

*From Arts & Architecture: the Powers Family Memorials*



It's the essence of simplicity. Located in the east aisle under the Magi presenting their gifts to the Virgin and the Christ Child window, the austere bronze memorial plaque contains very few words: *"In Loving Memory of Edward Fauvel Powers 1858-1926; Lawrence Bigelow Powers 1893-1931."*

Stepping back from the plaque, however, and looking up at the Magi window, a curious hint of a story begins to appear—a story that ultimately links three generations of the Powers family. The Magi window, it happens, is *"In memoriam the Rev'd Horatio N. Powers, DD obit 1890 [and] Clemence E. Powers his wife obit 1913."* Three generations of a family replete with accomplishments and tragedy are a part—perhaps until now a silent part—of the history of Saint John's Cathedral.



The Reverend Horatio Nelson Powers DD, born in 1826 in Amenia, New York, of course never laid eyes on the present Saint John's Cathedral. He may, in fact, never have been in Denver in all his wide travels to serve churches in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Davenport, Iowa, Chicago, and Bridgeport, Connecticut, and finally, in 1886, when he and Clemence went to Piermont-on-Hudson, to Christ Church, Sparkill. After four years at Christ Church, Powers died at the age of 64 in September 1890.

The Reverend Doctor Horatio Powers, a graduate of the General Theological Seminary in New York City, was known not only as a priest, but as a poet whose work is still available in reprint, as well as a literary critic, essayist, editor, college president, and director of the Foundlings Home of Chicago. In and around these professional accomplishments, Horatio and Clemence were also challenged by adversity and tragedy. Powers was tasked with closing two churches where he was rector due to the financial instability of the times. Over the years of their marriage, Horatio and Clemence experienced the deaths of four of their children, one at the age of twelve, and three as children.



In 1855, in his first call as assistant priest at St. James Episcopal Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Powers met Clemence Emma Gouraud, adopted daughter of the rector, The Rev. Samuel Bowman. The two were married by the Rev. Bowman in April 1857 before they left for Davenport, Iowa, and St. Luke's.

Clemence was born in the Faubourg-St. Germain, Paris, in 1838, daughter of Emma Painter of Gloucestershire, England, and François Fauvel-Gouraud, French scientist, engineer, professor and member of the *Institut Français*. Expert in the early photographic process known as Dauguerreotype, Fauvel-Gouraud traveled to the United States many times between 1839 and 1847, when he, his wife Emma, and the children Clemence and George Edward, resided for a time in Brooklyn, New York. Tragedy struck the family there. Within a month, both François and Emma were dead, leaving Clemence and her younger brother orphaned, alone, and without financial support. The experience of being orphaned very probably led Clemence, and her husband, to support post-Civil War financing of Iowa orphanages for children left without parents because of the war, and to be intimately involved in the Foundling Home in Chicago as well.

During their time at St. John's in Chicago (1868-1875), Horatio and Clemence lived through the Great Chicago Fire of October 1871. They remained at St. John's until the church failed in a financial crisis, and was closed. Their son Edward Fauvel, born in September 1858 in Davenport, Iowa, left their Chicago home after the Great Fire. His destination was London, most likely under the tutelage of Clemence's brother, his uncle George Edward Gouraud, an engineer involved with promoting the Edison telegraphic system in England.



Having become interested in the new telephone technology that his Uncle George was also working on with Edison, Edward went to South America in 1875. According to his obituary published in the *Denver Post* on 4 May 1926, he worked at installing “the first telephone in the Argentine republic.” Thirteen years later, while still in South America, Edward Fauvel Powers and a coterie of English businessmen entered into a corporate agreement with the “Monte Video Telephone Company” of Uruguay, with Edward as managing director for two years, according to *The Telegraphic Journal and Electrical Review* in the August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1888 issue.

By 1890, after fifteen years in South America, Edward returned to London, where he met and married Clara Jane Bigelow, daughter of Maria Sarah Cann Bigelow and John Parks Bigelow, a fiscal agent for the Treasury Department of the United States living in London. An article in the *Belfast News-Letter* for 24 January 1890 reports that the wedding took place on 21 January at St. Jude's Church, South Kensington, London, and was officiated by the vicar, the Rev. Robert William Forrest, a prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral, and honorary chaplain to Queen Victoria. He was assisted by the Rev. Thomas Collison, M.A.

Lawrence Bigelow Powers was the second of two children born to Edward and Clara Jane while they resided in London. The first was a daughter, Evelyn L. Powers, born in 1891. On April 1<sup>st</sup> 1893, Lawrence was born in Chelsea, London, and baptized on May 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Upper Chelsea.

By 1898, reports the *Post* obituary, Edward's health was in question, and the Powers family sailed on the *SS Paris* for the U. S. in December of that year. After 28 days at sea, they arrived in New York in early January of 1899, bound finally for Denver. By 1900 the family was living at 1275 High Street, at the edge of Cheesman Park. The obituary continues, "beginning his Denver career as a bond dealer, Powers soon developed his interests into a large brokerage business in which he remained active up till the time of his death." A member of many clubs and organizations in Denver, Edward was also a member of Saint John's Cathedral. He died at the family's High Street home on Monday 3 May 1926.



A part of the "smart set" of early twentieth-century Denver, Lawrence Bigelow Powers often saw his name, and sometimes his image, in print. For Lawrence, the notoriety was both benign and sometimes a bit embarrassing. There were the frequent mentions of his participation in the Denver "Kirmess," a dance exhibition of various styles of international dance, as well as luncheons, dinners, and other events during his youth. There were also the unfortunate reports of his penchant for speed in his "motor," which resulted in at least a few court appearances and fines.

According to his obituary published on Wednesday 1 April 1931, in the *Denver Post*, Lawrence attended Andover Academy, then Yale University, and returned to Denver after his college years to enter the investment business. By 1919, he was the manager of the Denver branch of the Calvin Bullock Investment Company, and he worked for the firm until his death.

Not only did the firm provide Lawrence with his livelihood, but it was through the firm that he met his future wife, Ethel May Fewlass of Littleton. The couple were married on 10 July 1929 in the chapel of St. Martin's Episcopal Church in the northern part of Manhattan. Reports about the wedding in the *Denver Post* record that Lawrence, his mother, and his younger sister Ida made the trip "across the continent" to New York City "by motor" for "Mr. Powers to claim as his bride, Miss Ethel Fewlass, attractive Denver girl, private secretary to Calvin Bullock." In the next year, Lawrence and Ethel had one son, Lawrence Jr.

Early on Tuesday 31 March 1931, the day before his birthday, Lawrence had "a stroke of paralysis...and lived but a few hours." According to the *Post* obituary, Dean Benjamin D. Dagwell officiated at Lawrence's funeral, held at the family's High Street residence. Like his father and mother, he is buried at Fairmount Cemetery. After his death, his mother leased the High Street house to the Peter Pan School for Girls and Boys. Later called Cheesman Academy, the school occupied the Powers house and adjoining buildings until the 1980s. The house was demolished in 1989, ending nearly a century of presence on High Street.



A bronze plaque of very few words, one of the Cathedral's earlier and beloved stained glass windows, three generations of a family, four remarkable individuals—the silent memorials tell a story, long unheard. It's also a story of the early history of the present Saint John's Cathedral, all gathered in the quiet of the east aisle. Giving it voice deepens the understanding of "the communion of saints" here in this place. It's a complex history. Yet, it's the essence of simplicity.