



the bard of sparkill

the forgotten true story

Christ Episcopal Church • Sparkill, NY 10976 • First Edition





“

...I am reaping the
invisible harvest
of the heart...”

- DR. HORATIO NELSON POWERS (1826-1890)

Above: the annual garden at Christ Church in late summer.

On the cover: the rose window; the Sparkill Creek near the Ferdon Avenue Bridge.

Introduction

To 21st century ears, Horatio Nelson Powers' love for Sparkill sounds giddy and melodramatic - almost unhinged.

“I never was so happy in all my life before!” he proclaimed in an 1887 letter to a friend. “So many birds singing and singing; such a wealth of blossoms and tender skies, such a magnificence of landscape instinct with the divine breath, such peace of heart, such a sweet atmosphere of love in my little church... I have never known such blessed restfulness and tranquility as in this retreat along the hills of Piermont.”

"I have known sorrow year after year, I have had continual solicitude and troubles, but they have not killed my faith, hope and charity. Now I am reaping the invisible harvest of the heart - am actually 'living before I die.' "

It was in Piermont on the morning of September 6, 1890, that Powers' life ended, at the not-so-ripe age of sixty-four. He had been working on a compilation of poetry inspired by the beauty he had found in Rockland County. He was preparing the volume as a surprise for his wife of 33 years, the woman who had borne him nine children. He never lived to see it published.

A writer, pastor, and man of the arts, The Reverend Doctor Horatio Nelson Powers was a rector of Christ Church for only four years - the last four years of his life. On the surface, all we can see of his life today is success after success. But just who was he? Where did he come from? How did his path cross with those of prominent 19th century Americans like Thomas Alva Edison and William Cullen Bryant? With a hugely impressive resume, how did he find his way to tiny Sparkill?



If he was so widely published and acclaimed - by all accounts a kind, highly charismatic individual - what is the sorrow of which he speaks? And why should we care today?

In the following pages, we hope to answer those questions - concluding with Powers' own words. For now, suffice it to say that this highly accomplished man personifies a philosophy of life that long ago fell out of fashion among the elite. It bursts with affection for the natural world - not as a randomized collection of atoms and cells, but as an incomparable canvas suffused with divine love.

The simple, sincere product of Horatio Nelson Powers' pen has been compared to Wordsworth. But that does not begin to describe the man - or the forces that made him.

Beginnings

Horatio Nelson Powers was born in Amenia (below left), a hamlet in Dutchess County, New York, in 1826. (The name is derived from the Latin word *amoena*, which means "pleasant to the eye.") He was raised in a family of devout Methodists. The Powers



family not only founded and built a number of Methodist churches in Dutchess County, but they were instrumental in founding the Amenia Academy, which, despite its Methodist orientation, produced at least two other Episcopal rectors: the Rev. John Canfield Sterling and the Rev. Solomon G. Hitchcock, both of whom served at Christ Church.

Thus influenced, Powers entered study for the priesthood. He graduated Union College in Schenectady in 1850, and studied at the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church, in New York City, in 1855. He was ordained in Trinity Church, New York, by Bishop Horatio Potter, and was almost immediately appointed as assistant at St. James's Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Apparently while studying for the ministry, Powers fell in love with a young woman named Clemence Emma Fauvel-Gouraud. Clemence has a particularly interesting - and tragic - backstory.

She was the daughter of Francis Fauvel-Gouraud (right), a doctor of science at the University of France and the author of several books on mnemonics. Fauvel was a student of Louis Daguerre, the inventor of the daguerrotype - the first photography process to become commercially successful.



Fauvel had come to the US with his family to demonstrate and deliver lectures on this nascent technology. “In less than six months,” according to one account, “a few, shrewd, cunning Yankees fathomed the art, at least enough to make it practicable, and ‘photo-graphic establishments’ were in full blast all over the country.”

But in 1847, Fauvel and his wife became ill with pulmonary consumption. They died within a month of each other. Nine-year old Clemence and her 6-year old brother, George, were thus left orphaned - at a young age, in a foreign land.

Adding insult to injury was a twist of financial fate. A year before he fell ill, Fauvel was informed that an aged relative in France had provided “a considerable legacy” for him and his family - but only on the condition that he return to Europe by a particular date to take charge of certain trusts designated in the will.

Evidently preoccupied with lecturing and demonstrating photography in America, Fauvel never met this requirement. The deadline expired while he and his wife were too sick to travel. An obituary reports that as he lay dying, Fauvel “spoke of this with the deepest anxiety and chagrin, on account of his children.”

Fauvel and his wife died indigent, and were buried in the Unclaimed Body Lot at Greenwood Cemetery, in what was then rural Brooklyn. Only very recently - in July 2011 - an anonymous individual had a bronze and granite marker placed at the gravesite.

Clemence’s ordeal as an orphan apparently had a lasting impact on Powers, as we shall soon see.

The frontier

The year 1857 marked a radical change in Powers’ life. He was 31. He and 19-year old Clemence were married. His young wife at his side, Powers left Lancaster to accept a call as rector at St. Luke’s Parish in Davenport, Iowa.

If Powers was expecting a placid assignment in an idyllic location, he picked the wrong job. Davenport was no *Little House on the Prairie*. Unlike St. James, a well established An-

glican congregation dating back to colonial Pennsylvania, St. Luke's and its community were new and struggling.



Located on the Mississippi River roughly halfway between Chicago and Des Moines, Davenport had been founded only 21 years earlier. In 1856, one year prior to Fr. Powers' arrival, Davenport became home to the very first railroad bridge across the Mississippi River (at left). It immediately plunged the town into controversy.

Steamboat owners saw the bridge as an impending threat to their livelihood. Just weeks after it was completed, a steamboat named the *Effie Afton* crashed into the bridge. The vessel's owner filed a lawsuit against The Rock Island Railroad Company, claiming the bridge represented a nuisance to navigation. (The railroad's leadership chose an attorney named Abraham Lincoln to defend them at trial.)

The case eventually reached the Supreme Court, and the bridge was allowed to remain. But the uncertainty consumed much of Davenport's attention for the better part of three years, just as Fr. Powers was trying to grow a church.

By this time, the Civil War lay just around the corner. Davenport was becoming, quite literally, an armed camp. Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood declared Davenport to be Iowa's first military headquarters. Five camps were set up in the community during the war, and thousands of Iowa troops trained there.

Easterners do not think of places like Iowa as having felt the effects of the Civil War. In fact, hundreds of Iowa children were left orphaned by the conflict. There is no record of how many parentless children descended on the steps of St. Luke's, but given the Episcopal Church's long tradition of offering refuge, it seems likely that the issue of war orphans captured the attention of Fr. Powers and his congregation.

What effect Clemence's own experience as an orphan had on her husband at this time is not possible to document. We do know, however, that the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans'

Home (at right, renamed the Annie Wittenmyer Home in 1949) opened on November 16, 1865, about a 10-minute carriage ride from Powers' church. A fundraiser in Davenport for the Home was reported to have raised \$2,800 - approximately \$43,000 in 2011 dollars - in just 22 minutes. The first 150 children arrived from Farmington, Iowa. The home eventually became a self-contained community, containing residences, a school, tailor shop, and a chapel.



The strains on Davenport during the Civil War years - and perhaps the decision to divert limited economic resources to the pressing issue of orphans - were too much for Fr. Powers and St. Luke's. Financial problems mounted, and his parish was forced to close in 1864. The church building was sold to a Presbyterian congregation, and later became a museum.

College life

Powers was undoubtedly discouraged, but it is unlikely he was unemployed for long. When he had arrived in Davenport, a cluster of buildings not far from St. Luke's lay vacant. It was the former site of Iowa College, founded in 1846 by Congregationalists, who had recently decided to move the campus further west.

The year after Fr. Powers' arrival, the Bishop Henry Washington Lee bought the property on behalf of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa for \$36,000. It would reopen as Griswold College, after the late Episcopal Bishop Alexander Viets Griswold. Fr. Powers was appointed as president.

According to a Facebook page on the subject, Bishop Lee's long-held dream was to educate Iowa's youth in an "academically superior and Christian manner." He had been able to convince his wealthy Eastern friends that there was a need to not only educate these "more or less unsophisticated westerners," and to do so in a Christian way.



The preparatory department of Griswold College opened in 1859. College-level curriculum development followed in 1863. At left is a snapshot of how one of Griswold's buildings looks today (the college closed in the 1890's).

The first commencement was in 1867. By the middle of the next decade, Griswold College was offering courses in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, advanced mathematics, Logic, Oratory, and Theology. Graduates earned a Bachelor of Art or a Bachelor of Science degree, or were ordained as Episcopal clergy.

Griswold even boasted a literary magazine, called *College World*. It's the first hint that Horatio Nelson Powers was nurturing an interest in the art of literature.

It seems fair to surmise that the academic life planted a seed in Powers' soul. He somehow found the time to study, as well as administer a college. In the same year that Griswold graduated its charter class, Powers was awarded a Doctorate of Divinity by his alma mater, Union College.

All this time, Fr. Powers (now The Reverend Dr. Powers) was keeping incredibly busy domestically. He and Clemence were raising a large family - they would become the proud parents of nine children.

But in 1867, just two weeks before Christmas, tragedy struck. One of their children, a son named Charles, died of unspecified causes. He was just four months old.

Chicago

Perhaps it was the pressure of small town finances that led Horatio Nelson Powers to consider life in a bigger city. Maybe it was the strain of raising a large family on the frontier. Or perhaps his interest in literature needed a more cosmopolitan environment in which to thrive. For whatever reason, the writer in Powers was about to blossom with his next assignment - in 1868.

Dr. Powers relocated to Chicago (1868 lithograph at right). He arrived in the midst of rapid and historic change. From the 1860's through the 1880's, according to the University of Chicago Library's Web site, the population of Chicago grew from 109,000 to more than one million. "It is often said that no city of the Western world had ever grown so quickly," the site said.



Advocates and guardians of culture were playing a major role in Reconstruction Era America. Major museums were being founded in New York, Philadelphia and Boston. An educated and moneyed class was starting to emerge in Chicago as well.

In retrospect, the city's upward trajectory was interrupted only briefly by the Great Chicago Fire of October, 1871. The conflagration burned for three days, killed hundreds, and destroyed roughly one quarter of the city. But redevelopment began almost immediately, and it turned Chicago into the economic powerhouse that the poet Carl Sandburg would later call "The City of the Big Shoulders."

Finally, it appeared good fortune was shining on Powers. His parish was on Chicago's newly affluent Near West Side, away from the fire's direct effects (which were closer to Lake Michigan). What's more, he was arriving in Chicago not just as an Episcopal church rector, but as a former college president with a freshly minted doctorate. As the city

rebuilt, Powers was welcomed warmly into the gaslit damask parlors of the emerging Chicago elite.

It was in this milieu that Powers really caught the writing bug.

His style was heavily influenced by Romanticism, a genre that emerged in the 18th century as a reaction against the prevailing Enlightenment ideals of the day. Romantics favored a more natural, emotional and personal esthetic. Powers began writing poetry and getting his work published in major publications of the time, such as Harper's and Lippincott's.



He warmed to the work of William Cullen Bryant (shown at left in a Matthew Brady photograph, circa 1860-65). New Yorker Bryant (1794-1878), a transplant from the Massachusetts Berkshires, was a leading Romantic poet of the era.

And although it is hard to imagine a poet in this role today, for half a century Bryant was also the editor and publisher of the New York Evening Post (today's New York Post). Powers was published in the Post, and is described in Bryant's papers as a "frequent correspondent" with him.

Powers' work was also featured in The Lakeside Monthly, a newly formed Chicago literary journal. Francis F. Browne, the Monthly's editor, started an informal "Lakeside Contributors' Club," with the aim of extending the journal's influence and advancing the claims of literature generally in the city. Powers quickly signed on, and in 1874 became one of the founders of the successor organization, the Chicago Literary Club. The organization still exists and meets on Monday evenings from October through May (www.chilit.org).

One of the Club's earliest official functions was to honor William Cullen Bryant on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. The elderly Bryant politely declined the trip to Chicago, but sent two younger brothers to attend and accept the group's accolades.

The following year, Powers published his first book: "Through the Year," a collection of religious essays, and he sent Bryant a copy. We can imagine Powers' elation when he received the following reply from his muse, then living in Roslyn, Long Island:

Roslyn, June 21, 1875

Dear Dr. Powers,

I am glad to have your book which I have read with pleasure – not every page of it but enough to be delighted with your way of treating the topics to which it relates. It is a genial book, the topics are handled gracefully the piety is unaffected and the general spirit of the work truly catholic. One would know that it was written by a poet – at least a poet by temperament. You take cheerful views of life and duty – the true philosophy both for the race and the individual; for to imagine one's self and one's friends miserable is one of the ways to be so. The pessimists color their world for themselves and look at it through a distorting medium. May you write many such wholesome books.

*Yours very truly
W. C. Bryant*

To be called a poet - or at least a poet by temperament - by one of the greatest living poets had to have left Powers walking on air. He would later publish a biography of Bryant. It appeared in 1878, the year of his subject's death.



The list of Powers' accomplishments continued to lengthen. Chicago, like Davenport in the 1860's, had a growing problem with orphans, an issue still close to the hearts of both Powers and Clemence. When Dr. George Elias Shipman, a well-known New York physician, established the Chicago Foundling Home in 1871, Powers became its first president.

He continued to accumulate literary friends - among them, Bayard Taylor, at left (1825-1878), the poet, literary critic, and travel writer), and the British author/artist Philip Gilbert

Hamerton, who dedicated his 1871 book “The Unknown River” to Powers. Hamerton was a prominent European art critic, and it was probably through his auspices that Powers became the US correspondent for L’Art, the great French arts periodical of the era. And in what spare time he had, Powers joined Chicago’s elite in volunteering in the city’s fire recovery, serving for a time as a member of the Sanitary Relief Board.

With triumph piling on secular triumph for Horatio Nelson Powers, it is fair to ask the question: what was going on with his ministry?

We noted earlier that he had accepted a rectorship in Chicago. Information on Powers’ church had proved difficult to find. That, it turns out, is no coincidence. What we found, in the end, was not a happy story.

A monumental “mistake”

Powers accepted the call as rector of St. John’s Church, near Union Park at the present-day corner of Ashland and Ogden Avenues on Chicago’s Near West Side (at right, the intersection as it appears today). The parish had been worshiping in the parlor of a private dwelling. But when Powers arrived, plans were in the works for a monumental edifice that would “excel in size and beauty and magnificence” all other churches in the then-fashionable neighborhood.



As the Reverend W. H. Hopkins put it, “you could not choose a point more important to be occupied by a church; it is in the very heart of a crowded and intelligent population, and sufficiently distant from any other parish to have a field all its own.”

St. John's was at the forefront of a movement of churches away from downtown Chicago, as the city's population center shifted in the aftermath of the Great Fire. Many expensive and ornamental structures were envisioned in this era. Critics questioned the architectural grandeur of this ecclesiastical building boom, but proponents countered that "church design should reflect Chicago's progress, prosperity, and religious commitments," writes Daniel M. Bluestone in Constructing Chicago (Yale University Press, 1992).

After all, up to that point, there was no cause for worry. Chicago's recovery from the Civil War and the Great Fire had been virtually nonstop.

But then came the Panic of 1873.



Triggered by the insolvency of Jay Cooke and Company, then a major component of the US banking establishment, the Panic ushered in a economic depression in the US and Europe that lasted 65 months - even longer, by most measures, than the Great Depression of the 1930's. (See lithograph at left - an 1873 run on the Fourth National Bank on Nassau Street, New York.)

Eighteen thousand businesses went bankrupt. Unemployment would peak at 14 percent in 1876. Real estate prices crashed, and credit dried up.

Chicago's Protestant churches could not withstand the gale. As Bluestone notes, by 1877, their total mortgage balances exceeded \$1.25 million - more than \$35 million in today's dollars - "enough to build dozens of more modest churches." As the debts piled up at St. John's, the church building slowed, then ground to a halt.

By all accounts Fr. Powers was loved and admired by his congregation. But for the second time in his ministry - and this time, despite his having so many friends in high places - his church's finances were on life support. He resigned as rector in 1875, saying that it had been a "mistake" to plan so grandly.

In a hint of his frustration, he spoke to the Wardens and Vestrymen about “rumors prejudicial to the Interests of the Parish.” Episcopalians new to the neighborhood, Powers said, “were generally deterred from connecting themselves with the church through the fear of incurring an uncomfortable burden, while old members dropped off to escape what they thought was inevitable.”

Emotional pleas followed in the city’s newspapers - including one letter to the editor in the Chicago Daily Tribune, signed simply, “A Disgusted Churchman”:

Can the Episcopalians of Chicago afford to let St. John’s Church be sold to the Presbyterians and the parish to become extinct?... (Is it) a fact that churchmen generally of this city are with indifference looking on and quietly waiting for St. John’s to die, and they will be without interest enough to come to her funeral and shed one tear of sympathy?... God forbid.

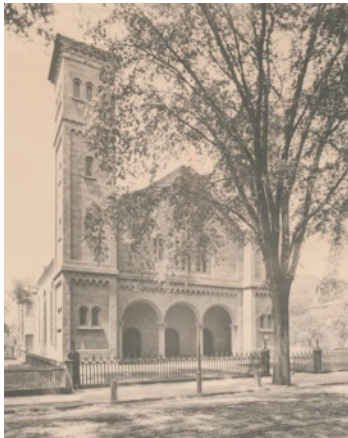
Although two interim rectors followed Powers, St. John’s Church finally faced eviction and foreclosure by the mortgage holder. It closed on the Last Sunday of Pentecost, November 25, 1877. An emotional farewell service was covered by the Tribune. A fundamentalist Christian church and Bible college stands at the address today.

Horatio Nelson Powers had suffered yet another sorrow. It would be his biggest professional setback.

And if losing his church were not enough, it was in Powers’ Chicago years - 1868 to 1875 - that he and Clemence lost three more of their children. Two sons succumbed as infants. A daughter, named Clemence Emma after her mother, died of unspecified causes at the age of 12.

Recovery

Horatio Nelson Powers was nearly 50. Having buried four of his children, and having faced so much professional calamity, he may well have felt much older. He did not know that his best work lay ahead of him.



Fr. Powers left Chicago and returned east, accepting a call to serve as rector of Christ Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut, a large, imposing structure built in the Romanesque style (left) with a majestic pulpit (below). It was just the tonic that he needed. Powers' 10-year rectorate was a successful one, in what was then a highly competitive religious marketplace.

Bridgeport was growing, and fast - doubling in size, from roughly 20-thousand people in 1870 to an estimated 40-thousand by the mid-1880's. Serving this relatively small population were no fewer than six churches in the Episcopal denomination alone. A parish history refers to Powers' "able administration." That was probably a great relief to him, given his experiences in Davenport and Chicago.

His tenure at Christ Bridgeport was innovative. He took what was considered a very "low" church by Episcopal liturgical standards, and broadened its appeal. He introduced the white donation envelopes that were rare then, but became a staple in 20th century churches of all stripes. He supported the Ladies' Aid Society, one of the first organized groups in America to connect women to roles outside the home.



Tempering this picture, however, was the rapid industrialization of Bridgeport. Founded on fishing and farming, it was on its way to becoming the largest city in southern New

England. Factories were opening, producing such goods as milling machinery, brass fittings, carriages, sewing machines, saddles and ammunition.

Through all of this, Powers continued to write - and the two works published while in Bridgeport could not be more different from his evolving surroundings.

"Poems, Early and Late" (1876) featured a collection of poetry with titles such as "The Old Chimney Place," "The April Snow," and "The Stars in the Stream." In 1881, Powers published "Ten Years of Song," and co-authored "The Homes and Haunts of Our Elder Poets." The latter featured an essay on his own favorite poet, William Cullen Bryant, and begins with a tribute to the unspoiled scenery of Bryant's homestead in Cummington, Massachusetts (right).



Most tellingly, there was "Amenia," a heartfelt paean to the woodlands and vales of his childhood home:

*The hills are voiced with sacred speech,
The meadows bloom with sweet desire,
From mountains kindred spirits reach
To clasp the glory streaming higher.*

There were no hills or mountains in Bridgeport, and the meadows were fast disappearing. Powers' writing was reflecting, even reinforcing, his deep hunger for the natural world. That longing would find fulfillment in 1886 - when he came to Rockland County.

But his assignment at Christ Church Sparkill would not only become his life's capstone. It would include a groundbreaking collaboration with one of the most innovative men who ever lived - one who truly connects Powers' genteel world with our own.

Powers, Piermont, and the phonograph

Like so many of us who are reading these words, Fr. Powers was drawn to Rockland by the beauty of the natural surroundings. By 1886, he was something of a celebrity. It is hard for us to imagine such a figure today - until we consider that in an era before the Internet, TV or radio were even conceived, successful authors were among the most prominent people in American society.

Sparkill and Piermont were clearly excited at Fr. Powers' arrival. Some prominent Christ Church members made donations to help him build a rectory (left), in a house which still stands on Piermont Place.



By 1887, Powers' great love affair with Sparkill was in full bloom. His last and perhaps best work - "Lyrics of the Hudson" - was composed while he was rector of Christ Church. It was published in 1891, the year after his death. Indeed, the closer he came to the end of his life, the more Powers' writing took on an almost mystical quality.

But "Lyrics" includes an especially noteworthy work of Powers, whose origins might merit a volume all their own. And it came about through the good offices of a young man who disappeared near the beginning of our story - but whose trail now reemerges.

When Clemence's father, Francois Fauvel-Gouraud, died in 1847, he left the young girl and a younger brother orphans. We know, of course, what happened to Clemence: she married Powers and raised a large family with him.

But what of Clemence's brother, George Gouraud?

Gouraud fought as a Colonel for the Union Army in the Civil War, and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for gallantry in the Battle of Honey Hill, South Carolina (1864). But he also inherited his father's proclivity for promoting inventions.

Just as Francois Fauvel Gouraud had worked for Louis Daguerre, the father of photography, George Gouraud signed on after the war with a promising young inventor named Thomas Alva Edison. He went on to build a highly successful career with him.

Edison sent Colonel Gouraud to England, where he helped incorporate the Edison Telephone Company of London in 1879. He also promoted Edison's electric light technology. Although his parents had left him destitute, Gouraud had by now accumulated enough wealth to build an estate in Surrey that was christened "Little Menlo" (at right), after Edison's compound in Menlo Park, New Jersey.



But Gouraud held great fascination for another of Edison's inventions: the phonograph.

Edison was hard at work on improvements to the device, which he had created in 1877, but had shelved for nearly a decade as little more than a curiosity. On May 12, 1888, he exhibited his "Improved Phonograph" at the Electrical Club in New York. This was probably why, just 12 days later, Colonel Gouraud set sail for the US.



On June 16 in Menlo Park, Edison completed his "Perfected Phonograph" (left), supposedly after seventy-two hours of continuous work. Colonel Gouraud is shown with the Edison team, in the lower right of the photo, next to the inventor himself.

Timelines conflict as to whether Gouraud was present in the lab for the actual completion of the device - chances are he was

already on his way back to England. But it is virtually certain that he arranged for his brother-in-law - the poet, author, and orator Horatio Nelson Powers - to meet the great inventor. It was Edison who asked Fr. Powers to write a poem commemorating the occasion - and to make one of the first voice recordings in human history.

THE PHONOGRAPH'S SALUTATION.

Horatio N. Powers

*I SEIZE the palpitating air. I hoard
Music and speech. All lips that speak are
mine.*

*I speak, and the inviolable word
Authenticates its origin and sign.*

*I am a tomb, a paradise, a throne,
An angel, prophet, slave, immortal friend:
My living records in their native tone
Convict the knave and disputations end.*

*In me are souls embalmed. I am an ear
Flawless as Truth; and Truth's own tongue
am I.*

*I am a resurrection, and men hear
The quick and dead converse, as I reply.
Hail, English shores and homes and marts of
peace!*

*Well were your trophies through the ages
won.*

*May "sweetness," "light" and brotherhood
increase!*

I am the youngest born of Edison.

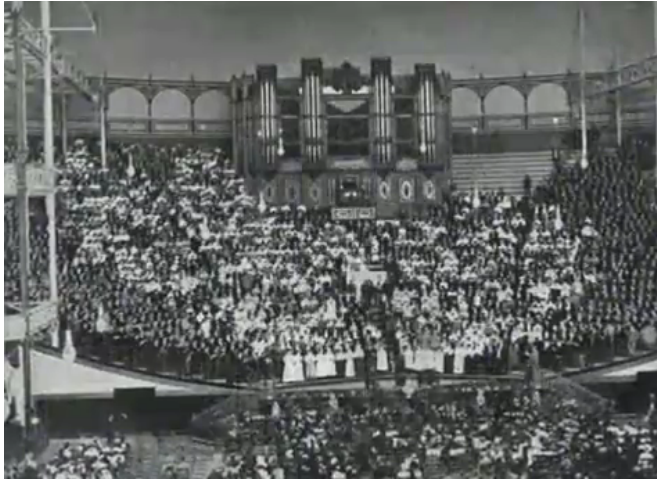


The recording of “The Phonograph’s Salutation” was reportedly made at 3 a.m. on June 16, immediately after the device was finished - apparently to ensure it could be shipped to Gouraud’s estate on a boat leaving later that day. Edison himself recorded an introduction, in which he joked that people might be better off listening to him, than trying to read his famously illegible handwriting. Both the Powers and Edison recordings, along with a phonograph on which to play them, were then sent off to London - thence, the line “Hail, English shores” in the Powers poem.

The shipment arrived at Little Menlo on June 26. Colonel Gouraud, freshly returned from the US himself, was apparently waiting anxiously to begin promoting the phonograph. On hearing the recordings, he quickly composed a letter to the editor of the Times of London:

...before all others of the interesting contents of "phonogramic cabinet" sent me, is an exquisite poem entitled "The Phonograph's Salutation," composed by the well-known gifted American poet and preacher, the Rev. Horatio Nelson Powers, D.D., of Piermont, on the Hudson. This poem makes the phonograph tell its own story of what it is and what it does, in a style and with a power that must add not a little to the already high reputation of its author. It was spoken by him in the phonograph, so that we cannot fail to read it as he would have it read - a privilege of no small importance to both the poet and those who hear him.

Perhaps the highest justification of the phonograph's description of its own power in its "Salutation" is found in the fact that to several members of my family who are familiar with the rev. doctor's style of oratory, from having sat under his preaching in former years, the voice of the author is perfectly recognizable, even by my youngest child of seven years, who had not heard the voice since he was 5 years old...



Colonel Gouraud, of course, had not just “sat under” Powers’ preaching. He was his brother-in-law.

Why the mad scramble to get the new device to England? We cannot say for sure. But just a few days later, Gouraud transported the phonograph and an unwieldy recording horn to London’s famed

Crystal Palace, not far from his home. An enormous festival was underway, honoring the composer George Frideric Handel.

On the afternoon of Friday, June 29, in a balcony above an audience of 23-thousand, Gouraud recorded the 3000-member choir’s rendition of “Israel in Egypt” (above). It can still be heard on the Web:

<http://www.webrarian.co.uk/crystalpalace/crystal16.html>

Gouraud thus made one of the first ever recordings of music. It is surely the oldest such recording still in existence. Fr. Powers’ reading of “A Phonograph’s Salutation” is not believed to be online, but a copy resides in the archives of the British Library National Sound Archive in London.

Recessional

An early 20th century history of Christ Church devotes only one brief paragraph to the tenure of Horatio Nelson Powers. It notes that “failing health rendered a cessation of his labors in the winter + spring of 1890 necessary, and he departed for Europe on 12th January, 1890.” He and Clemence probably wished to visit George Gouraud.

Dr. Powers returned to Piermont on July 25th. He died just six weeks later.

Despite the scant treatment of his story in earlier times, Horatio Nelson Powers has a well-earned place of honor at Christ Church. He had witnessed war, homelessness and



civic destruction on an unprecedented scale, and done his best to respond. His wife valiantly carried the trauma of being suddenly orphaned as a child in a strange land. He suffered the pain of closing one church, and the agony of seeing another slipping away before

his eyes, due to forces largely beyond anyone's control. And the horror of losing four of their own children had to be unspeakable for him and for Clemence - indeed, nowhere in his writings does he make any mention of it.

Yet these many sorrows, Fr. Powers himself notes, "have not killed my faith, hope and charity." Judging by "Lyrics of the Hudson," written so close to death, we can have every confidence that this bard of Sparkill left the world a happy man.

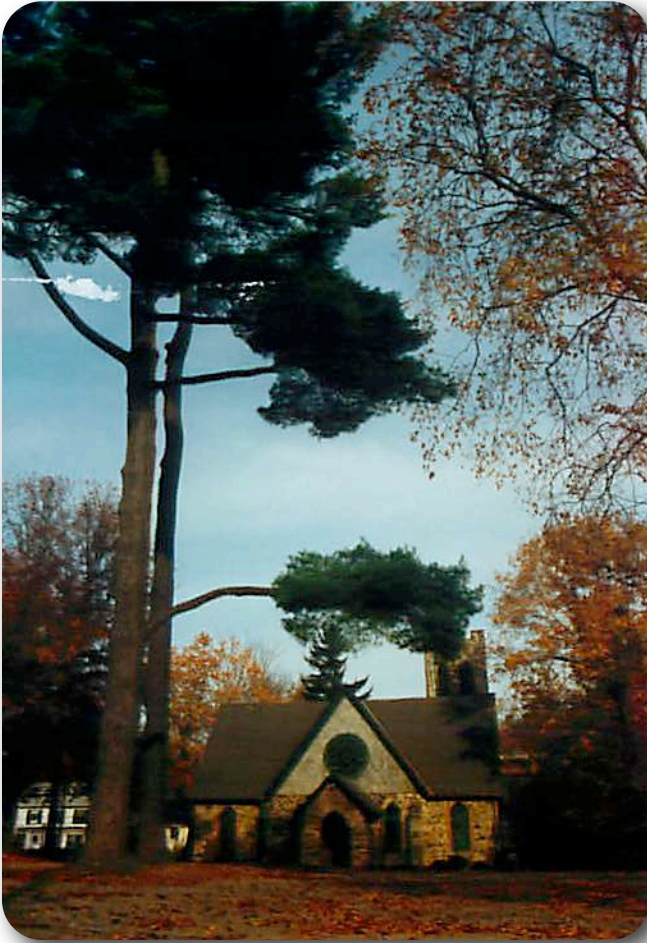
His life offers timeless, hard-learned lessons - but in the end, that is not how Horatio Nelson Powers would prefer to be remembered. He chose to leave behind words - words that will resonate for anyone who has ever walked a trail on Tallman Mountain, biked past the Piermont Duck Pond, or simply watched the sun rise over the quiet river on a still winter morning.

We conclude with three more selections from "Lyrics of the Hudson."

My Walk to Church.

*Breathing the summer-scented air
Along the bowery mountain way,
Each Lord's-day morning I repair
To serve my church, a mile away.
Below, the glorious river lies —
A bright broad-breasted, sylvan sea —
And round the sumptuous highlands rise,
Fair as the hills of Galilee.
Young flowers are in my path. I hear
Music of unrecorded tone.
The heart of Beauty beats so near,
Its pulses modulate my own.
The shadow on the meadow's breast
Is not more calm than my repose
As, step by step, I am the guest
Of every living thing that grows.
Ah, something melts along the sky,
And something rises from the ground,
And fills the inner ear and eye
Beyond the sense of sight and sound.
It is not that I strive to see
What Love in lovely shapes has wrought*





*Its gracious messages to me
Come, like the gentle dews, unsought.*

*I merely walk with open heart
Which feels the secret in the sign;
But, O, how large and rich my part
In all that makes the feast divine!*

*Sometimes I hear the happy birds
That sang to Christ beyond the sea,*

*And softly His consoling words
Blend with their joyous minstrelsy.*

*Sometimes in royal vesture glow
The lilies that He called so fair,
Which never toil nor spin, yet show
The loving Father's tender care.*

*And then along the fragrant hills
A radiant presence seems to move,*

*And earth grows fairer as it fills
The very air I breathe with love.*

*And now I see one perfect face,
And hastening to my church's door,*

*Find Him within the holy place
Who, all my way, went on before.*

-Horatio N. Powers

The Hills of Piermont.

A SONG.

O Happy hills of Piermont,

How fair ye stand to-day,

The May sun on your slopes of green,

Your woods with blossoms gay!

How tenderly the thrushes sing,



How soft the breezes blow!

Blue, blue the sky — the apple-trees

With fragrance overflow.

O blooming hills of Piermont,

How sweetly ye look down

On the far-flashing Hudson

And many a little town!

How fondly on your loveliness

Gaze those who sadly roam,

And long, in your bewitching charm

For such a sheltered home!

O lovely hills of Piermont, How blessed your repose!

How in the hearts that love ye Your own contentment grows!

Your bosky steeps and garden walks

With soulful dreams are dear,

And a benignant spirit broods in all your atmosphere.

*O happy hearths of Piermont,
How restfully ye stand, Safe in the shadow of a rock
Above a peaceful land!
Where, to the raptured vision, spreads
Another realm so fair?
And where, amid her templed hills,
Is Nature more at prayer?
O noble hills of Piermont,
How rich your charms to-day!
Ne'er dawned upon your gracious slopes
A more enchanting May.*

*Your fountains gush, your robins sing,
Your scented breezes play;
The great world thunders on — but,
ah!
How far it seems away!*

-Horatio N. Powers



A Rockland Sunset.



*With royal purple, the great sun goes down,
And rifts of cloud, here banked in giant shapes,
And there in flocks soft, tremulous, inspired,
Gather, and break, and melt in tender fires,
That make the pageant of the skies divine.
It is a host of billows rosy fringed,
Tumbling upon a paradise of flowers.
It is a cataract of flame, now fixed
Amid ethereal precipices,
Then dashing crimson tides on saffron shores
And mingling with an opalescent sea.*



*It is a pomp of banners waved on walls
Of porphyry and amber, floating wide
O'er gardens where the angels weave their crowns.*

*Ah! how the glory changes ;— mighty folds
Of luminous tapestry flung afar,
Shot through with feathery splendor, brodered
wide*

With dark carnations — belts of golden green

Between the pink horizon and the wastes

Of intense radiance of the higher heavens —

Mountains of bloom that heave, and split, and glow

Showering the petals of celestial flowers

On meadows soft with verdure, on old woods,

The Hudson's tranquil breast, and Hook's still dome,

Set like a jewel on earth's happy brow.

The pageant fades and, steep by steep, dissolve

The airy cliffs, furrows of rose and gold

That ploughed the dazzling fields of upper air,

Pinnacle and buttress of the gorgeous shapes

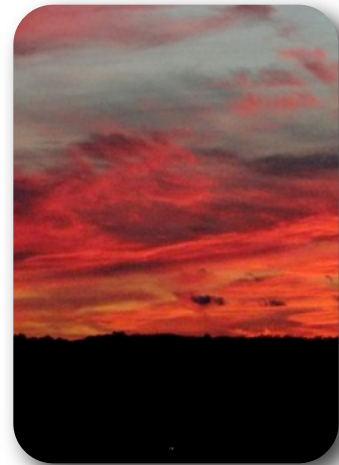
That hung in heaven and caught its mystery,

And dim grow all the vales, and on the hills

Of the enchanted river dies the day,

And solemn twilight sheds on all repose.

-Horatio N. Powers



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On page 22: Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823-1900), High Torne Mountain, Rockland County, New York, 1850. Oil on canvas. St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri

Photo on page 23 by Sarah McTasney

Photos on pages 2, 24 and 26 by Steve Dunlop

On page 28: Thomas Chambers (1808-1866), Hudson Valley Sunset, mid 19th century, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

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