



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,

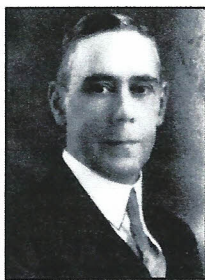
Some of the joys of my job is to see Florida Baptist history researched, published, preserved and intelligently interpreted. It has long been a desire of board members and society members of the Florida Baptist Historical Society to get a fresh look at Florida Baptists. In November, 2013, a new look at Christians in Florida called *Southern Baptists* will be published.

Don Hepburn and Earl Joiner (1924-1997) took the time and made the effort to see that Florida Baptists had a good look at our beginnings. Their book *Favored Florida* will be released at the Florida Baptist Convention session on November 12, 2013, in Jacksonville. It is of some interest to see how we arrived at this important historical juncture.

Gordon Crawford Reeves was the first to write a documented history of Florida Baptists. Reeves was born on May 4, 1910, in Bellevue, Kentucky. At the age of ten he joined the First Baptist Church of Dayton, Kentucky. He was active in church life and moved with his family to St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1925. He then joined Fifth Avenue Baptist Church and after various training and job experiences he graduated from Stetson University in 1936. Reeves wrote *A History of Florida Baptists* as a thesis requirement for the M. A. degree at Stetson in June, 1938. He was closely associated with Dr. H. C. Garwood, who was a professor at Stetson and a Florida Baptist scholar and writer.



Earl Joiner



John L. Rosser

John L. Rosser (1875-1972) was the next author of a comprehensive history of Florida Baptists. Rosser was born in Rustburg, Virginia, and was converted at age 19. He attended Roanoke College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as pastor of Memorial Baptist Church in Hampton, Virginia (1903-1905), First Baptist Church, Selma, Alabama (1906-1913), First Baptist Church, Bristol, Virginia (1913-1932), Riverside Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida (1932-1938), and Ancient City Baptist Church in St. Augustine (1938-1948). He wrote *A History of Florida Baptists* in 1949 and in 351 pages told the Florida Baptist story in a compelling way.

In 1952, Jack P. Dalton did a tremendous service for Florida believers when he chose to write his University of Florida dissertation on *A History of Florida Baptists*. This tome is 615 pages long. Dr. Rembert Wallace Patrick was head of the UF history department in 1952 and Dr. George Coleman Osborn was chairman of the Dalton graduate committee. These scholars saw to it that this history was academically presented and expertly documented. The Dalton work set the tone for research as Rosser set the tone for telling the story.

Edward Earl Joiner (1924-1997) was director of the Florida Baptist Historical Society when I moved to Florida in 1982. Dr. Joiner was well known at Stetson and among Florida Baptists. He was born near Colquitt, Georgia, on April 25, 1924. According to an interview I had with his wife Jerry after his death, Earl was "curious" to know about everything. He taught at Stetson for 37 years, and wrote numerous books and articles.



Jack Dalton

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Dr. Joiner wrote *A History of Florida Baptists* and the Florida Baptist Convention published the book in 1972. Earl served as Curator and Secretary of the Florida Baptist Historical Society from 1973-1997. It was my privilege to serve on the FBHS Board of Directors after I moved to Florida in 1982. Earl liked to do things professionally and he always conducted himself as a gentleman and a scholar.



Don Hepburn

The paths of Dr. Joiner and Don Hepburn cross in the November 12, 2013, release of *Favored Florida, A History of Florida Baptists Volume One, 1784-1939*. Earl had done research on the revision of his own 1972, history but his death brought to a close a life of research and writing that Florida Baptists missed very much. Nobody knows more about Florida Baptist history than Don Hepburn. Interestingly enough Don is the first native Floridian to write a Florida Baptist history. Don was born in St. Petersburg and educated at Carson-Newman, Southwestern, and the University of San Francisco. He came back to Florida in 1983 and for the past 30 years has served as Public Relations/Missions Promotion Director of the Florida Baptist Convention. Don has worked hard, traveled extensively, researched laboriously, read voluminously and written down well the story of Florida Baptists.

The Florida Baptist Historical Society under the auspices of the State Board of Missions, welcomes *Favored Florida*.

I plan to purchase a copy the first day it is for sale. I also plan to purchase some copies to give to friends as Christmas gifts. The book is that good and the effort is that great.

The Florida Baptist Historical Society likes to honor those who honor Christ. I think Reeves, Rosser, Dalton, Joiner and Hepburn have honored Christ with their work.

Let's celebrate the fruits of Christian labor as we read our own history and look expectantly to the future.



Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33

