emmanuel* car, a young man gazed through the windows and asked, “What kind of a car do you reckon that is?” After being told that a minister and wife lived in it, he quipped:

*“Well, I’ve seen a cattle car, a hog car, a smoking car, a baggage car, a passenger car, and a sleeping car, but I’ll be blessed if I ever saw a car like that—if that don’t beat the devil!”*

The  
*Emmanuel*  
car has been  
restored and  
is displayed  
at Prairie  
Village, South  
Dakota.



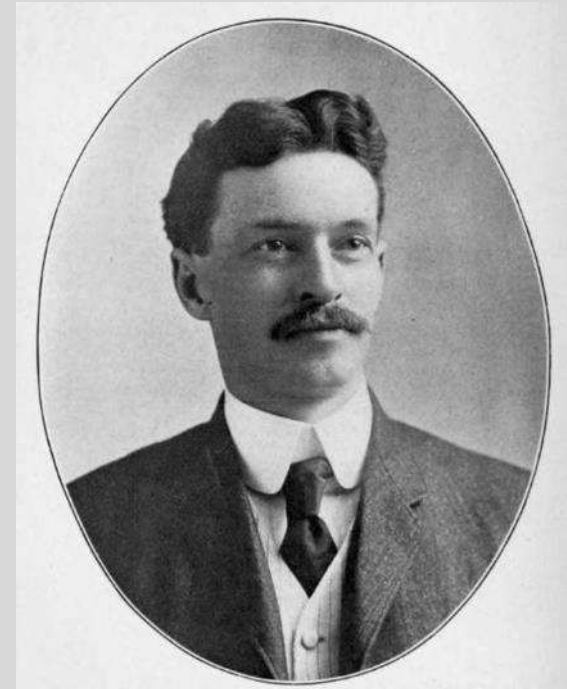


Interior of the restored  
*Emmanuel* car

## *Glad Tidings Chapel Car (3)*

**The minister and his wife who served as missionaries in the third Baptist car, built in 1894, were the Reverend and Mrs. Charles Rust, newlyweds and just graduated from Gordon Bible School.**

- *The miniature “parsonage” was 18’ x 10’, featuring two berths, a dining table, a study area, a kitchen, an ice chest, a wardrobe, and a toilet.*
- *The young couple started west in the fall of 1894, and the first stop was Brainerd, MN.*



*Glad Tidings* on a siding with a handcar and  
gandy dancers, 1905







Railroad  
workers  
inside *Glad  
Tidings* for a  
chapel  
service, 1905

*Glad Tidings Children's  
Meeting, 1910*



# *Good Will Chapel Car (4)*

**Dedicated in Saratoga Springs, New York in 1895, the Chapel Car *Good Will* was initially sent to Texas.**

- *In the 1890s, Texas was divided into three frontiers, East Texas, South Texas, and West Texas. The further west one went, the wilder it became.*
- *The Good Will car survived the Category 4 hurricane of Galveston in 1900, which killed more than 3000 people.*
- *Later, it traveled routes in Missouri and Colorado, and eventually, into the Pacific Northwest.*

The Great Storm in 1900 in Galveston is considered the most deadly natural disaster in USA history. Because there was no national weather service, no one knew the storm was coming. However, the Good Will Chapel Car survived!



At the end of its tenure, the *Good Will* ended up in Boyes Hot Springs, California, where it sat from 1938 until 1998. It currently is in the process of restoration by the National Museum of American Religion.

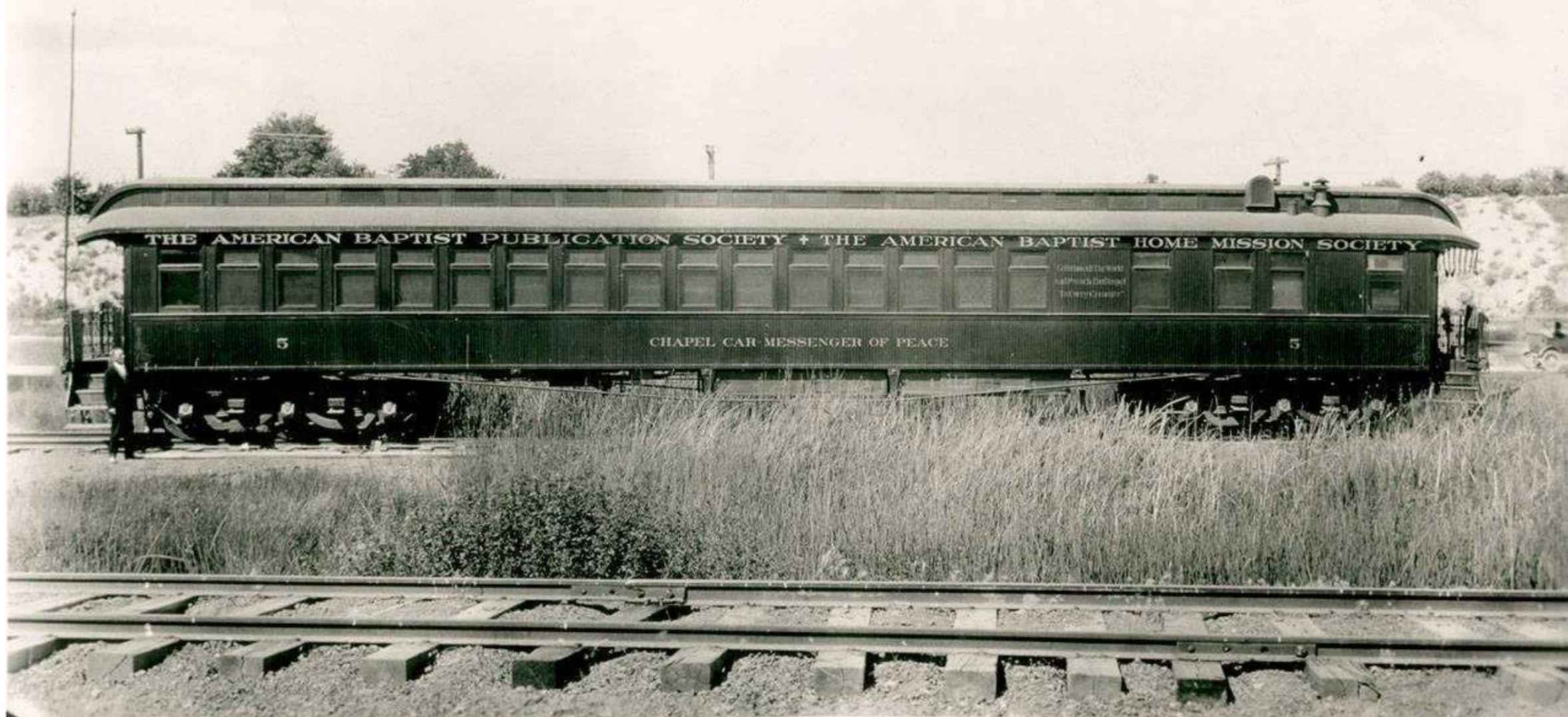


## *Messenger of Peace Chapel Car (5)*

**Dedicated to service in 1898, the *Messenger of Peace Chapel Car* was nick-named “the Ladies car,” since the initial funds to build it were donated by Baptist women.**

- *It was on display at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in 1898 and again at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis.*
- *Though he wasn’t a Baptist, Dwight L. Moody gave a sermon from this car.*
- *In 1910, the car was assigned to the International YMCA to minister to railroad workers.*

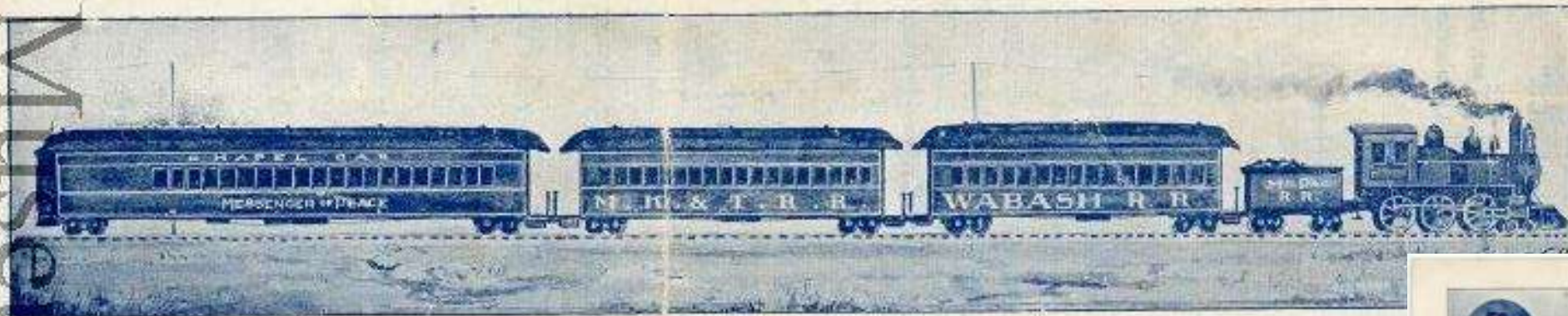
# Baptist Chapel Car *Messenger of Peace*



SATISFYING REFRESHMENTS SERVED ENROUTE.—PSALMS 104:5.

# ...THE GOSPEL ON WHEELS...

CHAPEL CAR No. 5, "MESSENGER OF PEACE."



THE TERMINUS.—REV. 22:14.

STOPPING PLACES.—MARK 1

BOSTON W. SMITH, General Manager,  
2309 James Avenue, North, Minneapolis, Minn.

S. G. NEIL AND WIFE, Missionaries,  
316 North Eighth Street

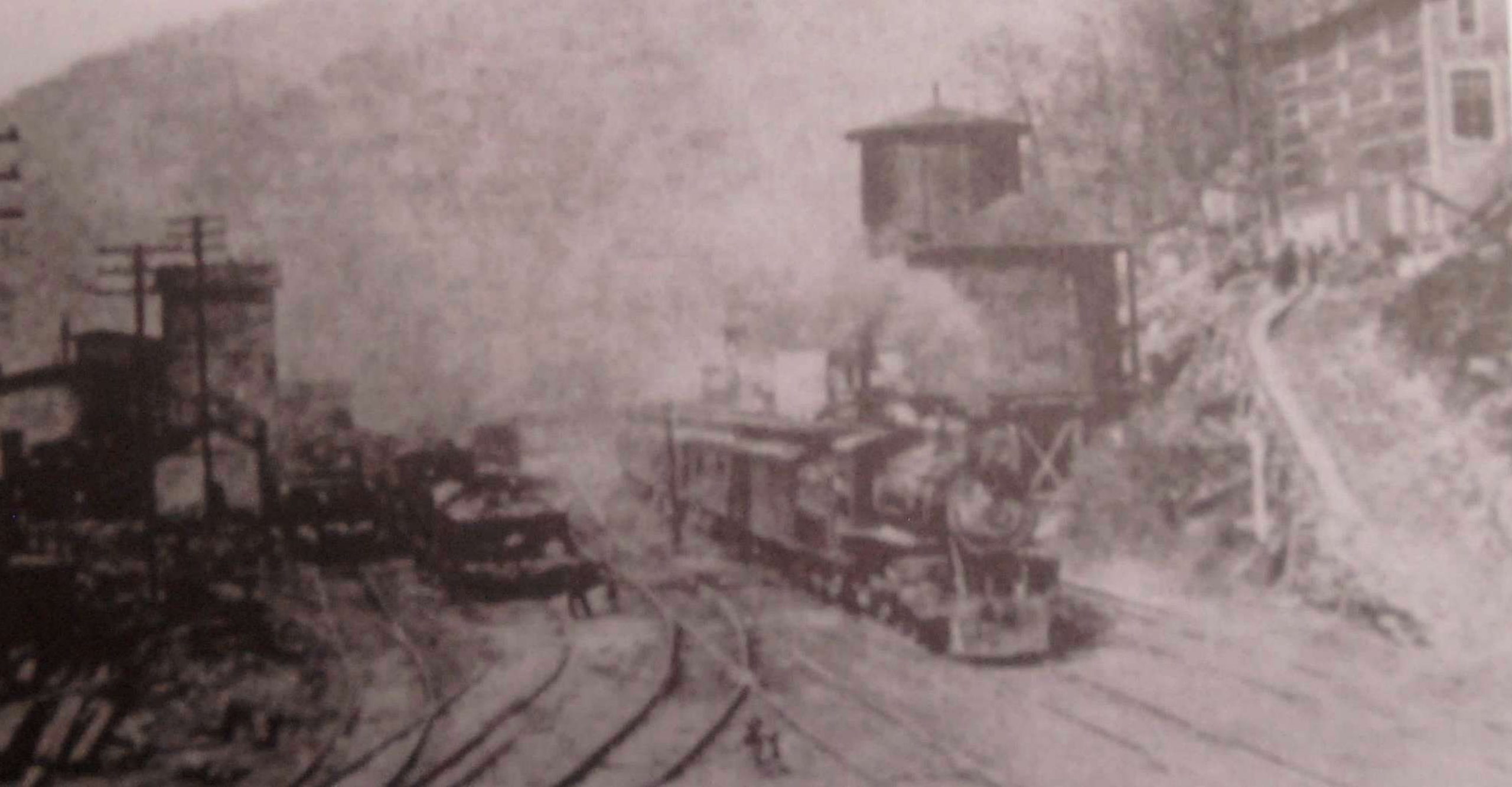
NOTE—PASSENGERS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO STAND ON THE PLATFORM.—LUKE 11:23.

Advertisement brochure for *Messenger of Peace*, 1899



Northwest Railway Museum





*Messenger of Peace* in Thurmond, W. Virginia, 1901



Though scheduled to be scrapped in the 1970s, the Messenger of Peace car was rescued and donated to the Northwest Railway Museum in Snoqualmie, Washington.



*Messenger  
of Peace  
with  
restored  
interior*

## *Herald of Hope Chapel Car (6)*

**Dedicated to service in Detroit, Michigan in 1900, this Chapel Car was the only one that primarily ran east of the Mississippi River .**

- *Tagged the “Young Men’s Car,” the initial funds were donated by the young men of the Woodward Avenue Baptist Church.*
- *The first run of this car was in Michigan, and the first stop was Grindstone City in “the thumb” on the Pere Marquette RR.*



The Woodward Avenue Baptist Church in Detroit (right center) burned in 1986.

Photo, Library of Congress



Grindstone City, Michigan, at the tip of the “thumb” and a boomtown since the late 1880s on Lake Huron, produced the best grindstones in the nation..

THE GOOD OLD DAYS AT GRINDSTONE CITY, MICH. 35 M



Sided at Wallace, West Virginia, members of the newly organized church pose beside the *Herald of Hope* car (1915)



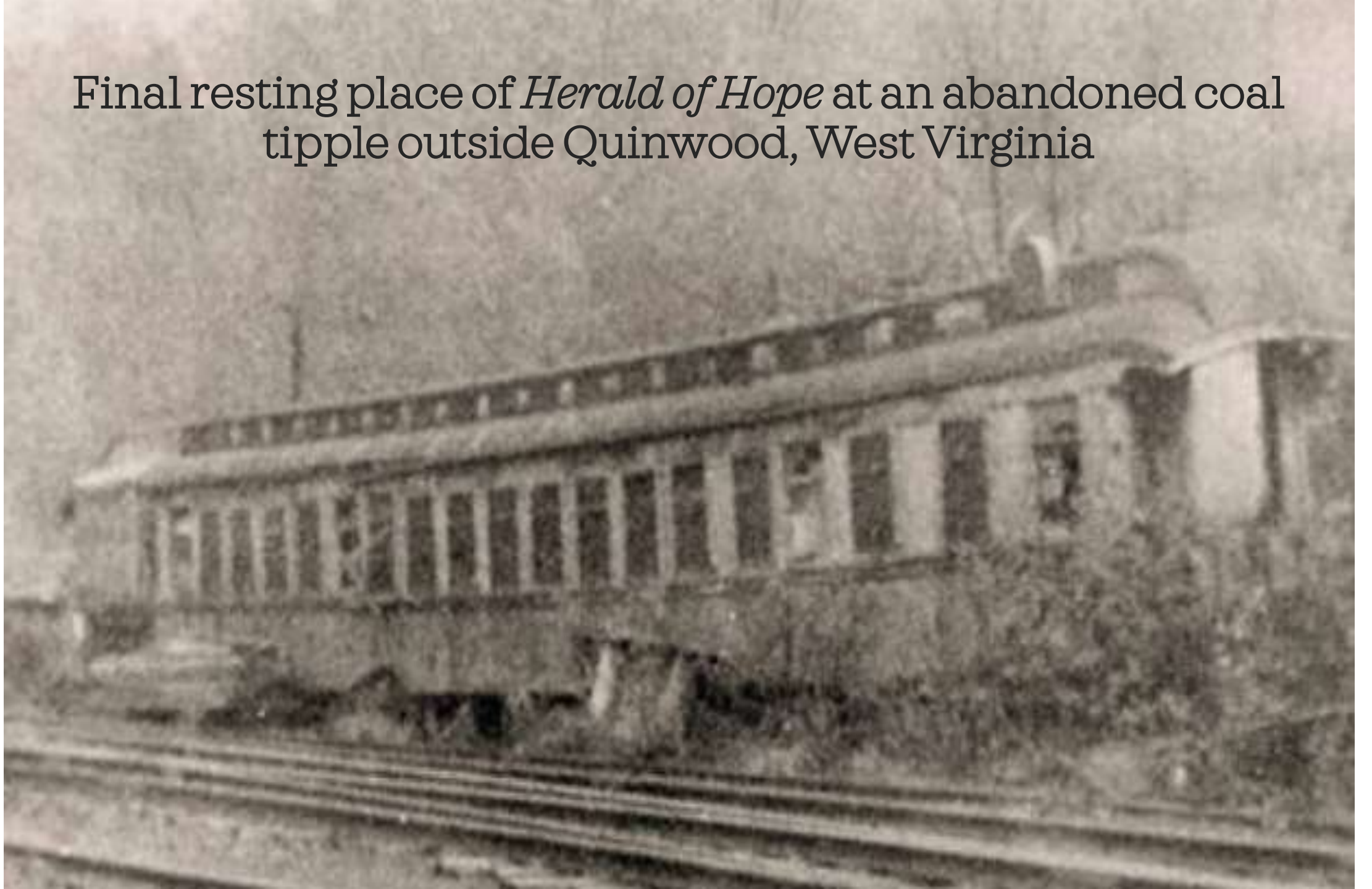
Railroad men's meeting in *Herald of Hope*





Railroad workers gather around *Herald of Hope*, sided in a West Virginia shop area.

Final resting place of *Herald of Hope* at an abandoned coal tipple outside Quinwood, West Virginia



# Grace Chapel Car (7)

**The last of the Baptist Chapel cars was *Grace*, built in 1915.**

- *The construction of this car was more “churchy” than previous cars, and this one had a stained glass door panel and green leaded glass in the clerestory windows.*
- *It was exhibited at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco celebrating the completion of the Panama Canal.*
- *The clergy apartment was spacious and upscale, with a brass bed (as opposed to berths) and a shortened chapel area.*



Baptist Chapel Car *Grace*



The *Grace* Chapel Car has been preserved in  
Green Lake, Wisconsin



Interior of  
*Grace*

View from  
the Front



Father Kelly, who served his first parish in Lapeer, Michigan

## Roman Catholic Chapel Cars

**In 1905, Father Francis Kelly became the president of the newly formed Catholic Church Extension Society, and having viewed the Baptist *Messenger of Peace* the year prior, he was inspired to do the same for the Roman Catholic Church.**

- *St. Anthony Car (1907) built by the Pullman Co.*
- *St. Peter Car (1912) built by Barney & Smith Co.*
- *St. Paul Car (1915) built by the Pullman Co.*

Dedication of  
*St. Anthony* at  
the Pullman  
Company  
factory,  
Chicago,  
1907





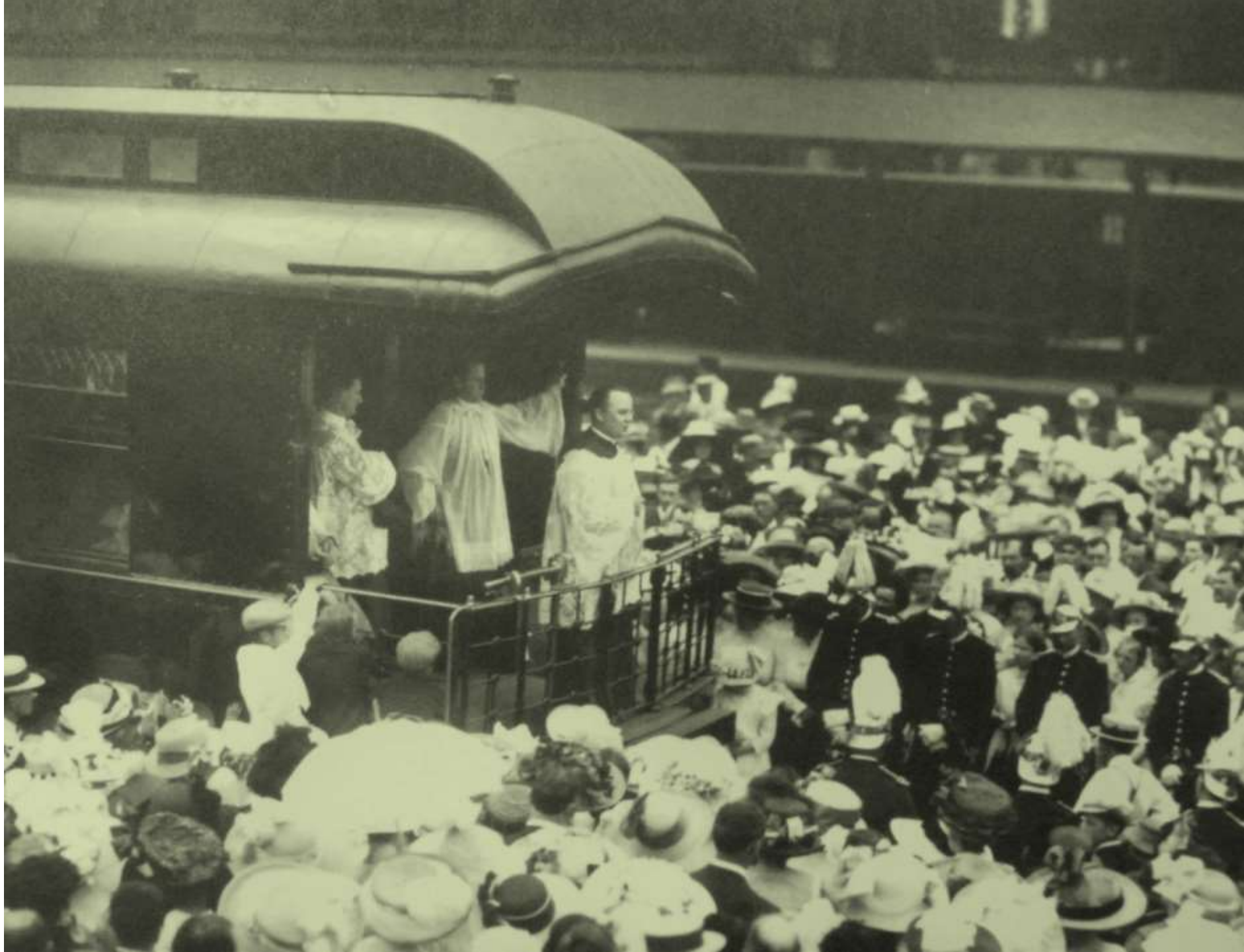


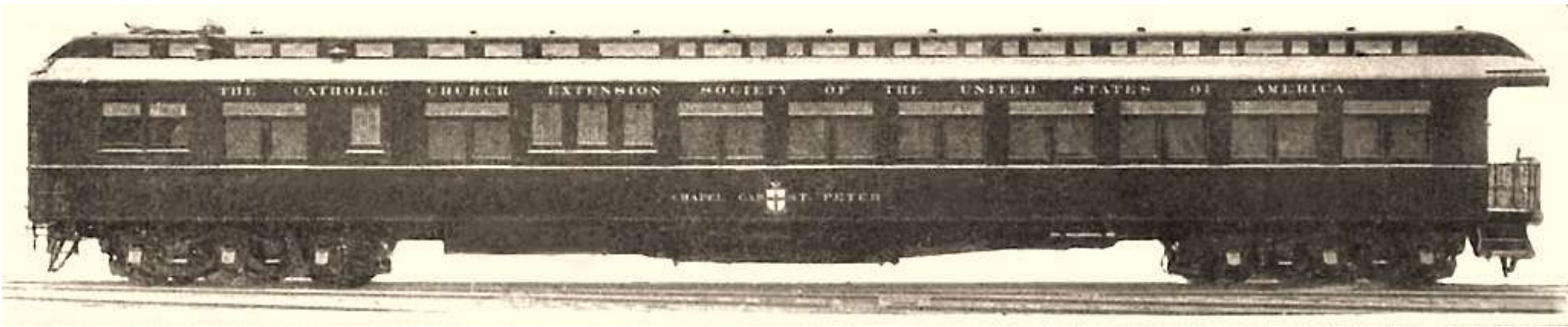
The *St. Anthony* Chapel Car surrounded by a crowd at Sidell, Louisiana, 1909. It is credited with establishing more than 80 Catholic parishes.



Hundreds of people lined up to tour the *St. Anthony* Chapel Car when it was sided at the 32<sup>nd</sup> and Market Street Pennsylvania Yard in Philadelphia, 1908.

Dedication  
of *St. Peter*  
with a  
special Mass  
at Dayton,  
Ohio, 1912





*St. Peter* was the first steel chapel car to be built, all the previous cars being constructed with wood sheathing.

At the time of construction, it was considered to be one of the longest railroad cars in the world, measuring 84' in length.

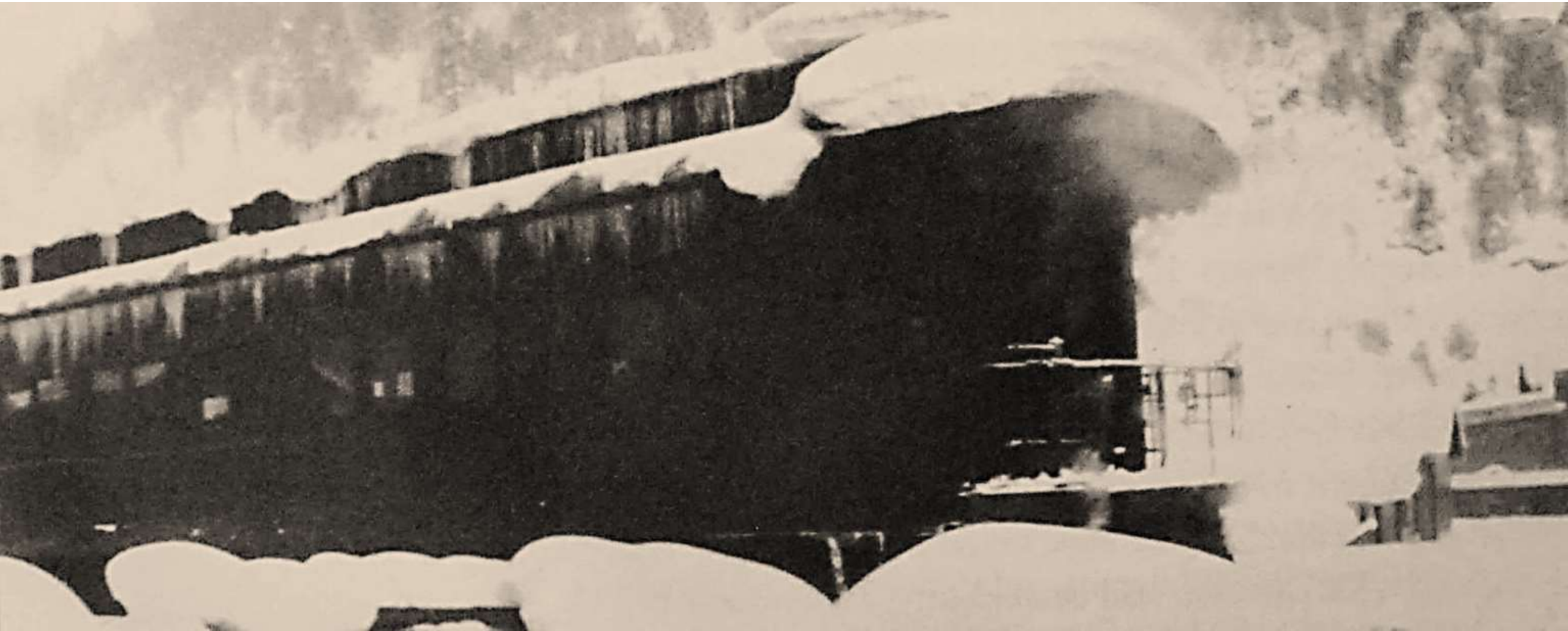
It joined the Baptist car *Grace* at the San Francisco Panama-Pacific Exposition, and the two cars were coupled together.



The altar area of the *St. Peter* car featured an elevated platform, a rood screen, a communion rail, and a confessional booth.

Stations of the cross were built into the car interior as well, and there was an organ near the entrance.

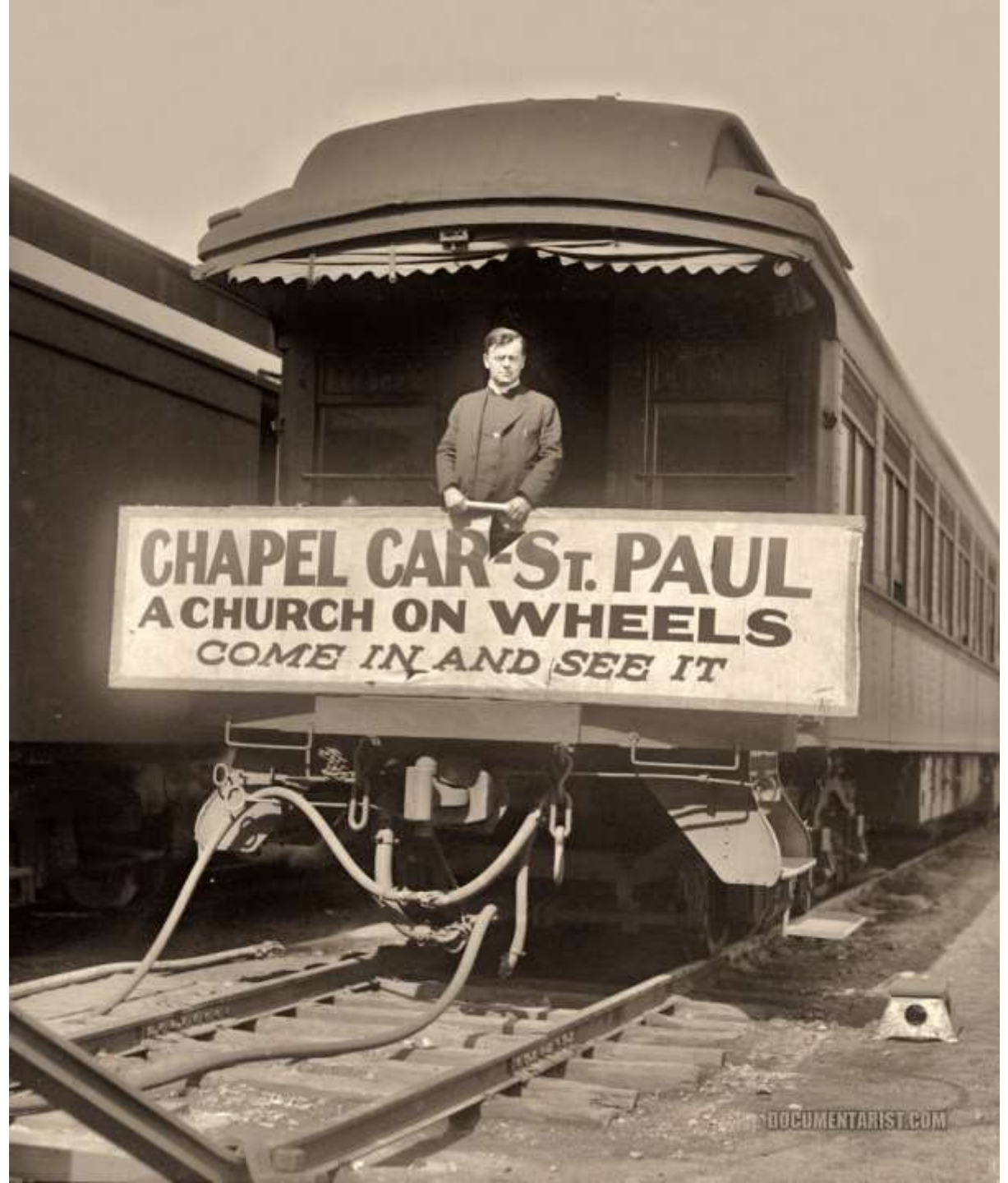
ALTAR AND SANCTUARY OF CHAPEL CAR ST. PETER  
OWNED AND OPERATED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
EXTENSION SOCIETY OF THE U. S. A.



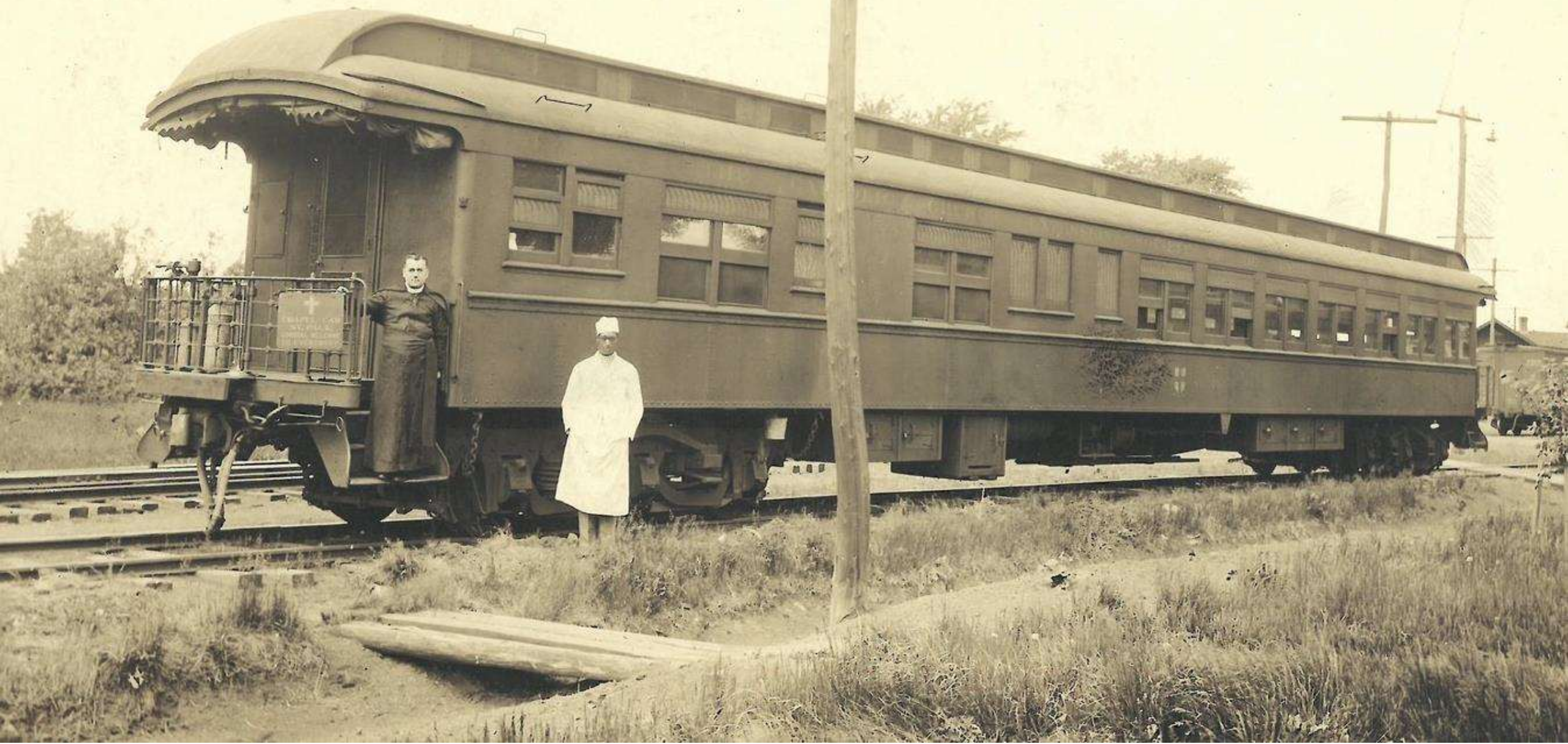
A perennial problem with all the chapel cars was the Baker heater system, which was designed for the anthracite coal of the east (high carbon content), whereas in most western states, bituminous coal was the major type available (high sulfur content). Hence, the cars were often cold, and this 1923 photo of the *St. Peter* car in northern Idaho illustrates the problem.

The *St. Paul* car, dedicated to service in New Orleans on March 14, 1915, was the longest yet at 86'.

It dedicated its work to the Deep South, reaching out to Blacks, French Creoles, lumberjacks, shrimpers, cotton farmers, and railroad workers, serving primarily in Louisiana, Texas, North Carolina, and Oklahoma.



*St. Paul Chapel Car with Father Kelley*





Interior of the *St. Paul* car looking forward toward the altar area



# The Demise of the Railroad Chapel Cars

**The golden age of the railroad chapel cars came to an end in 1918.**

- *The U. S. American Railway Association regulations prohibited operating wooden passenger-type cars on mainline railroads after 1910 (too dangerous).*
- *U. S. ICC regulations barred the railroads from transporting the cars for free.*
- *The National War Cabinet created during World War I dictated that all the tracks had to be kept clear for troop trains and war materials.*