

Mt. Moriah's Bible



W. Ruth Sneed

2018

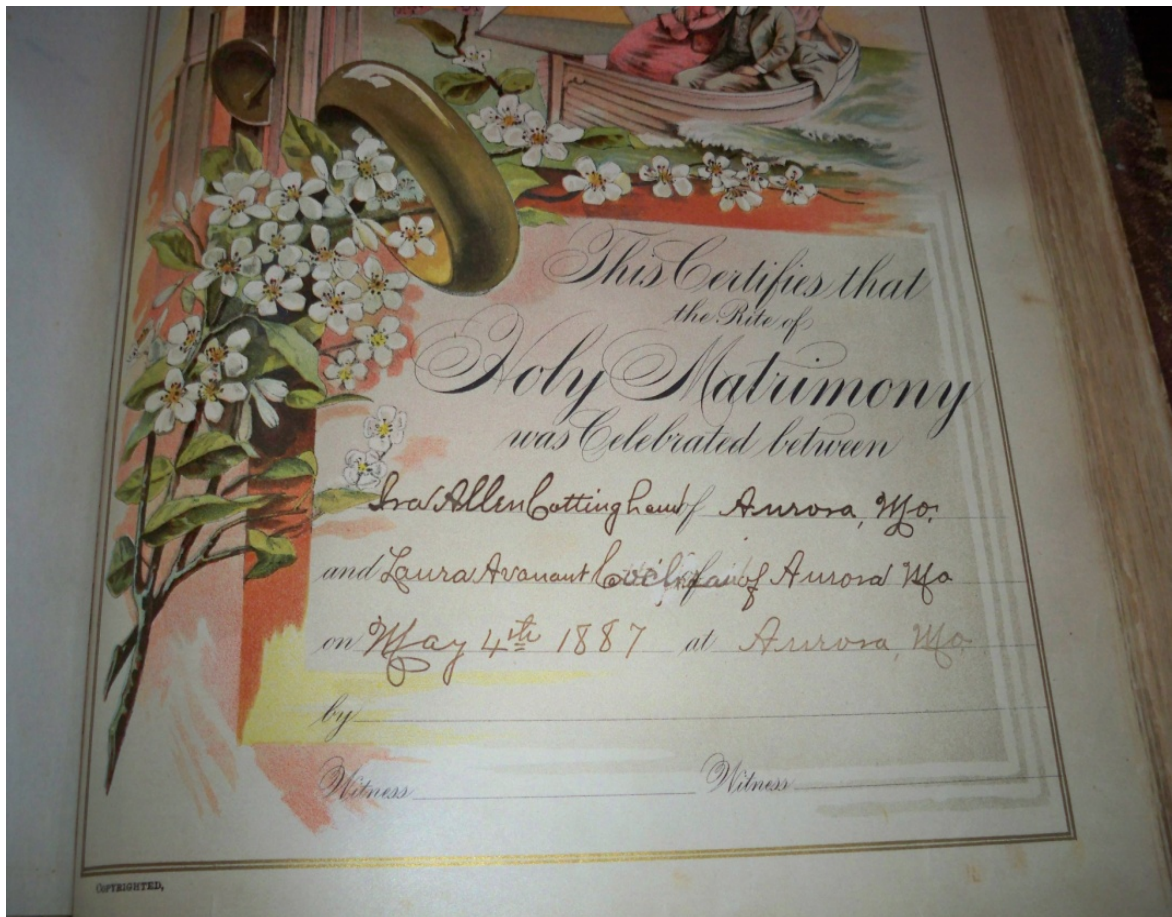
Carthage, MO



The Altar Bible of Mt. Moriah

Rain from a sudden spring shower beat against the windows, accompanied by brilliant flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, but inside the sanctuary, it was dry. The Holy Bible was in its safe, familiar place in front of the altar of the Mt. Moriah church. The storm abated, and before long, beams of light from the rising sun came through the east windows, creating a pathway across the varnished pews and illuminating the pages of the opened book. All too soon gone - another day . . . another season . . . another year; still the Bible stood sentinel, there to provide guidance for generation after generation. Time passed as relentlessly as the meandering water of nearby Dry Fork starting on its journey to the sea.

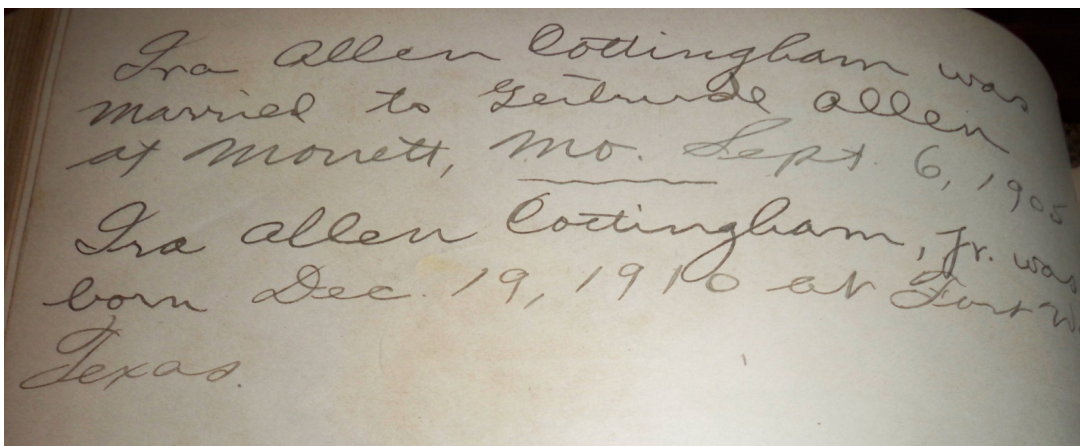
The Bible began its existence in 1889 when it was published in Cincinnati (or quite possibly Chicago). After being purchased by Ira Allen Cottingham, it found its first home in Aurora, Missouri. The crisp new pages were opened wide to record the previous 1887 marriage of Ira Allen Cottingham and Laura "Eva" Avonant Cochran. Their celebration of Holy Matrimony was inscribed for posterity in the pages between the Old and New Testaments. Continuing the entries, a page was turned over to document the birth of a son, Jesse Bernays Cottingham, on April 3rd, 1888. Then the Bible was undoubtedly placed on an ornate table in the center of the parlor for all to see and admire, as this was a common custom in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Sunny, unclouded times continued to be noted in the Holy Bible when a pen was again dipped into ink to commemorate the name and birth date of a new little daughter, Daisy Dean Cottingham, on May 9, 1895.



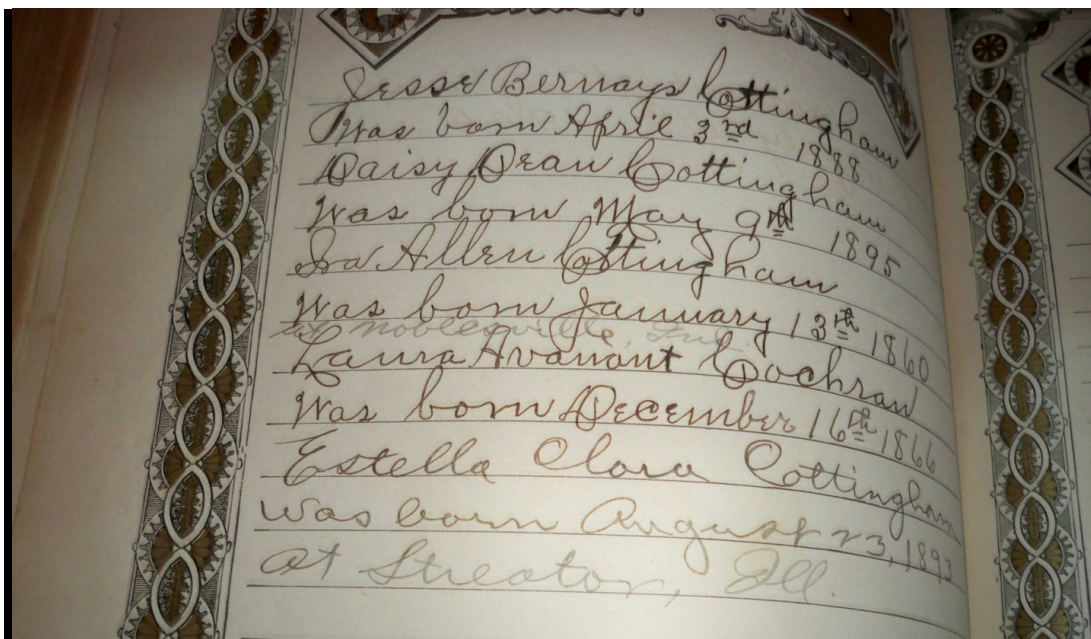
Ira Allen Cottingham was born in Indiana in 1860, coming to Missouri when he was seven years old. In 1870, William A. and Flora Cottingham and their eight children, Ira being the oldest, lived in Marion Township of Jasper County; after a few years, the family moved a short distance to Madison Township, nine miles northeast of Carthage. Ira attended Carthage High School one year. He later entered the Cincinnati Medical Institute, and in 1885, he was given an eclectic medical license to practice in Missouri. He began his career in Aurora, Missouri, and was also mayor of that city for three terms. Continuing his professional training, he received his certification in eye, ear, nose, and throat diseases from the St. Louis College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1890.

Life had progressed smoothly and according to plan for Ira, until everything was suddenly turned upside down. The contented family days were replaced by ones of sorrow when the mother of the family died at the young age of thirty-eight. The grieving husband sadly opened the Bible to the page reserved for deaths and chronicled the date of Laura's passing on July 27, 1904.

Dr. Ira Allen Cottingham, left with two children after Laura's untimely death, soon made the acquaintance of a lady from Texas named Gertrude Allen. They were married in September 1905 at Monett, Missouri. Making plans to move to Texas, Dr. Cottingham received his medical license to practice in that state in 1907. All was in readiness by July of 1909 when Ira, Gertrude, twenty-one-year-old Jesse, and fourteen-year-old Daisy packed their possessions and left Missouri for Fort Worth, Texas.

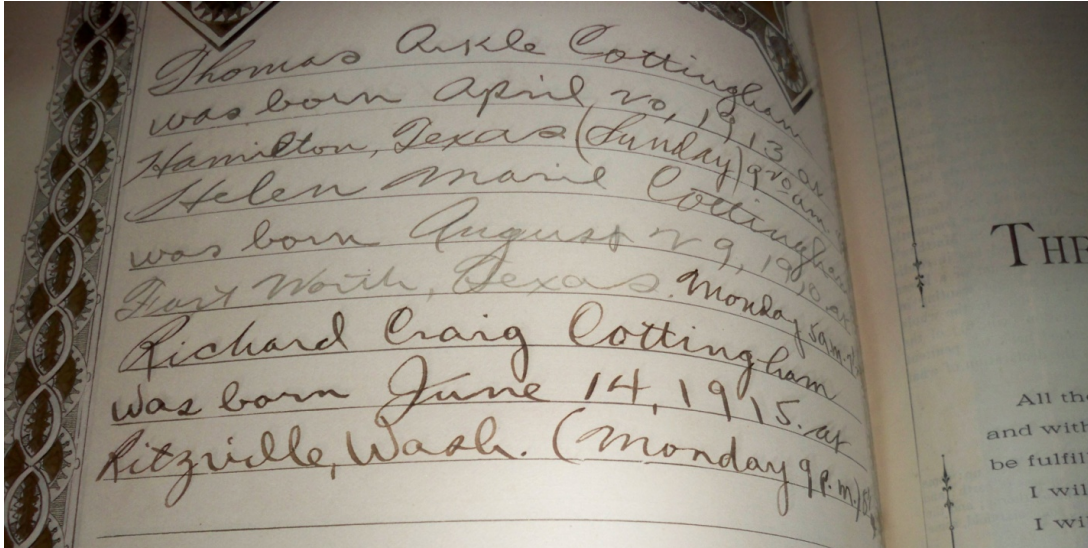


Ira Allen Cottingham was married to Gertrude Allen at Monett, Mo. Sept. 6, 1905
Ira Allen Cottingham, Jr. was born Dec. 19, 1910 at Fort Worth Texas.



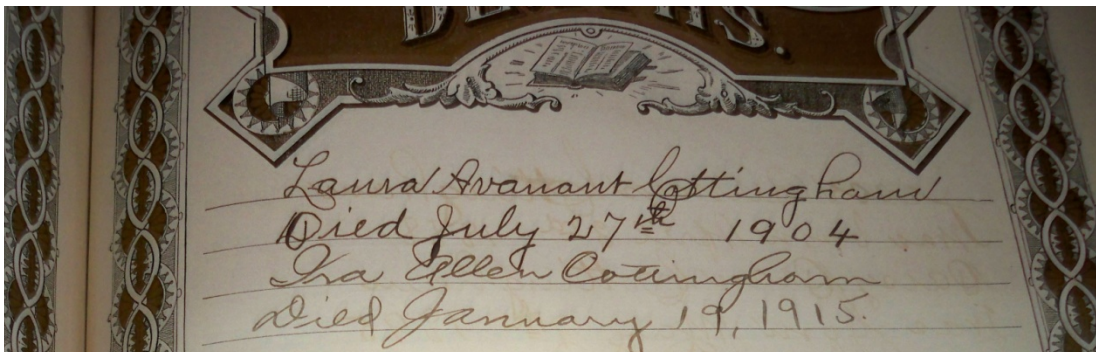
Jesse Bernays Cottingham was born April 3rd 1888
Daisy Dean Cottingham was born May 9th 1895
Dr. Allen Cottingham was born January 13th 1860
Laura Aravant Cochran was born December 16th 1866
Estella Clara Cottingham was born August 23, 1893 at Sreator, Ill.

In August, shortly after the move to Texas, twenty-one year old Jesse Bernays Cottingham and Estella Clara Mitchell travelled to Oklahoma to get married. The new daughter-in-law's name and birthday were added to the same page as that of the first two Cottingham children. As Jesse and Estella's family grew, the birth dates of their children, Thomas Arkle and Helen Marie, were listed on the remaining blank page in the middle of the Bible.



Things must not have worked out too well in Texas, for after a few years, a decision was made by Ira and Gertrude to return to Missouri. A home for the family was located at 317 West Third Street in Carthage, while Dr. Cottingham found office space and began his medical practice anew.

After being in Carthage for two and a half years, Dr. Cottingham suffered an attack of the grippe, a highly infectious respiratory disease similar to influenza. Recovering, he felt well enough to be in his office on Friday, January 14, but did not consider his condition dangerous. According to an item in the local newspaper, a violent blowing of his nose caused a blood vessel to erupt, which was thought to have led to the development of cerebral-meningitis. In an era before advanced medical practices and the discovery of antibiotics, little could be done. Shortly, on January 19, 1915, Dr. Cottingham died. He was "considered one of the most reliable general practitioners and surgeons of the city and county."



* * *

Had the Bible traveled to Texas with Ira and Gertrude in 1909? Or, when packing up belongings to move, was it turned over to another family member for safe keeping? The study of the handwriting of the later entries in the Cottingham Bible may tell the story. The data for the marriage of Ira and Gertrude had been written in the Bible; below it, at the end of December 1910, birth information for their son was added. He was given the name of Ira Allen Cottingham, Jr. Both of these entries were made by another person, other than Ira or his wife, Gertrude. Ira's penmanship was formal and precise, while his wife's signature (as shown on Ira's death certificate) was light and flowing. Perhaps the writer was the caretaker of the Bible, and thus assumed the role of family historian.

All the descendants of Ira left Missouri. At the time when Ira Cottingham died, his son Jesse Bernays was working for a newspaper in Toledo, Ohio, but returned to Carthage for the funeral. Within a few months, Jesse and his family moved to the west coast where his uncles lived - one in Washington and one in Oregon. Shortly, information was received by the "home folks" of the birth of a third child to Jesse and Estella. Richard Craig Cottingham was born in Ritzville, Washington, on June 14, 1915. Jesse was listed in the 1917 city directory of Portland, as well as in several other yearly directories, indicating a move across the state line to Oregon. By 1920, Daisy Dean Cottingham, little sister of Jesse, had moved to Seattle, Washington, where she found employment as a bookkeeper in a flouring mill. Gertrude and her four-year-old son, Ira Jr., left Missouri to return to Texas after the death of her husband. In 1930, they were living in San Antonio where Gertrude worked in a dry goods store, and Ira Jr., though only nineteen, was said to be practicing medicine. It is apparent that none of the three children who descended from Dr. Ira Cottingham - Jesse, Daisy, or Ira, Jr. - took the large heavy volume with them when they moved westward. The hefty book evidently remained in Jasper County.

With the Holy Bible needing a home, perhaps it was given to Ira's mother, Flora, or to one of Ira's sisters. Flora, a widow since 1885, lived for a short time in Carthage until returning to the eighty-acre family farm northeast of Carthage in the Zion neighborhood. Only three of her eight children remained in the area: Emma (Mrs. Edwin Taylor), Ann Eliza (Mrs. Newt Keener), and Clara. The latter, who lived alternately with her mother or various siblings through the years, eventually married a man by the name of Hall. When Flora Cottingham died in 1922, she instructed first that all her debts be paid. Each of her children were then given the sum of one dollar with the exception of two daughters, Clara Cottingham and Emma Mary Taylor; these two inherited equal parts of the remaining estate. Did the Bible become part of Flora's estate? Or, was it passed on to one of the daughters? Or perhaps given to a friend?

No known connection of the Cottingham family to Mt. Moriah has been found. Both Ira Allen and Clara belonged to the First Christian Church of Carthage while Flora was a member of Center Point Christian Church. When, and through what set of circumstances, did Mt. Moriah become the recipient of the large Bible?



The first Mt. Moriah church building, originally constructed of wood, survived a “cyclone,” but was destroyed by fire in 1902. A wind-blown prairie fire in 1932 caused the destruction of the church once again. Burning to the ground, it is assumed all contents were lost in the blaze. Native stone was chosen to rebuild the church, and the dedicated members began the slow process of refurbishing the new building. Did a thoughtful person remember the Cottingham Bible and, becoming aware of the needs of the church, see that it was donated to Mt. Moriah?

One can only surmise the whereabouts of the Bible for a number of years, but what *is* known is that sometime after the new rock structure of Mt. Moriah was built, the Bible found a permanent home in the sanctuary of the church. Reaching back in their memories, older members associated with the church definitely place it there during the 1940’s. Frank

Dawald remembers it from early in the 1940’s when he started attending Mt. Moriah, and Joyce Carter says it was there when she first came in 1937. Dorothy Frost Shull recalled it being there at least since she was a teen-ager, and Carolyn Frost Johannes stated that it was there as far back as she can remember.

Nevertheless, without a specific time, several decades ago the Bible found a permanent resting place at the Mt. Moriah Methodist church in Marion Township, Jasper County, Missouri. The Bible was placed in front of the altar where it was opened to the beloved Twenty-third Psalm. Those pages, after many years, became stained, tattered, and torn. The old, brown pieces were concealed and protected by simply turning a few pages. The Bible remained open near the middle, close to Psalm 118, the center chapter of the Bible.

Psalm 118:1 *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”*

* * *

Conditions were not always ideal for the preservation of an old book. The cold, freezing temperatures of winter alternated with the hot, musty temperatures of summer, but in the spring time, soft breezes – along with the occasional wasp – came through the opened windows

and wafted gently through the church. In due course, ceiling fans and better methods of heating improved comfort for the congregation, and eventually a central air and heating system was installed.

Surroundings changed as the years rolled by. With the growth of the United States, it became necessary to retire the old forty-eight star flag and replace it with one having fifty stars. The old dark brown opera, or theater, chairs with their fold-up seats had seen better days and were replaced by long, cushioned pews in 1961. Some families donated \$100 for the new seating in memory of church members who had passed on; bronze plaques with those names were then attached to the aisle end of the pews. One by one, needed additions to the building were made. The hand-drawn stage curtains were taken down and supplanted by heavy, dark red drapes constructed by Nell Frost; when new carpet runners were purchased, the color was chosen to match those of the drapes and the seat cushions. An altar and a communion rail of birch wood were built by Glen Carter, while handmade wooden crosses and candlesticks were added later by Gene Carter. In the background behind the altar, a devotional painting by Sallman, "The Head of Christ," was hung, enhancing the feeling of reverence. However, these were only physical changes; the Bible remained in its appointed place, ageless.

There it remained as every Sunday the church filled with worshippers who listened to the sermon and sang the old, beloved hymns. The treasured Book relinquished its position of honor only on brief occasions, being moved aside for the placing of the Advent wreath or when space was needed for special performances.

Through the years, uncountable worshipers knelt for communion alongside the Bible at the altar rail with its inscription, "In Remembrance of Me." Infants were brought for christening by proud, young parents and were joined by doting grandparents and other family members. As these little ones grew, one could hear the pattering of their little feet as they ran past the open Bible on their way to their Sunday school classes. Before long, they eagerly attended Bible School each summer, enthusiastically learning to sing favorite songs such as "Deep and Wide" and "B-I-B-L-E." Under the leadership of strong teachers and leaders, religious instruction continued into the teenage years with the Methodist Youth Fellowship providing guidance, fun, and lasting friendships. Though the youth of the church often moved away, carrying their faith with them, others stayed close in the surrounding community, married and raised their families, and continued to keep Mt. Moriah church vital, building on the heritage of those who had gone before.

With the passage of time, friends and families periodically mourned the passing of the stalwart, older church members. One by one, these dedicated leaders had all served faithfully through the years, leaving a valuable legacy to their children . . . grandchildren . . . great-grandchildren As season followed season, the years rolled on, all gone swiftly like their

predecessors. Generation after generation, decade by decade. . . For close to eighty years, the Holy Bible of Mt. Moriah has remained a beacon, lighting the pathway for all generations.

