



Here & Now

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

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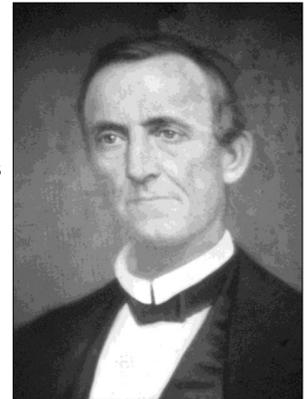
Dear Board Members and Friends of the Florida Baptist Historical Society,

Richard Johnson Mays (1808-1864) was the father of the Florida Baptist Convention. Coming down from South Carolina, Mays brought his cotton, politics and religious roots. He also brought Baptist beliefs of church starting, strong fellowships and cooperation. He and his descendants have proven to be a blessing to hundreds of people.

Today I write about one of them. Dr. Elizabeth Mays Cook died in December, 2015, at age 94. Elizabeth was a great-granddaughter of Richard Johnson Mays. She and her 96 year old husband Raymond have been wonderful influences upon scores of people.

Elizabeth had a long career as a psychologist and Raymond served as college professor and president. There are two events from their life that I want to share that have some very interesting outcomes. The two events are their choice of a mate and their choice of a care giver.

Raymond asked Elizabeth to marry him in 1943 and she said no. Raymond served as a navy airship pilot in World War II and he and Elizabeth actually met on a troop train at Christmas, 1942. Elizabeth was on her way to Miami where she worked with the navy and Raymond was traveling to his hometown of Harlem, Georgia, on Christmas leave.



Richard Johnson Mays



Elizabeth Mays Cook

In the summer of 1943, Raymond was assigned to Miami and saw Elizabeth again. They dated, Raymond proposed marriage, and Elizabeth said no. Her reasoning was that a wartime marriage meant deployment, separation, distance and the possibility of death. Both of them went on to enjoy successful marriages and eminent careers. After both of them became widowed and in their 70's they met again and began to date. Raymond proposed marriage again in 1995 at a McDonalds in Valdosta, Georgia, and this time Elizabeth said yes. They were married in May, 1995, and have been a delight to know, love and appreciate. Their interest and concern about the Mays-Florida Baptist tradition has always been personal and genuine. Jerry Mae and I visited with them at the Mays property in Greenville, Florida, and also on other occasions. They were present in Madison at the site of the Mays plantation when we celebrated our 150th anniversary as the Florida Baptist State Convention in 2004. Later, Don Hepburn, Jerry Mae and I traveled to Valdosta, Georgia, to visit with them there. What a wonderful couple. The Mays family has been a joy to know and to research (Go online and google Elizabeth Mays Stein Cook).

As Paul Harvey said, "Now for page 2." At a point in time Raymond and Elizabeth chose a care giver to assist them in Valdosta. Juanita Burke became this care giver and friend. Raymond and Elizabeth designated Juanita as "Nita," and she became a part of the family. When Don Hepburn and I visited the Cooks, Nita was a part of the conversation, memories and family recall. Through general interest and research it was discovered that Nita's ancestors worked for Richard Johnson Mays at Clifton Plantation in the ante-bellum period of the early 1800's. The reconnection between Juanita and the Mays family created no rancor or resentment. Nita felt the love and affection of Raymond and Elizabeth and their dependence upon her was like family caring for family.

5400 College Drive ~ Graceville, Florida 32440

Telephone: 850-263-3261, Ext. 480 ~ E-mail: fbhspt1@baptistcollege.edu ~ web: floridabaptisthistory.org

Baptist history does not repeat itself in circles. Baptist history moves in a line. It best moves in a straight line. The things that make a Baptist history line straight are love, joy, grace, commitment and service. These characteristics transcend distance, dates, denominations and destiny.

We might have come over on different ships, but we are all in the same boat now. There will always be a place for love, courage, compassion and service.

Honoring those who honor Christ,



Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33
jmwindsor@baptistcollege.edu



R to L Raymond Cook, Juanita Burke and Elizabeth Mays Cook



L to R Elizabeth Mays Cook, Emy Kelly Howerton, and Raymond Cook



L to R Jerry Windsor, Elizabeth Mays Cook, and Raymond Cook
2004, Greenville, Florida



Jerry Mae Windsor and Elizabeth Mays Cook,
2004, Greenville, Florida