

Interesting Newspaper Account From 1948 Gives Insight About A.K. Mozumdar and The Camp He Built

Following is a true typewritten copy of a story appearing in the *Crestline Courier* newspaper giving a good introduction to A.K. Mozumdar and Camp Mozumdar. This copy was made shortly after the article appeared - typewritten, of course, because this was many years before copy machines. This copy is courtesy of Rolf Solstad, grandson of William Lodge, Camp Mozumdar architect and personal friend of Mozumdar.

(TRUE COPY)

THE CRESTLINE COURIER

Friday, Sept. 3, 1948

MOZUMDAR AND THE TEMPLE

By Carl A. Anderson.

Carl A. Anderson, the author of this article, was formerly a news paper man and County Supt. of schools in McLeod County, Minn. He has traveled extensively in many lands and has written many similar articles for newspapers, magazines and radio programs, assisted by his wife.

The following article gives a deep insight into the life and work of Mr. Mozumdar whose philosophy and religion have long been a source of mystery. The origin and purpose of Mozumdar's picturesque shrine, the Temple of Christ and the Pillars of God, are fully explained by Mr. Anderson, as well as the character, the philosophy and the life work of an oriental teacher of Christianity. Altogether too frequently Mr. Mozumdar has been dubbed a "Hindu fakir", "cult leader" and "pagan" by people who are ill-informed and make assumptions without regard for truth. Thanks to Mr. Anderson and this sincere article we gain a picture of a lovable man, a Christian teacher, and a man whose name is synonymous with the San Bernardino mountains, A. K. Mozumdar.

Editor.

Tourists who first visit the shrine near Crestline, Calif. find it a riddle. On the map it is a spot marked "Mozumdar Lodge". A conspiracy of silence seems to have been maintained by the city press and automobile clubs, consequently it was quite by accident that I discovered the shrine. No one had told me about it. When the car nosed up a steel knoll just beyond Cedarpines Park I saw a sight which I shall never forget. I held my breath. I saw the first of the architectural miracle that is Mozumdar.

In the midst of a grove of pines stood a dozen white tall stone pillars, set in a semicircle, in the stone wall circling the open air bowl or amphitheatre. They seemed like hands stretching out from the mountain top to Heaven. "Pillars of God", Mozumdar calls this theatre. There is a pillar for each apostle with a giant crushed granite cement cross in the center, back of the altar for the crucified Master.

This was not a Greek structure - thank God. The country is littered with Greco-Roman architecture.

Here, I realized, were Yankee, Anglo-Saxon, Christian concepts conceived and gendered in the mind of an oriental, fascinated by mountain beauty. Flung to the air before me, these pillars of granite masonry, four feet square at the base, rose about thirty feet, tapering off and bearing high an electric globe. When the electricity is turned on after dark the pillars flash out as if they had caught the fire of heaven from the myriad stars over the mountain top.

The Spirit of Mozumdar.

A large poster at the entrance to the Pillars of God read as follows:

"If you are weary and heavy laden and afflicted with sorrow and suffering, and if you desire healing of your body and mind, rest here for a while. the ETERNAL CHRIST will give you peace and rest and health of your body and mind. Banish all worry and fear. Feel the protecting arm of the everlasting FATHER. PEACE BE WITH YOU."

This conveys to the visitor pretty well what the spirit of Mozumdar stands for in his shrine. In a world where one finds on every corner an enterprise which seeks to make a profit out of the wayfarer, it is indeed a relief to find one spot where one can come and go, enjoy the accommodation, view the scenery and great works of architecture without price or regard. An opportunity is offered for all who wish to help, but even that is extended as a favor to those who feel they want to share in the work.

Who is A. K. Mozumdar.

Akhoy Kumar Mozumdar was born in Bengal, the son of an attorney there. Akhoy Kumar means "Son of God", a name given him by his mother when she early discovered his spiritual nature. He was a timid, quiet boy who had to wear heavy double lense glasses and was much interested in the art practiced by oriental "healers". He had very little formal education as he left home at sixteen and became an ascetic, studied various religions, even making a journey to Bethlehem to find out about Christ and His teachings.

His teacher of "guru" advised him to go to the United States. He first went to China and Japan, and finally got passage in the steerage on a tramp steamer which landed him in Seattle in 1903 at the age of 25. There he made his home with a Swedish family who taught him English. He was frail, weighing only 110 pounds and still had to wear double lense glasses. He became interested in the dynamic force of the Christian religion and took Christ's words as the literal truth. He believed in healing and began to overcome his timidity and poor sight. He liked the boldness, the positiveness of Christianity.

The Prophet comes to the Mountain.

In the San Bernardino mountains he found conditions and the scenery much like that of his native land. He first bought ten acres of land and built the "Lodge" overlooking the valley to the north. This has since been increased to 97 acres.

He taught and healed in San Diego, Los Angeles, Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, Portland, Oakland, Alameda, Milwaukee, Washington D.C., Berkeley, Cincinnati, Chicago and New York. In this way he came in contact with many people who offered their services and their money. Among these was Mrs. M. E. Splane who had lost a son in World War 1. At the Pillars of God amphitheatre a copper plaque was erected in her honor and reads: "In Memory of My Son, Alvin Wm. Splane. May All Nations and Creeds Worship Here, Free From Pride And Prejudice, Under the Banner Of Christ. M. E. Splane."

All Donations were credited to the donor and the money was used to advance the work. Others, have come forward to further the work and there is promise of more funds as soon as the present inflation subsides.

The Temple of Christ.

Beyond the Lodge is the Pearl of Crestline - the Temple - the Taj Mahal of the mountains, some call it. The "Temple of Christ" Mozumdar has named it.

The Temple of Christ is the crowning achievement of the trinity of structures.

I had to visit it again and again to let my eyes feast on its beauty. Then I had the good fortune to meet the architect, William P. Lodge, of San Diego, Calif. He is a tall, frail, modest man, a devout follower of Mozumdar, who gave his inspiration gratuitously to the cause.

"Where did you get the inspiration for the Temple?" I asked.

"Prince Mozumdar came to me early one morning and told me what he wanted," he answered. "We stepped off the ground; I sketched out the picture that came to me as if in a dream. Now here it is."

It is only a little thing - as a pearl, jewel, a diamond is tiny, but precious and beautiful. Possibly the foundation is a hundred feet square, built of native grey rock. On it is built the lower deck or galleria which surrounds the shrine and affords one a promenade from which to circle the building and view the pine-clad mountain peaks and the awe-inspiring valley almost five thousand feet below.

From the galleria one can see Old Baldy to the north-west and the peaks back of Arrowhead to the north-east. Right below the precipice, 1400 feet down is Miller Creek. The Mojave desert stretches out before one's eyes 5000 feet below - an inspiring sight. In the far distance lies Victorville.

The pillars and railings around the galleria are made of pressed crushed granite rocks and cement, giving them a rich greyish shade of color. The pillar heads bear the lotus design and the segmental arch between the posts is of oriental acorn design, matching the design of the cupolas. A balcony, which may also afford visitors a view of the landscape, has not been completed.

Inside this central frame rises the main structure of the temple about ten feet above the balcony. The walls have lattice designs on all sides with heavy corner block designs. This cement work is of the finest construction and the cement is hand poured, making it flawless and smooth as if polished. The building is believed to be almost indestructible, but vandals are putting it to a severe test.

A large double door leads into the shrine from the front with several small doors on the sides and rear. The front door, reached by nine steps is square and ornate with sky blue tile framing over the portico.

As we talked I asked Mr. Lodge where he got his ideas of the various designs. "I was drawing upon a smattering of ancient architecture I had studied."

Nearly always he answered very modestly. "I don't know - just inspiration." And I thought - how true the architecture is a collection of inspiration.

The Inner Shrine.

He took me into the inner shrine - the main building. I was surprised that it was so small, only about 40 feet square. Then I realized that it was not a church, but an art gallery, without windows but with niches for paintings of the life of Christ. A gallery with a circular railing is to serve the same purpose when completed. Work was halted by financial difficulties and the war. In the meantime windows and doors are being broken.

"Look at this," he said, picking up a piece of heavy wire-glass. "That is from the central dome. Someone got up there with a heavy hammer."

"How can anyone get up there?" I asked.

Then he called my attention to the inverted steps which forms the ceiling inside, but from the top makes wide steps from the four sides and corners. We went outside and noticed that four small cupolas rise from the four corners, supported by four square uprights of concrete. At the top of the steps, on a central platform, is the central large cupola or dome raised on eight square concrete pillars. The cupolas are of oriental or acorn design and masterpieces of symmetry and of beautiful granite hue. The cupolas and dome are undoubtedly designed to house sacred statues, with the Christ figure in the large dome.

The Philosophy of Mozumdar.

"What does it all mean?" visitors to the shrine ask.

I think most people around Crestline are Druids - tree worshippers - like me. When I see the little pines growing close together, struggling to live, and giant pines here and there, monarchs of their realm, I ask, "Why?"

I believe Mozumdar may have an answer. He explains why we try to live on in this unhappy, troublesome world, and not all lie down and quit.

Gems from Mozumdar.

Here are some of the gems of his philosophy:

"Your mind is your inner empire. Whatever you vision yourself in your mental empire, the same you become.

"Your understanding of Truth may change, but Truth itself never changes. With your broader vision of Truth, you become less bigoted and more tolerant."

"All human beings are your brother men, regardless of race, color or creed.

"Your individual racial or national woes are due to your ungodly selfish thoughts or deeds".

"Have peace and rest when you cannot see your way clear."

"Do not indulge in negative gossip which cause mental aberration".

Regarding his shrine on top of the mountain - "here man faces the Infinite in repose, which forever showers blessings upon all its creatures. Almost imperceptibly man's limitation of selfishness, greed

and wanton lust breaks down. He feels no more than one of the millions of God's children who are journeying through this earth for a brief period of time in their eternal spiritual adventure."

"On moonlight nights, when the sky lowers itself with its myriads of stars and when the wooded hillside and desert play with lights and shadows, one's heart is filled with gratitude just to be alive.

"This is your spiritual home of worship. You come and go as you please. You may come here to worship alone, or with your congregation. Even to stop here for a brief period is to commune with God - your Eternal Self. This place is open every summer and it can also be kept open during winter months if necessary. When the summer heat parches the valley below, here up in the mountains it is cool and peaceful. The cold spring water not only satisfies your thirst, but also invigorates your body."

How It Came To Be.

"Several years ago a son of man dreamed that there would be a place where all Christian denominations, in fact, all children of God, could worship in their respective faiths, and yet radiate universal love; Christian ethics, broader tolerance, harmony, devotion and peace. Gradually the dreamer purchased a ten-acre tract of land with his entire small fortune in the San Bernardino mountains of Southern California, about 80 miles east of the city of Los Angeles. All that this place could then offer was the magnificent desert view stretching far into the distant horizon, at an altitude of 4700 feet, wonderful climate, ever receding forest covered hills, strewn boulders and tall trees. There was practically no roads to the property. Water was an unknown factor."

"When things looked hopeless, miracles began to happen. Some came with contributions of their money; others with their free professional services, and still others with their physical labor and suggestions."

Unfortunately the World War and the inflation has halted the completion of the beautiful temple. I have written this, hoping that sensible men, educated, scientific men, will throw their weight back of Mozumdar to complete the great architectural Trinity on top of the San Bernardino mountains. It should be converted into a great World University where the best of science and philosophy is taught, fearless to the youth of all nations.

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