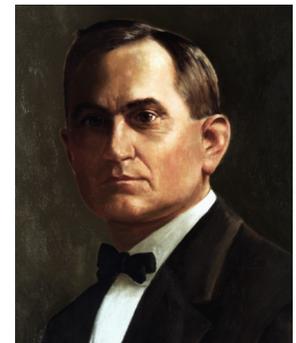


The Florida Baptist Historical Society seeks to **preserve the legacy** of Florida Baptist pastoral leaders and laity, the past and present functioning Baptist churches, the State Convention's cooperating ministries and milestone events that were historically significant to Florida Baptists. The Society's mission is accomplished through a variety of ministry services provided to Florida Baptists. To underscore this emphasis the Society's monthly newsletter, LEGACY, seeks to highlight the legacy endowed by the people, churches and events in Florida Baptist history. During the next several months this newsletter will feature those persons whose legacy in Florida Baptist life was achieved in part, by their service as president of the Florida Baptist State Convention.

As noted in previous issues of LEGACY, since 1854 (excluding the seven years at various times the State Convention did not meet), the persons elected as president have included 78 pastors and 16 laypersons. The first two issues of LEGACY featured brief profiles on those 16 laypersons. Continuing this month, we provide brief profiles on selected pastors who served as State Convention president.

Stuart B. Rogers, President 1904 -- 1909:

Stuart B. Rogers (b. 1866; d. 1926) was a former businessman who responded to God's call to the Gospel ministry and was ordained. He served as pastor of churches at Marianna and Chipley between 1896 and 1904. In 1904 he was called to serve as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Gainesville. While attending the State Convention meeting held in Kissimmee (1904) Rogers was elected to his first term as convention president. He subsequently was re-elected at Jacksonville (1905), Bartow (1906), Live Oak (1907), Plant City (1908), and DeFuniak Springs (1909).



Stuart B. Rogers

One of the most significant actions taken by the State Convention during the 1905 annual meeting, at which Rogers presided, was the approval to accept ownership, financial responsibility and management of the formerly privately owned *Southern Baptist Witness*, a statewide publication for Florida Baptists. [Only months earlier the newspaper had been created by the merger of two privately-owned newspapers, the *Florida Baptist Witness* and *The Southern Baptist*.]



Columbia College

The second major action taken by the State Convention under the leadership of S.B. Rogers occurred during the annual meeting held July 24-25, 1907 at Live Oak. The church-appointed messengers to the annual meeting voted to accept a 388-acre site with eight buildings, which was an abandoned state educational institution. The Convention approved a recommendation that a Baptist College be established in Lake City "owned and controlled" by the convention. The school opened on October 1, 1907, with a student enrollment of 133. Unfortunately pledge commitments to financially underwrite the school never materialized which resulted in the college having to close in 1918 and the Convention assumed \$50,000 in debt.

Rogers' denominational role took another turn as a result of the untimely death of L.D. Geiger on April 20, 1909, who was the State Board of Missions' Corresponding Secretary (now called Executive Director-Treasurer). S. B. Rogers' leadership skills and knowledge of the denomination's operation was immediately recognized and rewarded with his election by the State Board of Missions as its new Corresponding Secretary-Treasurer. It was a post Rogers held until his death in 1926 at age 60.

Claude W. Duke, President 1920 -- 1921:

Claude W. Duke (b. 1865; d. 1936), a native of Virginia, was serving as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Tampa, at the time of his election as State Convention president in 1920.

While Duke presided over the 1921 annual meeting held in Miami, messengers approved a resolution supporting U.S. President Warren G. Harding's plan to hold an international conference on disarmament to "end the burdens and tragedies of war." Additionally, the growing efforts across the state to establish local Baptist hospitals was put on hold when a Convention-appointed committee reported that due to the then current SBC-led Seventy-five Million Campaign (to relieve debts accrued by the SBC's Foreign Mission Board and other agencies), no Convention funds were available to assist hospital efforts planned in Gainesville, Orlando, Kissimmee, Haines City and Tampa.

Dr. Duke had begun serving the Tampa church in 1905 and continued ministering until his death 31-years later. He was credited as being an evangelistic "preacher of persuasive eloquence and penetrating intellectuality" the *Florida Baptist Witness* reported. The assessment went on to note that his "preaching with power" was due to "the fact that he had a great sympathetic heart and preached with pathos that indicated the fact that he had been with Jesus."



Jacob Lee White, President 1924 -- 1925:

Jacob L. White (b. 1862; d. 1948) was primarily known for his service as pastor of the former First Baptist Church (which later merged with the Temple Baptist Church in 1935 and was re-named Central Baptist Church), Miami, where he served from 1916 until his retirement in 1936, at age 74.

Dr. White presided over the 1925 annual meeting, held in Tampa, at which the State Convention participated in two historic events. The first was a continuation of a yearlong Centennial observance, which marked the 100th anniversary of the first Baptist church being established in Florida at Campbellton. The other historic move taken sought to ensure the financial stability of missions funding. The State Board of Missions recommended, and messengers approved, participating in the Southern Baptist Convention's newly defined Cooperative Program. In approving the missions support partnership, messengers approved an annual budget that earmarked 40 percent of Florida's undesignated receipts to be forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee.



During his tenure as pastor at First Baptist, Dr. White was instrumental in bringing many significant pastors of the day to participate on the program of the church-sponsored annual Southern Bible Conferences. Among those enlisted preachers were William Jennings Bryan, William Evans, and London-based pastors G. Campbell Morgan and D.C. Gray. As a result of Dr. White's missions emphasis and leadership the church came to support -- wholly or in part -- at least 55 foreign missionaries and sponsored the start of seven new churches in the Miami area. Dr. White and his wife Dovie had nine children, among which four sons entered the ministry.

The sequential order of State Convention Presidents between 1854 and 1929:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Richard Johnson Mays, 1854 | 11. Stuart B. Rogers 1904-1909 |
| 2. R. Fleming, 1856-1857 | 12. C.A. Carson, 1910-1913 |
| 3. William B. Cooper, Sr. 1866, 1872, 1876 | 13. N.A Blitch, 1914, 1916 |
| 4. Kinsey Chambers, 1867 | 14. Frank Bently, 1917-1918 |
| 5. B.S. Fuller, 1868 | 15. O.K. Reaves, 1919-1920 |
| 6. H.Z. Ardis, 1869 | 16. Claude W. Duke, 1920-21 |
| 7. P.P. Bishop, 1870-1871 | 17. A. A. Murphree, 1922-1923 |
| 8. John Henry Tomkies, 1873, 1875-1876 | 18. Jacob L. White, 1924-1925 |
| 9. William N. Chaudoin,
1880-1885, 1889-1903 | 19. W.L.C. Mahon 1926-1927 |
| 10. Henry M. King, 1886, 1888 | 20. Lincoln Hulley, 1928-1929 |

[Series to continue next month]

Highlights of the Board of Directors' Spring Meeting:

During the April 3rd meeting of the Florida Baptist Historical Society's Board of Directors, the following actions were taken:

- Re-elected Dr. David Elder, associate pastor, Anastasia Baptist Church, St. Augustine, as chairman of the Society Board;
- Approved a recommendation to the State Board of Missions for persons to fill vacancies on the Society Board of Directors;
- Approved a \$24,825 budget for the Society in 2020, 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 Leadership and selected biographical profiles to be featured in the 2019 *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage* to be published and distributed this fall;
- Approved the presentation of the 2019 Baptist Heritage Award to Dr. Thomas Kinchen for his efforts to preserve, restore and assemble the Heritage Village on The Baptist College of Florida campus; 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.