

## This Week in Eden History

### February 6 | Jacob Gass



*Jacob Gass (seated) with his wife, Elizabeth Laengle and son Herbert, photographed at the mission in Raipur, India about 1915.*

Jacob Gass, prominent mission in the Indian mission field of the Evangelical Synod of North America and, later, Evangelical and Reformed Church, was born February 6, 1866, in Liestal, Switzerland (died June 25, 1940). After a religious conversion, he studied at the Seminary for Preachers of the Free Churches, Basel, 1888-1892 and accepted a call as missionary under the Foreign Mission Board of the Evangelical Synod. After further study in a medical program at Niagara University, Buffalo, New York, he was commissioned and ordained in 1893.

Gass began his work in the Central India Mission in Raipur, India in 1894. In 1895, he was married to Elizabeth Laengle, and their partnership resulted in the success of the Raipur mission effort over the next 48 years. Laengle's work among the women of the Raipur community resulted in the creation of the Zenana Mission. Gass, recognizing the need for Indian catechists, opened a theological school in 1898 that operated

until 1946. Hundreds were trained to minister in the villages and towns of the region; several individuals continued their education and were ordained.

Central India was subject to a series of droughts, famines, and epidemics between 1896 and 1900, and the mission assisted in food relief efforts. Gass was asked by the British colonial government to oversee a large famine camp in Jora in 1899-1900. He was also responsible for

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the mission's Middle School from 1894 to 1940. Many of its students arriving after 1900 were orphans as a result of these recurring calamities, and the schools housing was expanded to accommodate the increased numbers. He also established the St. Paul High School, Raipur, in 1914.

Gass was elected as President of the Indian Mission in 1906, a position he held until February 1940. During his time as president, the work of the India Mission expanded significantly, despite the challenges of World War I. By the end of his tenure, the number of missionaries increased, but, more importantly, increasing numbers of Indian workers were trained to take over the national church. This effort resulted in the transfer of the mission program and property to the Indian Church in 1967.

In recognition of his important early work in Central India, Gass was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by Eden in 1920. The British colonial government recognized his work with the Silver Jubilee medal in 1935. In 1951 the Gass Memorial Center was dedicated in Raipur to commemorate his work.

Herbert H. Gass followed his parents into the India mission field, serving 33 years as a medical missionary specializing in the treatment of leprosy. Eden recognized his work with a Doctor of Humane Letters in 1970. Herbert's son, Eric Gass, studied at Eden, received an M. Div. Degree from Union Seminary, and also served as a missionary in India.

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