

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.

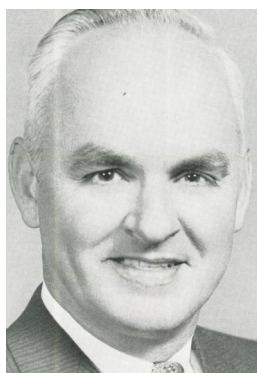
W. Hal Hunter, President 1960

William Hall Hunter (b. 1919; d. 2006) was serving as pastor (1954 — 1960) of the First Baptist Church, Crestview, at the time of his election to lead the Florida Baptist State Convention. He previously served Florida Baptist churches: First Baptist in Lake Wales, Northwood of West Palm Beach, and Riverside in Tampa. A native of Live Oak, he and his wife served as missionaries to Japan in 1976.

A report that Stetson University had receive \$1,000 from the Florida State Racing Commission's "Charity Day" event generated considerable comments during the 1960 annual meeting. Although Stetson President J. Ollie Edmunds denied knowing about the receipt of such funds, it added fuel to the on-going controversy that questioned if Stetson was truly a "Baptist" school and the push to establish another Baptist college.



W. Hal Hunter



Henry A. Parker

The State Board of Missions recommended a record \$2,500,000 budget which included a 50-50 distribution between the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. But in another recommendation the Board, citing the growing financial demands by its several institutions and the potential of a junior college being started by the state convention, requested a study on a possible revision to the 50-50 distribution of budget income. The motion passed.

Henry A. Parker, President 1963

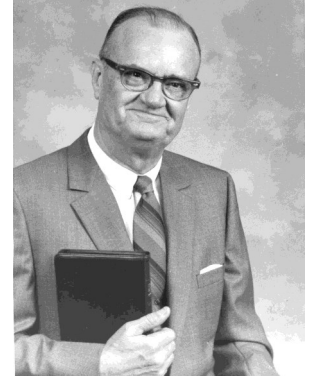
Henry Allen Parker (b. 1913; d. 1994) retired from ministry service as pastor, First Baptist Church, Orlando (1956 — 1977) in May of 1977. He previously served two other Florida churches – the First Baptist Church, Quincy (1941 – 44) and the

Allapattah Baptist Church, Miami (1944 – 1945) – having previously served churches in Kentucky and Alabama.

In one of the more ironic moments that can happen in state convention meetings – particularly in 1963 – messengers approved a report from the Stetson-Convention Relations Committee which was assigned to an on-going study designed to improve the rocky relationship between the two entities. No sooner had the committee's report been approved than a motion was made to approve for the second consecutive year a recommendation that the State Convention “vote now its determined desire to establish a junior college.” The irony in the action was that the Convention already was struggling to fulfill its financial obligations to both Stetson University and the recently adopted educational entity, the Baptist Bible Institute. Following adoption of the motion, messenger sang the hymn, “Blest Be the Tie that Binds.”

Homer G. Lindsay, Sr., President 1964

Homer Gentry Lindsay, Sr., (b. 1903; d. 1981) was the long-time pastor (1940 – 1973) of the First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, which reached a membership of 12,200 members by 1969. During the final four (1969 – 70) of his 33-years tenure, he served as co-pastor with his son, Homer, Jr. Lindsay, Sr., while serving as pastor held the distinction of also serving for six months in 1945 as the interim executive secretary-treasurer, of the Florida Baptist Convention, before the election of John Maguire.



Homer G. Lindsay, Sr.

The 1963 annual meeting featured an evening “20 Victorious Years” pageant that depicted the 20-years’ service by John Maguire as secretary-treasurer. In separate business matters, messengers approved a request that the report of the Committee on Nominations, with the names of persons proposed to serve as directors and trustees of boards and agencies, be printed in the future and provided to messengers at registration. Another motion endorsed and requested the Committee on Nominations to consider a wider field of nominees as a means to reduce the repeated use of the same individuals for the various vacancies.



James L. Monroe

In a move to more adequately fund pressing needs of the state convention’s institutions, the State Board of Missions proposed a budget of \$2.9 million that changed the former 50-50 distribution formula by earmarking 57 percent for state causes and 43 percent for the Southern Baptist Convention.

James L. Monroe, President, 1966

James L. Monroe (b. 1920; d. 1999) at the time of his election as state convention president was in the midst of serving as the pastor, First Baptist Church, Ft. Walton Beach, a position he held for 18 years. Following his retirement in 1986, Monroe and his wife Laura were appointed as coordinators in Partnership Evangelism between the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board (now known as the International Mission Board) and the Florida Baptist Convention.

The efforts, underway since 1961, for the state convention to establish a junior college, received a major push forward when a recommendation from the Palm Lake Baptist Association requested the state convention to proceed with the election of trustees for the school and direct the State Board of Missions to earmark \$200,000 toward the junior college for which the association was attempting to raise \$1,500,000 for facilities. The motion passed with 573 voting in favor and 360 opposed.



Edgar R. Cooper

Edgar R. Cooper, President, 1967 (Two sessions)

Edgar R. Cooper (b. 1918; d. 2010) holds the distinction of presiding over two sessions of the Florida Baptist State Convention in 1967. Cooper, a native Floridian, served as editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* (1971 – 1984). He went to the editor position from serving as pastor, North Jacksonville Baptist Church (1968 – 1971). At the time of his election as state convention president Cooper was serving as pastor of North Park Baptist Church, Orlando.

A special session of the state convention was convened March 31, to approve the proposed Articles of Incorporation for the new Florida Baptist college to be established in the Palm Lake Baptist Association (see previous 1966 annual meeting). The proposed governing document was discussed practically section by section. The main points of concern were several: (1) whether the document should define this institution as a Baptist *junior* college or a *four-year Baptist college*, which was the preferred choice; (2) whether the document should or should not contain the phrase, “The Bible is the inspired word of God, and it is the sufficient guide for salvation and the Christian life;” the “for” passed by a vote of 266 and 254 against; (3) whether the school would be “subject, at all times, to its [state convention] direction and control”; (4) a requirement that the president and all deans “shall be Baptists and actively related to a Southern Baptist church;” and (5) a proposed ten objectives to carry out the principles of the institution that were initially deleted on the first day were restored completely on the second day.



Conrad Willard

During the regular November meeting messengers learned from Jess Moody, the trustee chairman of the new Baptist college, that Evangelist Billy Graham had announced the potential of building a Christian university in Palm Beach County. The trustee board recommended and the messengers approved a request that if Billy Graham proceeded with a university, then the state convention should dissolve the Baptist College and re-focus on establishing a Baptist junior college.

Conrad Willard, President 1968

Conrad Willard (b. 1918; d. 2004) was serving as pastor (1962 – 1983) of the Central Baptist Church, Miami, at the time of his service as state convention president. When he retired from Central, he was named pastor emeritus. A Midwesterner, Willard had come to the Miami church from the Calvary Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri. Prior to his state convention service Willard served as vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1956 – 57).

The 1968 annual meeting was the first for new Executive Secretary Harold Bennett who had replaced John Maguire following his retirement. The messengers approved a 1969 convention budget, which for the first time, was identified as a “Cooperative Program” budget with an anticipated “Cooperative Program” income of \$3.9 million.

In a historic change, the messengers approved the request of the Florida Woman’s Missionary Union auxiliary to become a regular program department under the auspices of the State Board of Missions, thus ending an 87-year tradition of being an independent fraternal entity to the state convention.

The sequential order of State Convention Presidents between 1960 and 1969:

William Hal Hunter, 1960
J. Ollie Edmunds, 1961
M. B. Knight, 1962
Henry A. Parker, 1963
Homer G. Lindsay, Sr., 1964

Thomas M. Johns, 1965
James L. Monroe, 1966
Edgar R. Cooper, 1967
Conrad R. Willard, 1968
Doyle I. Carlton, 1969

[Series to continue next month]