

LEGACY, as the monthly newsletter of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, has as its mission to highlight the *legacy* forged by the people, churches and events in Florida Baptist history. During the next several months this newsletter will feature those churches and their leadership who between 1821 and 1849 contributed to the development of the Florida Baptist State Convention. Each monthly issue will feature at least one church established in the 1820s, 1830s and the 1840s respectively. **While dozens of Baptist churches were established during these decades, most have not survived time. The featured churches continue to function in 2020.**

Florida Territory Missionary Baptist Churches Established in the 1820s

Monticello: Ebenezer Baptist Church – 1828



Ebenezer Baptist Church holds the distinction of being the third west central Florida Baptist church to be established. The name Ebenezer means “Stone of Help.” The church was constituted in 1828, on the Casa Bianca plantation of Joseph White in Jefferson County. It was located approximately two miles south of Monticello. It began with twelve members and Benjamin Manning, Sr., was pastor. The founding members included: B. Abraham Mott, Joseph Chancy, Light Townsend, James McCorde, Abraham Lamb, Sarah Burney, Nancy Townsend, Isabelle Mott, Martha Brigham, Phoeby Townsend, Mary McArdell

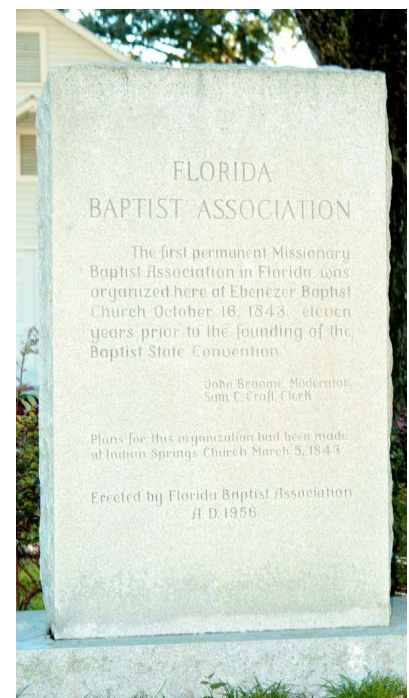
and Martha Lamb. Sparse records exist of the church’s early history. Within a year of being organized, the church purchased two acres of land upon which they built a church house and established a cemetery.

Subsequently the church relocated to a four-acre site on the Bolton Plantation. William B. Cooper later served as pastor for 25 years. The church holds the distinction of having hosted the organizational meeting of the Florida Baptist Association October 14 – 17, 1843. The congregation continues functioning as a Missionary Baptist church in the Jefferson County community of Monticello and marks its 192nd anniversary this year.

Florida Territory Missionary Baptist Churches Established in the 1830s

Brooker: New River Baptist Church – 1833

In the hopes of avoiding Seminole Indian raids, several members of the Pigeon Creek Church migrated from Nassau County further south into what was then known as Columbia County. They secured letters of dismissal from the Pigeon Creek church and assembled on August 24, 1833, to organize a new congregation called the New River Baptist Church. Today the congregation is in the community of Brooker, now in Bradford County. The organizing presbytery consisted of Elders Fleming Bates, John



Tucker and Paul B. Colson. The charter members included Isaac and Margaret Ann Carter, Thomas Prevatt, Sarah Prevatt, Elizabeth Prevatt, Levi and Elizabeth Pellam, W. H. Ward, W. M. and Hesther Johns, Lucy Johns, Kisiah Jones, and Mary Tucker. The new church called itinerant missionary John Tucker to serve as pastor for their monthly worship service. Nearly 12 years later the anti-missions issue surfaced in this church. In July, 1845 the church passed a resolution stating they would no longer affiliate with the Suwannee River Association (which had changed its governing document to reflect their anti-missionary position) and immediately withdrew from cooperating with the association. The Suwannee River Association pronounced it would not receive new member churches or fellowship with any pro-missionary church. Within fourteen months (January 1847) the New River Church was again confronted in a regular church conference “to settle the question whether it would become a Missionary Baptist church or whether it would be an anti-missionary Baptist church.” In a vote by a small majority the church chose to become a Missionary Baptist church. Throughout its nearly 187-years of existence, the church has remained an active Missionary Baptist congregation to the present day.

Florida Territory Missionary Baptist Churches Established in the 1840s

Ocala: Fellowship Baptist Church – 1844



Fellowship Baptist Church, Ocala, began as a dream and prayer on August 15, 1844, when five Baptists gathered in the home of Harvey Bennan and met with frontier missionary John Tucker. The group agreed that someday soon a Baptist church needed to be established in the then newly designated Marion County. One year later, 24 Baptists gathered and were constituted into a church – then called Little Branch Baptist Church – led by Elder John Tucker and Elder Daniel Edwards. Edwards was elected as pastor and served the congregation until 1850. In 2020, the church continues to thrive in rolling hill country in a rural community called Fellowship, which is located west of Ocala.

[This series on early churches continues next month](#)

Highlights of the Board of Directors' Spring Meeting:

During the March 31 meeting of the Florida Baptist Historical Society's Board of Directors, the following actions were taken:

- ◆ Elected Dr. Joel Breidenbaugh, pastor, Gospel Centered Church, Apopka, as chairman of the Society Board;
- ◆ Recommended a nominee to the State Board of Missions to fill the vacancy to occur at the end of this year when David Elder rotates off the Society Board of Directors completing six years of service;
- ◆ Approved a \$24,825 budget for the Society in 2021, which is dependent upon a \$20,000 allocation from the Florida Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program and additional income from membership dues and donor contributions;
- ◆ Approved the theme Legacy Evangelism and topics and persons to be featured in the 2020 *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage* to be published and distributed this fall;
- ◆ Approved the presentation of the 2020 Baptist Heritage Award to David Cunningham of Jacksonville for his historical chronicle of the history of Sunday School work in the Florida Baptist State Convention and a recently completed book on significant laity who have served as Baptist Sunday school teachers across the United States; and
- ◆ Received several reports on the Society's church anniversary recognitions, website operation, the Historical Society's Collections, and the activities of the secretary-treasurer.