



Here & Now

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An update for Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors and friends

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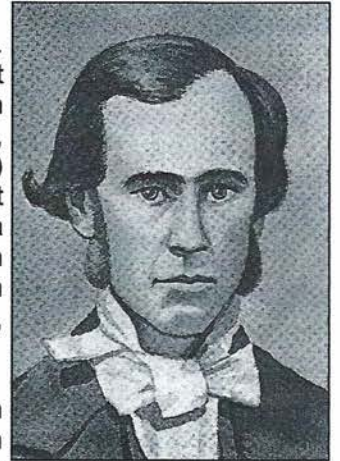
Penny Baumgardner
Secretary

Dear Board Members and Friends of the Florida Baptist Historical Society,

One thing about living in Florida is that you get to see friends and relatives more often than in some climates. Most families travel I10, I75 or I95 at some point in the life of their young children. Disney World, Universal Studios, Sea World and sports brings tourists, friends and family members by the thousands. However the people who come to Florida do not always stay. People from Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky pop-in and pop-out.

And so it has been with preachers. Some came because of health reasons, some came for ministry opportunities and some came because of proximity to family and friends. Thomas Jefferson Bowen (1814-1875) was one of those visiting preachers who made an eternal impact in foreign missions and made a local impact on Florida Baptist history.

Bowen was born in Jackson County, Georgia, on January 2, 1814. Thomas Jefferson Bowen was the first Florida Southern Baptist appointed to the mission field by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Bowen served as pastor of four (Hebron, Providence, Liberty and Lake Jackson) churches in the Florida Association (1848) at the same time. He was appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board on February 22, 1849, as a missionary to Central Africa. Bowen returned to the United States in 1853, to marry Lurena Henrietta Davis on May 31, 1853. They then left to serve in Africa and Bowen baptized his first convert in June, 1854.



Thomas J. Bowen

In 1859 the Bowen couple was commissioned by the SBC Foreign Mission Board to open work in Brazil. This they did until ill health forced them home in 1861. From 1868 to 1874 Bowen traveled over Florida and Texas in the work of missions and evangelism. Bowen died on November 24, 1875, in the state of Georgia.

Bowen was the first Florida Southern Baptist to be appointed to the Foreign Mission field. He is not famous and is hardly known in mission circles. But maybe he should be.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33

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