



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,

Something bothers me. We now have 2,150 biographical sketches in our Florida Baptist Historical Society files. Most have no pictures, some have questionable dates and a few have glaring gaps. But that is not what bothers me. The thing that bothers me is that nearly 100% of them are male. I don't feel guilty about it, but it does bother me.

I don't feel guilty because we had to start somewhere. We started the file with 100 well known Florida Southern Baptist pastors from 1854-2004. Once we had 100 I set the goal for 1,000. After we got 1,000 I set the goal for 2,000. We have reached that goal and now I have a new goal. I want us to be just as diligent in acquiring the biographical sketches of female Florida Southern Baptist leaders. Some of the most interesting, inspiring and thrilling stories are from the lives of some of our Florida Baptist female leaders. I feel it is time for us to research, write and publish that great part of our Florida Baptist Heritage.

I want us to start that journey in this particular newsletter. It is not safe, smart nor politically correct to begin with the "Top Ten" but that is exactly what I want to do. This research is arbitrary and prejudiced. But it is also thought out and planned. Let me know what you think of my "Top Ten" Florida Baptist female leaders from 1845-1945. Tradition says to place these ten in alphabetical order or chronological order. But I want to do it differently.

Number one. Louise Cecilia "Lulu" Fleming (1862-1899). Lulu Fleming was the first Baptist female foreign missionary from Florida. She was appointed in May, 1886, and served in the Congo. Lulu was born in Hibernia, Clay County, Florida. Her mother was a slave and owned by a family who lived near Green Cove Springs. Lulu graduated from Shaw University and the Medical College of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia. Her life and service needs to be remembered and told all across our state. Dr. Fleming (M. D.) gave her life for Christ in service to others.



Lulu Fleming

Number 2. Nancy "Ann" Cone Hagin (1782-1846). (See Hepburn, Joiner, *Favored Florida*, pp. 41-46, hereafter; identified as Hepburn). Nancy Hagin fought tradition, Indian raids, tragedy, discord and disbelief on her way to becoming a powerful witness for the gospel. She was expelled from her Baptist church for believing in missions and took a stand for cooperation, fellowship and evangelical compassion in a time and place where an anti-missionary spirit prevailed.



Eliza Mays

Number 3. Eliza Anne Williams Mays (1816-1886) (Hepburn, p. 115). Eliza married at age 14. She married Richard Johnson Mays (1808-1864) who was to become the "Father of the Florida Baptist Convention." They had eleven children and Eliza was a spiritual, business and motivational factor in the Mays household. Eliza assisted all seven of her surviving children in gaining a university education.

Number 4. Caroline Amanda Frensley Chaudoin (1835-1907). Caroline was born in Davidson County, Tennessee, and married William Newell Chaudoin in 1850. They were married 54 years until his death. W. N. Chaudoin was the Corresponding Secretary Treasurer of the State Board of Missions from 1881-1901. Caroline was beloved in the convention and was known as "Aunt Carrie." Caroline set an example in marriage faithfulness, mission support, humility and sacrificial living.

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Ann Bailey

Number 5. Mary Wells Mercer (1790-1880). The Mercer name is much revered in Georgia... and in Florida. Mary Wells Mercer married Joshua Mercer in 1808, and they had six sons and three daughters. Joshua served in the War of 1812 and was called to preach at age 42. Mary and Joshua served in areas of Florida that were destitute in gospel preaching. In 1845, the Union Academy (Greenwood) Church was begun and eight of the nine charter members were from the Mercer family. Joshua traveled and preached. Mary stayed home and raised the family.

Number 6. Ann Hester Bailey (1841-1886). Mrs. Napoleon Bailey was the first secretary for Woman's Mission Work in the Florida Baptist Convention. She was appointed in 1881, and in her first year organized 26 missionary societies in nine of the thirteen Florida associations. (Martha Trotter, *Faithful Servants*, p. 11, hereafter Trotter). In 1884, Ann attended the first organized meeting of women held during an annual SBC meeting. (Trotter, p. 310).

Number 7. Jennie Lucena Spalding (1861-1931). Miss Spalding served as state secretary of Women's Work from 1894-1911. It was in 1894, that the women's work became fully autonomous and on January 12, 1894, the organization became the Florida Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. Jennie Spalding lived and worked through a perilous time of controversy and denominational change.



Jennie Spalding

Number 8. Charlotte Rinkenberger Peelman (1866-1943). Charlotte Peelman was the fourth person to serve as WMU corresponding secretary (1911-1936). L. D. Geiger, corresponding secretary of the State Board of Missions stated that Charlotte Peelman was "one of the most intelligent and consecrated women we know." (Trotter, p. 73). The beginning of WMU work in Cuba was a true highlight of the Peelman era.

Number 9. Ann Elizabeth Billups Chipley (1849-1910). Mrs. W. D. Chipley was the wife of railroad baron, Colonel W. D. Chipley. He was a magnet for business and commerce in north Florida. His wife Ann proved to be a catalyst in church work. Her Christian commitment, interest in missions and generosity in giving, set a good example for Florida Southern Baptist women in a post Civil-War environment. Ann Elizabeth and Lucina Beach Telford were Florida leaders that assisted in establishing the Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention on May 14, 1888. Ten states had representatives in this decision making process and each of the states had a vice-president who served on the advisory board of the WMU Executive Committee. Ann Elizabeth was named the vice-president from Florida (Trotter, p. 28).

Number 10. Elizabeth Page. Elizabeth was the wife of James Page (1808-1883) who was the first ordained black Baptist preacher in Florida. They lived and served in the Tallahassee area. Their influence upon the National Baptist Convention was enormous. Elizabeth was described as "a faithful Christian...touched by the spirit of God...kind...as her husband's helpmeet, with a reverence for holy things." (Richard I. McKinney, *History of the Black Baptists of Florida, 1850-1985*, p. 26).

There are other Baptist Christian women who served from 1845-1945, that could be added to our online biographical collection. But this is a start.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

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Matthew 6:33
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