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Chapter One



Beginnings

Howard Archibald Goss was born on March 6, 1883, to William Clinton Goss and Margaret Jane (Gillette) Goss on a farm near Steelville in Crawford County, Missouri. ¹ Clinton, as he was known, and Margaret had eleven children, nine boys and two girls. Two of the boys did not survive infancy so when Howard told his family story he claimed to be the fifth of seven boys. The two girls, Nina and Leila, came later. ²

In 1821 Missouri became the twenty-fourth state in the union. The principal rivers of the state, the Mississippi and the Missouri, had become major transportation routes as American settlers pushed steadily westward. By the time it became a state, Missouri had a population close to seventy thousand persons; however, much of the state was untouched by European settlers. This was especially true of the Ozark region of the state.

In 1835 James Steel (possibly an Anglicized form of the German name Stahl), who operated a trading post on the Meramec River, sold forty acres along the river to the county of Crawford and the town that bears his name was established. ³ Steelville became the county seat of Crawford County. Located in the foothills of the Ozarks in the east central part of the state, at the time of Howard's birth it was, in many ways, still a frontier town. About the time of the Civil War, the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad began to open up this

region of the state. Missouri was both a philosophical and physical battleground in the years leading up to and including the Civil War.⁴ As with many parts of the nation, a lingering bitterness festered after the close of the war.

When Larkin Goss, Howard's grandfather, arrived in 1851 to homestead on Crooked Creek, one of the many spring-fed streams in the Steelville area, he found the landscape to be familiar. Born in the Appalachian Mountains in Grayson County, Virginia, like many young men of the time, he moved west. In Larkin's case the migration was to Overton County, Tennessee, where he met and married his wife.⁵ In a few years, he migrated again, this time farther west to the foothills of the Ozarks. The land Larkin Goss homesteaded was hilly; one could not really call it mountainous, with scrubby oak forests and poor soil. The creek beds were more fertile but even they were not ideally suited for agriculture. For example, in 1885 a flood swept through Larkin's farm and carried away the best of his soil and left useless hardpan in its stead.⁶ In spite of the inherent challenges, he cleared the land and began to farm 320 acres.

Clinton Goss, born in Tennessee in 1849, was two when the Goss family arrived in Crawford County. He was raised on the family farm and, when he married Margaret Jane Gillette in 1871, they too began farming. Margaret was born in Kentucky and possibly came to Crawford County as a schoolteacher.⁷ Over the next seventeen years, eight sons were born in quick succession. Two daughters and another son were born later. Two of the sons did not survive infancy.

Like most boys reared on a homestead the Goss sons were expected to work on the family farm. Carving a farm out of a rocky and hilly forest was hard work and, as the boys grew, they acquired an increasing share of the workload. Sunday afternoon was the only time of the week free from chores. Other days were filled with work

from sunup to sundown. The Fourth of July and Christmas Eve were the only two holidays celebrated with time away from the family farm. Howard Goss was convinced his childhood developed in him a strong work ethic that remained throughout his life.

He learned a number of lessons on the farm. On one occasion his father sent Howard and his younger brother Bryl to plant a field with corn. The boys were not paying close attention to the task and they spilled the corn on the ground. Deciding it was too much work to pick up the spilled corn, they covered it with dirt. When the corn sprouted it revealed their laziness and the punishment meted out by his father taught young Howard a lesson he remembered throughout his life: Be sure your sins will find you out. In spite of the hard work, he remembered his childhood with fondness. In his hindsight it was a “boy’s paradise,” the forests filled with wild game and the clear swift streams teeming with fish.⁸

As could be expected for a homesteading family, money was scarce. Howard did not get his first pair of shoes until he was twelve. Clinton Goss developed an apple orchard that became the family’s primary cash crop. It is possible that he also supplemented the farm income with employment in the area’s growing mining industry.

The east central part of Missouri became home to a number of iron mines and works. In the 1820s Thomas James, an Ohio banker and merchant, met a group of Shawnee Indians who were decorated with paint colored by iron ore. James sent an associate to explore the area the Indians indicated was the source of their paint. The associate found the iron ore deposits and, as a result, the Maramec Iron Works was founded in 1826 near Maramec Spring, which was not far from what would become Steelville.⁹

In 1879-1880 a new iron works was constructed at Sligo near the Goss homestead. Iron ore for the Sligo furnace came from the

New York iron bank located a mile from the Larkin Goss farm. The Sligo Iron Works created a small boomtown complete with a school for the children of the workers.¹⁰ It is probable that this school is where Howard Goss received his first formal education. When he was fourteen, he went to work for the Sligo furnace where he filled the kiln with cordwood to be made into charcoal for the furnaces.¹¹

The Move to Galena, Kansas

The next year brought a great change for Howard. His father, perhaps enticed by the promise of great opportunity in the mining business, sold the family farm and invested in a mining venture in Galena, Kansas. As a fifteen-year-old, Howard moved from the wooded hills of the Ozarks to the tri-state region where Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma met. His new home, Galena, had all the trappings of a frontier mining boomtown.

Galena, located in the southeast corner of Cherokee County about three miles north of the Kansas border, was just across the state line from Missouri. The landscape was rocky and the soil decidedly not fertile. The original European settlers in the area were ranchers and, for generations, the population remained sparse. However, in 1877 lead ore was discovered in the area, the bluish-grey color of the lead giving Galena its name. As a result, mining speculators and miners flooded into the region. Two competing mining towns rapidly arose on either side of Short Creek. Empire City on the north side of the creek initially grew faster but, before long, Galena became the principal city. By 1900 Galena was home to over ten thousand people and the site of 265 lead and zinc mines and thirty mining companies.

Galena exhibited the best and the worst of frontier mining towns. At its best it afforded an opportunity by capital investment

or abundant employment to get ahead financially. At its worst it demonstrated the depths to which humans so often fall. Tent cities sprang up and life seemed about as secure as the tents. Howard remembered the insecure nature of the city.

Rough men came from every direction, riding or driving through the deep mud or dust, whichever for the moment made up the newly laid-out streets. They drank, gambled, shot, fought or killed each other as they pleased. Largely making their own laws, they went their own ways, and worked in the mines when they felt like it, or when they ran out of money and were compelled to. In the business section almost every other building housed a saloon with brothels sandwiched in between.

Few were the mornings when I went to work that I did not see at least one dead man lying between the tent shacks where he had been thrown during the night to get him out of the way. After some nights there would be several bodies in evidence.¹²

Clinton Goss had seen Galena as an opportunity to better his family financially. Unfortunately his gamble quickly failed and the family lost its financial stake. As a result of this swift reversal, Howard himself became a miner. His first mining job was to replace a miner who had been killed on the job the previous day. His early jobs were underground, and through a series of accidents that almost cost him his life, he came face to face with his mortality. His near-death experiences unsettled his young heart and perhaps laid the groundwork for not-too-distant religious conversion. He soon secured an above-ground job in the mining industry, and by

the time he was nineteen, management thought he had potential for advancement and presented him with an opportunity. The opportunity was conditional on Howard having graduated from high school, and so to prepare himself, he returned to high school.¹³

Goss's Introduction to Pentecostalism

High school presented Howard with a number of new opportunities in addition to his education. He was a gifted athlete and soon was both boxing and playing on the football team. While he benefited from both his educational and athletic opportunities, it was in high school where he received a personal invitation to visit the revival services of Charles Parham and that visit changed the trajectory of Goss's life.¹⁴

Galena was an unlikely place to experience a religious conversion. The tri-state area around Galena was not known for its religious affection. In fact, the opposite was true. With little exaggeration a local poet wrote the following of nearby Joplin, Missouri:

Suez was still east of us and there were no Ten
Commandments, for way down yonder in Southwest
Missouri, where women drink and curse like fury; where
the barkeepers sell the meanest liquor which makes a
white man sick and sicker, where the tin horns rob you a
little quicker, that's where Joplin is.¹⁵

Howard claimed little or no religious background. His grandfather, Larkin Goss, had converted and joined the Methodist Church in 1857.¹⁶ While the extent of Larkin's faith or his involvement with the Methodist church is unknown, evidently his son Clinton did not share his faith. Although Howard's mother was a

“staunch Christian and a leader of the women’s work of our church,” he remembered his home as non-Christian. At some level there is a contradiction in Howard’s recollection. His mother, in his words, was a staunch Christian and church member at least as early as 1901 and yet Howard said that he was the first in his family to find the Lord.¹⁷ The story is further complicated by the following:

None of us were Christians at this time. Far from it. We never had a Bible story told to us. We never read a Bible, attended a Sunday School, or a church on our lives. God was completely ignored in our home. Once my Mother told me that I could never be a truly educated man unless I had read at least some portions of the Bible. To please her I got a Bible and asked her where to read. She said anywhere she supposed. I opened at Matthew and after reading the first chapter through, I remarked: “Well, if it is all like this, I do not want to read anymore of it.” She never mentioned it again. Consequently I grew up quite free from the doubts, unbelief and erroneous ideas which plague many a church member ... even today.¹⁸

When Goss said he was the first in his family to find the Lord, he meant he was the first of his siblings. John, his elder brother, was a committed “infidel.” He had been influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and Robert Ingersoll and was eager to pass his “radical ideas” on to his brothers. While most of his brothers did not share John’s commitment to agnosticism, they were apathetic about matters of faith. John thought Howard had the most promise in this area and on his deathbed—he died at twenty-one—he urged Howard to hold on to infidelity.¹⁹ While it is impossible to know

with certainty the state of Howard's religious upbringing, it is safe to say that in no way did he consider himself to be a Christian. He did, however, consider himself and his brothers to be upstanding citizens not touched by the wickedness of the city in which they lived.

In the fall of 1903 Galena was turned on its head by a series of revival meetings. Mary Arthur, the wife of a prominent merchant in Galena, had been healed under the ministry of Charles Parham the previous summer in El Dorado Springs, Missouri.²⁰ Mrs. Arthur returned to Galena ecstatic about her healing and invited Parham to hold services in her home.

To properly understand Howard Goss's conversion to the new Apostolic Faith, or Pentecostalism as it later became known, it is necessary to briefly exam the rise of Pentecostalism. It is to this task we now turn our attention.