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S. B. Rogers:
Gifted Administrator

As the third executive secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention, S. B. Rogers parlayed his education, administrative and business acumen to take the Convention beyond a loosely knit association to a thriving organization poised for growth in the 20th Century.

Rogers was elected corresponding secretary-treasurer of the Florida Baptist State Board of Missions in 1909 after the death of L. D. Geiger, and served in that position until 1926. Educated at Mercer University and the University of Chicago, Rogers served churches in Marianna, Chipley and Gainesville before being tapped for denominational service.

As the first executive secretary with university and theological training, the former pastor demonstrated credibility when doctrinal issues surfaced, unifying an often divided state convention.

Rogers' unifying leadership was apparent in the Convention's participation in the Southern Baptist Convention's 75 Million Campaign which sought in 1923 to erase deficits incurred by the SBC Home and Foreign Mission boards. While other state conventions could not raise their quota, Florida Baptists, under Rogers' leadership, responded generously and met their goal. While the campaign did not meet its goal nationwide, it served as the forerunner of the Cooperative Program, which serves today as the SBC's unified budgeting plan.

Even in his first year of office, Rogers made great progress toward cooperation, recommending a systematic plan of giving by the churches and adopting a percentage basis for funding to causes supported by the State Board of Missions. This was a huge step considering that many churches at the time designated their gifts to specific causes, severely limiting use of convention funds.

"Many of his suggestions which were carried out by the State Board and the State Convention greatly improved the administrative efficiency with which Florida Baptist did their work," recalled the late historian Earl Joiner.

During his tenure the Convention staff had grown to over 100 and Rogers saw the need for a building to house the state denominational offices. He moved the Florida Baptist offices to Jacksonville from Gainesville and later oversaw the financing and construction of the Convention's first building in downtown Jacksonville. The Convention later named it the Rogers Building in his memory.

Rogers hoped to inspire Florida Baptists to create a loan fund to assist congregations construct church buildings. While the funding never reached the goals he had set, he was gifted in finding contributors to the cause. During his last year, \$47,811 was provided to churches, with 496 churches receiving such aid during his administration.

Rogers also was credited with focusing the state convention beyond Florida's rural landscapes to the cities where growth and urbanization was taking place post World War I. He spread the mantle of leadership when he discontinued an earlier practice of the executive secretary serving as the elected state convention president.

In 1924 Rogers summarized his 15 years of leadership: \$227,824 given for foreign missions; \$219,465 for home missions and \$282,645 for Christian education. Value of church property grew from \$705,371 to \$14,002,872, an increase of 567 percent; and total church membership grew to 77,846 from 37,027, a net increase of 210 percent.

Wise and able, committed and cooperative, S. B. Rogers set the direction of the Convention on a new course for his successors to follow. "We can only hint at the scope of this man's program," said the late John Maguire, executive secretary-treasurer, 1945-1967.

S. B. Rogers:

While completing some research on early Florida churches, I came across this tidbit of information about S.B. Rogers which may be helpful to you. The narrative was regarding the Greenwood Baptist Church, Jackson County:

"The Rev. S. B. Rogers served from 1896 until 1903. The church had some 42 members during the 1890s and, like its Greenwood neighbor, was occasionally obliged to dismiss a member for unacceptable conduct." [source: Jerrell H. Shofner, Jackson County, Florida -- A History. (Greenwood, Fla.: Penkevill Publishing co., 1985) p.368.

The footnote refers to the book: Retilla C. Miller Leitch, A Christ Centered Century: History of the First Baptist Church, 1881-1981.

September, 2004

Stuart Beggs Rogers

Executive Secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention, 1909-1926

by **Jerry M. Windsor**

Professor

The Baptist College of Florida

In 1925 Stuart Beggs Rogers wrote a review of his convention work that included some very interesting introspection.

“Twenty-three years ago this month, the Convention saw fit to call me from a quiet place and humble sphere as a young pastor, and make me an official of this convention.

“Some of you perhaps yet remember that eventful day; that critical hour in our fellowship and service.

“You may also remember how I begged to be excused, and how scared I was, when in this intense moment you led me to the chair of the president of this body.

“For six successive years we did our best to impartially guide the body along paths of peace, in the bonds of love.

“While president of Convention you again called me to the still harder task of executive secretary of your corporation and mission board. This year we are bringing you our seventeenth annual report in that department.

“Many things occurred along the backward look which we would be glad to forget, some to remember forever and forever.”[1]

The Quiet Years

Stuart Beggs Rogers was born near Macon, Georgia, on September 18, 1866. He attended local schools and Mercer University. According to the 1889-1890 Mercer University catalog, Rogers was a student at some time at Hearn Institute and was somehow related to Reedy Springs, Georgia. The 1890-1891 Mercer catalog stated that Rogers was a freshman at Mercer University and from Laurens County, Georgia.[2]

Rogers married Daisy Walker on March 4, 1896, in the Baptist church at Vidalia.[3] His father was reportedly a prosperous merchant and Rogers attended school at Mercer University and the University of Chicago but did not graduate. In 1897 Rogers became the pastor of First Baptist Church in Marianna and First Baptist Church in Chipley, Florida. He served each church on a one-half time basis.

The date of the conversion and call of Rogers apparently came before his marriage for he moved to Greenwood, Florida for pastoral ministry work in 1896. One source states that Rogers was forced to forsake his schooling “in order to manage his father’s business and save it from ruin.”[4]

The training, experience, and temperament of Rogers laid the exact framework needed for his future ministry. He seemed to have a giftedness for uniting people behind grand projects yet he had a practical bent that served him well.

The University of Chicago study and the daily exposure to his father's business gave Rogers a sense of ease and persistence about fiscal matters that brought him to a focus of accomplishment in his pastoral work and in his work with the Florida Baptist Convention.

Marianna and Chipley

Rogers became pastor of First Baptist Church, Marianna and First Baptist Church, Chipley on a half-time basis each. The churches were only about fifteen miles apart. Although they are in different counties (Marianna in Jackson and Chipley in Washington) the churches were much alike and actually had family, business, and friendship associations across church lines. Marianna was the county seat of Jackson County and Chipley was the county seat of Washington County. Jackson County joined Bay County and the Gulf Coast and Washington County joined Bay County Gulf Coast. Both churches were agrarian related and on the same highway and railroad lines. He served the churches for seven years. He also served two years as moderator of the West Florida Baptist Association.

In the centennial history of First Baptist Chipley it is stated that Rogers drew blueprints of the church auditorium at the kitchen table of Mrs. W. O. Butler. In 1901 the auditorium was built and in 1902 it was dedicated.[5] Rogers also was heavily involved in the administrative organization of the church. He was the third pastor but the first to organize a Sunday school there.

Rogers left the business world and entered the ministry with a good deal of business experience but very little church administrative experience. Yet he was a quick learner. He found out quickly that there was a vast difference in getting a business to pay its debts and getting a Baptist to give his tithe. He also learned that salary and employment perks had to be negotiated to protect ones family. When Rogers was elected corresponding secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention on April 29, 1909, the following Florida Baptist Witness editorial made some very incisive observations about the man and his philosophy of ministry.

“When he came to Florida he left a pastorate that was paying him \$1,400 and a home to take a field in Florida that paid only \$1,000 without a home. During his whole connection with the Florida work he has manifested a disposition to sacrifice himself for the cause. These things together with his broad knowledge of the State and his sound judgment and good business qualities and great energy make him well fitted for the work which has so unexpectedly fallen upon him.”[6]

First Baptist Church Gainesville

Rogers was pastor in the Panhandle from 1896-1904. He then served as pastor of First Baptist Gainesville from 1904-1905. He was called to go to Gainesville in March 1904. However Rogers did not accept the call until certain things were worked out. He asked for \$1,000 a year and housing. After “some debate” the church met those needs and also agreed to some other innovative suggestions.[7]

The early months of the Gainesville ministry also caught Rogers up in a very critical matter of church discipline. J. B. Holley had preceded Rogers as pastor of First Baptist Gainesville. By his own

admission, Holly had a terrible temper and was not always in good control. His temper was usually settled after a good night's sleep, but the problem was he reacted so quickly and so violently to certain triggers that he seemed to stay in hot water with someone all the time. People loved him and accepted his passion as just part of his personality. But at the January 1904 business meeting Holley handed the church clerk a letter and requested that the clerk read the letter to the church. The clerk read: "Dear Brethren: I hereby hand you my resignation as pastor of your church with the request that you allow it to take effect after today's services. Fraternally submitted, J. B. Holley." This document was read, accepted and Holly was out and 60 days later Rogers was in.

But Holley could not go quietly. He went over to First Baptist Church in Jacksonville and caused such a disturbance in a loss of temper that the church in Jacksonville "withdrew fellowship from Holley." He then headed back to Gainesville to get the church to help him work it out.

Rogers had a land mine. A former pastor was on his doorstep pleading for mercy. The former pastor had a violent temper but he also had many friends in the Gainesville congregation. Rogers showed the wisdom of Solomon. He got a committee of 16 Baptist preachers from Northeast Florida to investigate the matter. When the dust settled, Holley apologized, Jacksonville restored him, Gainesville sent him on his way, and Rogers gained a great deal of respect from Baptists in Gainesville and Jacksonville. [8]

The Storm

Stuart Beggs Rogers was ready for the work. The king was dead but long live the king. Rogers felt the pain and sorrow of the death of Dr. Lorenzo Dow Geiger (October 18, 1854-April 21, 1909) but he knew he was facing "some embarrassing circumstances." In his 1910 report to the Florida Baptist Convention Rogers was openly concerned and honest about the situation.

"It is with gratitude to God, and fraternal greetings to the Brethren, and yet with profound grief, that we bring to you this, our twenty-eighth annual report. . . there is a feeling of profound sorrow pervading our hearts. The shadows of grief have fallen like mantles of darkness about our board. . . Dr. Lorenzo Dow Geiger, your faithful and worthy secretary is dead. Confronting us from the beginning, however, were some embarrassing circumstances. . . a large deficit. . .[9]

The Florida Baptist Witness in a May 6, 1909 editorial had already foreseen the problem. The writer noted that there were three matters that needed to be dealt with. There was "money stringency," "a new man in the harness," and "widely different" ways of accomplishing the task. The writer also made a plea for patience, prayer, and wisdom for the convention and Rogers.[10]

The Debt

The debt was hardly intentional. But it was large and could not have come at a worse time.[11] Stetson, Columbia College, and ongoing personnel and program expenses had state mission leaders in a crunch. Something had to be done.

Rogers had a plan. He served as President of the Florida Baptist Convention six times and he was well familiar with the convention finances.[12] He knew something needed to be done and he had

built up a reservoir of trust among his peers. He had handled the death of Dr. Geiger with poise and statesmanship.

On April 24, 1909 (Dr. Geiger died April 21, 1909) Rogers wrote a letter to the editor of the Florida Baptist Witness and addressed it to the "Baptist Host of Florida." He said, "Our great mission leader has fallen in the very midst of the struggle. . . but God reigns and the work must go on. Let us rally as never before. Don't get discouraged. Don't stop work. God will raise Him up a leader." [13]

Rogers used the death of Geiger to call for more faithful giving. Before he knew that he would be the new leader of the convention he pleaded: "Don't let his successor start into the fight with a load he cannot carry. Let everyone make a GREAT MEMORIAL OFFERING, and rush it to his office, Apopka, at once." [14]

The financial plan was set. Rogers asked for three things. He asked for the election of a committee to apportion each association its "prorata share of all obligations." Second, he recommended the adoption of a percent basis budget for the state convention. Then he asked for a twenty percent increase in giving by the churches of the convention for the year 1910. [15]

In 1915 the convention temporarily got out of debt. It nearly broke the health and strength of Rogers but he announced that "your records are clean, your office is clear, no obligations upon the office unpaid . . ." [16] As a matter of fact Rogers was worn out and he knew it. He tried to resign due to his worn out condition but the convention would have nothing to do with it.

Columbia College

Stetson and the Florida Baptist Convention never could get any traction. There was a love affair down through the years but no real affection. Questions about authority, trustees, and money were raised again and again.

Finally on July 24-25, 1907, the Florida Baptist 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 an excellent administration and faculty and a student enrollment of 133. The school was to be administered by a board of 20 trustees, all of whom were to be members of Florida Baptist churches and elected by the convention. [17]

The school started out with 355 acres, eight buildings, and \$15,000 cash from the city council of Lake City. The beginning was promising but the financial support never materialized for the school. The terrible drought of 1908 was a great financial set back and expected pledges went unpaid. The convention could not come to the rescue of the school and eleven years later the school was forced to close with an indebtedness of \$50,000. All of this happened on the Rogers presidential/secretary watch. The pressure and stress were just too much for one man to handle.

The failure of Columbia College was simple yet complex. They simply did not have the money to operate. However other small colleges were surviving so there must have been some basic factors that caused the failure of the school. I believe those basic reasons were seven distinct events that hit Florida and the school at one time.

- The 1908 drought cannot be over estimated. Good people made good pledges and for good reasons they could not keep their promise. The 1895 freeze just seemed to set the whole state up for the tragic drought ten years later.
- The failure of the Heard National Bank where the school did their banking was also a contributing factor. This one incident nearly caused total disaster for the school but loyal friends came to the school's rescue.
- The World War I war cloud shed confusion and doubt across the economic landscape among banks, businesses, and other financial entities. The fields of France saw tragedy and failure but so did the national economy in the United States.
- The Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention were deeply in debt and set up fund raising activities for every association and church in Florida. This added to the economic pressure in fund raising.
- The resignation of C. A. Carson as president of the Board of Trustees put a pall on the college quest for survival. He served as president of the board for ten years and gave generously to the causes of the school but his resignation as board president sent shock waves that were easily and sadly misinterpreted.
- The military draft actually dried up the student pool. When the school closed, the trustees felt that possibly the school could open the following year if the draft and World War I was not intervening. The war to end all wars continued and the draft stayed in effect.

After all these prevailing circumstances came a whirlwind fund raising effort by the Y.M.C.A. to raise \$100,000 in Florida. As secretary, Rogers says this fund raising effort swept from "the border to the Keys" and garnered nearly all discretionary funds that were available.[18]

The Efficiency Movement

There was a general movement across the Southern Baptist Convention to somehow come to a better understanding as to the use of resources and personnel in the local church and on the convention level. Florida also was caught up in this attempt at efficiency. Saving money and man power was needful. Every department and employee was stretched and the attempt to be frugal and more direct in ministry must have greatly appealed to Rogers.

A department of Efficiency was set up and a secretary was employed. The motivation was pure and the logic sound. The conclusion was drawn that if we do a better job at home we can do a better job abroad. "If we do a better job in our churches we can do a better job in our convention."

The unit plan aspect of this movement was doomed to failure from the beginning. This was an attempt to bring all state agencies under one board. There would be no trustees at the colleges or Children's Home. There would be no directors to work through. There would be just one board elected by the convention to "efficiently" oversee all Baptist work in Florida. This idea sounds good but it flew in the face of turfism, traditional, and theological tenets that speak of giftedness and shared cooperation. The unit plan was dead in the water before it began.

But Rogers and his colleagues made two good points. One point was that a national budget with local fund raising needed to be established. This whole effort was crying out for a cooperation that would eventually come in 1925 with the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program.

The second point was the importance of local church contacts in regards to Sunday school, missions, and giving. This concept of “every member canvass” was the genius of the efficiency movement.

The Efficiency approach might have been born in a business context but it grew theological wings when it put emphasis upon visiting every church member in the state convention and asking them to get involved in Kingdom work.

Stuart Beggs Rogers felt he came from a “quiet place and humble sphere” to serve the Florida Baptist Convention. Yet he was a man with the exact spiritual temperament and leadership skills that the Florida Baptist Convention needed at such a crucial time.

Dr. Rogers suffered poor health off and on his whole ministry. He died on August 16, 1926 at a hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. He was survived by his wife and three children. [19]

End notes

[1] Stuart Beggs Rogers, “1908-1925 A Brief Review.” p.1. Florida Baptist Historical Society. Stuart Beggs Rogers vertical file.

I admit the dates just do not seem to match.

[2] Actually the 1890-1891 Mercer University catalog, p. 10., mentions F. B. Rogers but Susan Broome in an email to Jan Cunningham dated July 29, 2004, states that the F. B. is probably a typographical error. He is also listed as a minister in the New Ebenezer Baptist Association, 1890, 92, 96.

[3] Christian Index marriage notice, March 12, 1896, p. 5. Florida Baptist Witness, May 6, 1909; August 19, 26, 1926; September 2, 9, 23, 30, 1926; November 13, 1941.

There is an unsigned research sheet in the Florida Baptist Historical Society, Stuart Beggs Rogers file that states S. B. Rogers and Daisy had three children.

[4] Ibid. Rogers also served as pastor at Greenwood from 1896-1903.

[5] Joan P. Chance. History First Baptist Church Chipley, Florida 1887-1987, pp. 3-4.

[6] Florida Baptist Witness, May 6, 1909, p. 4.

[7] The First Baptist Church Gainesville, Florida, 1870-1970, pp. 20-24.

The salary and housing was agreed upon but one is led to believe that it was the other “conditions” suggested by Rogers that caused the church “debate.” Within three weeks of going there as pastor, Rogers had the number of deacons increased to seven, moved Sunday School from the afternoon to the morning, and reorganized the Sunday School and B.Y.P.U.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Florida Baptist Convention Minutes, 1910, pp. 10-35.

[10] op.cit. Witness, May 6, 1909, p. 4.

The writer also notes in this editorial that Rogers was a “graduate” of Mercer University. I believe he was mistaken about that. Rogers did study at Mercer and the University of Chicago but I am not aware of his graduating from either school.

[11] Florida experienced a terrific drought in 1908. For an agrarian culture this was devastating. The Southern Baptist Convention was in debt at the Foreign Mission Board and at the Home Mission Board. Pastors of some of the strongest mission giving churches in Florida had given up their own pulpits for the first four months of 1909 to canvass the state for Southern Baptist Convention mission giving. This was necessary but it was devastating for state mission giving (1910, Florida Baptist Convention Minutes, p. 11).

[12] Rogers served as convention President at the conventions in Kissimmee (1904), Jacksonville (1905), Bartow (1906), Live Oak (1907), Plant City (1908), and DeFuniak Springs (1909).

[13] At no time does it ever appear Rogers sought the job as President of the Convention or Executive Director. The honors found him.

[14] Florida Baptist Witness, April 29, 1909, p. 4.

This is a rather interesting editorial page. On the left side Rogers pleads for support of the new director in the left hand column in his April 24, 1909 letter. On the right hand column of the same page the April 29, 1909, announcement of the new secretary is made. Rogers could not have foreseen that five day swing of events but it does show his humility and cooperative spirit.

[15] Florida Baptist Convention Minutes, 1910, pp. 17-18.

[16] Florida Baptist Convention Minutes, 1915, p. 28.

[17] Earl Joiner, “Columbia College,” Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, I, p. 300.

[18] State Convention Minute annuals are the best sources for a study of the failure of Columbia College. The annuals of 1917 and 1918 are especially enlightening. I have no idea where the Columbia College records are stored but Florida Baptist Convention minutes give a good annual overview from 1907-1918.

[19] The health of Rogers was a constant issue for him. It is my belief that his weakened condition might have caused the onset of undiagnosed tuberculosis.

The 1922 convention minutes tells of the purchase of property in Jacksonville for the construction of a new Baptist building. Later the completed building was named the Rogers building as a memorial to Rogers and his convention leadership.

According to the July 26, 1923 issue of The Florida Baptist Witness Rogers went to Europe for rest, relaxation, and enjoyment. He spent time in Rome, Paris, and Brussels. He was probably the first Florida Baptist executive director to travel abroad.

Rogers wrote a 23-page document entitled A Brief History of Florida Baptists 1825-1925. There is no documentation, no pictures, and no bibliography. Its importance lies in the fact that it was the first published history of Florida Baptist work.

**Selected Excerpts from Unpublished Manuscript
Favored Florida – A History of Florida Baptists 1854-2004**

By Earl Joiner

Donald S. Hepburn, editor and contributor

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPANSION, RECOGNITION, AND CONTROVERSY: 1901-1920

In a very real sense the birth of the 20th Century was for Florida Baptists a premature one, because they were not ready.

They were still feeling the pinch of financial distress which not only plagued the whole country, but especially Florida during the last few years of the 19th Century. Florida Baptists began the new century with a sense of frustration born out of widespread economic pessimism and from their awareness of the great challenges which they would face in the new century.

These two decades--1901-1920--were marked by a definite rise in the economic and social status of Florida Baptists despite the frequent financial difficulties they experienced in denominational activities. Nowhere is this rise in the social status of Florida Baptists better illustrated than in a 1911 report by E.H. Rennolds, chaplain of the Florida Senate. Rennolds stated that Baptists in the State Legislature were second in number only to the Methodists in both houses.ⁱ The improved social status of Florida Baptists also may have been reflected by the Legislature's decision to adopt a song written in 1873 by a Baptist minister as the official state song. Entitled "Florida, My Florida," the song was approved by the legislature on May 12, 1913. It was written by a Baptist minister, C.V. Waugh of Lake City, Florida. Waugh was born in Manchester, Virginia, on June 8, 1848, and ordained as a Baptist minister in 1873. His first pastorate was the First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Florida, which he began in 1876. In 1893 he was named professor of languages at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College in Lake City. During that same year he wrote the poem, "Florida, My Florida," and used the German air "Der Tannenbaum" as the musical score.ⁱⁱ The text is as follows:

Land of my birth, bright sunkissed land,
Florida, my Florida
Laved by the Gulf and Ocean grand,
Florida, my Florida
Of all the States in East or West,
Unto my heart thou art the best;
Here may I live, here may I rest,
Florida, my Florida.

In country, town, or hills and dells,
Florida, my Florida

The rhythmic chimes of the school bells
Florida, my Florida
Will call thy children day by day
To learn to walk the patriot's way,
Firmly to stand for thee for aye,
Florida, my Florida.

Thy golden fruit the world outshines
Florida, my Florida,
Thy gardens and thy phosphate mines,
Florida, my Florida
Yield their rich store of good supply,
To still the voice of hunger's cry,
For thee we'll live, for thee we'll die,
Florida, my Florida.

Th' oppressors rod can't rest on thee,
Florida, my Florida
Thy sons and daughters free must be,
Florida, my Florida
From North and South, from East and West,
From freezing blasts they come for rest,
And find in thee their earnest quest,
Florida, my Florida.

When ills betide thee and woes o'ertake,
Florida, my Florida
Thy sons and daughters quick will make,
Florida, my Florida
The sacrifice of loves and life
To save from woe, from ills and strife,
To fell the foes in danger rife,
Florida, my Florida.

An article on "Florida" in the 1910 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says that in 1906, Baptists were the strongest denomination in the state.ⁱⁱⁱ This rise in the numerical strength and social status of many Florida Baptists paralleled the extensive migration and the growth of industry in the state. The population grew to 968,470 in 1920 from 528,524 in 1900. The population increased 42.4 percent between 1900 and 1910 and 28.7 percent from 1910 to 1920. Baptist growth not only reflected the general population increase but exceeded it. In 1901 there were 484 churches with a total membership of 60,874. **[NARRATIVE PAGE JUMP]**

THE CHARACTER OF THE CONVENTION

In 1901 Chaudoin resigned after serving as Corresponding Secretary of the Florida Baptist State Convention and as president for 21 years. His calm and gentle spirit had guided the State Convention and the State Board for more than two decades. Also, no one since has served as president so many times. Also, no one since has served as president and executive secretary at the same time. In this period there were eight different State Convention presidents, with no one serving more than three terms in succession.

Upon Chaudoin's retirement, a significant change in the Florida Baptist Convention (an agency of the State Convention) occurred. The peace and harmony of the last decades of the 19th Century and the beginning years of the 20th Century were often interrupted by controversy, strife, and economic difficulty. Even so, by the end of this period, because of excellent leadership, the Convention could look back on some great achievements, and it was prepared to meet great challenges in the future.

One of the first significant events in the Convention during this period was the securing of a charter, a matter which had been discussed for some years without action.^{iv}

The growth in the number of churches was made possible in part by migration and in part by continued help from the Home Mission Board.^v At the same time, there was a corresponding upswing in the number of churches giving to state missions.^{vi} Two key events, both overdue, gave expression to this growth of interest in missions. First, in 1904, the first foreign missionary from Florida, Frank J. Fowler, was appointed by the Foreign Mission Board along with his wife to serve in Argentina.^{vii}

Second, the growth of mission interest was expressed in the development of concern for the spiritual welfare of the Seminole Indians. Around 1907, Indian missionaries from the Creek Tribe in Oklahoma came to Florida to evangelize the Seminole and Miccosukee Indians. Travel was difficult and the Indians mostly in the Everglades were hard to find.^{viii} In 1913, a special committee, chaired by A.J. Holt, who had served as a missionary among the Indians of the West, reported on their preliminary investigation of sending missionaries to the Seminole Indians of Florida. The committee said that the Seminoles were hostile because of the way the white man had treated them. The committee said that it would be unwise to send a white missionary to the Indians. They did conclude that the best approach would be made by working through the Home Mission Board to secure a Christian Indian from among the Seminoles in Oklahoma to work among the Florida Seminoles.^{ix} In 1914, the State Convention passed a resolution protesting the expropriation of Indian lands by the State of Florida and asking that

the land be given back to the Seminoles for a home.^x In 1916, the State of Florida complied with the State Convention request and the Federal government gave additional land.^{xi}

In 1915 the financial crisis in the country and among Florida Baptists was so great that the Convention's annual session was not held.^{xii} By 1920, however, things were looking better, for the Florida Baptist Convention made plans to pay all its debts. The Convention decided to give its assigned share to the Southern Baptist Convention Seventy-five Million Campaign, an effort intended to pay off Southern Baptist Convention debts and put all the institutions of Southern Baptists on a sound basis.^{xiii}

One aspect of Convention life, the pastors' conference, continued very much as it began earlier. The annual meeting of ministers took place usually just before the State Convention and continued with fair regularity, performing a very useful function for ministers. The conference continued to emphasize: (1) the sharing of insights into practical problems of pastoral ministry and (2) discussion of popular theological questions, such as: "Baptist Principles and How Best to Educate the Masses in Them,"^{xiv} and "When, Where and By Whom Was the first Baptist Church Set Up."^{xv} A paper was usually read, followed by free discussion, which was usually lively.

THE STATE BOARD, GEIGER AND ROGERS

As indicated earlier in Chapter Three, the State Board of Missions became very quickly the basic instrument through which the purposes and work of the Florida Baptist State Convention were served. One of the first significant acts of the State Board at the beginning of this era was to accept the resignation of executive secretary W.N. Chaudoin, who resigned in 1901 because of ill health. Despite having suffered health problems throughout his tenure, Chaudoin had served Florida Baptists well.

L.D. Geiger was elected to replace Chaudoin. Geiger was a native of Florida, born at Old Town in Marion County in 1854. Having only a very limited country school education, he was first a Baptist, then became a "Campbellite"^{xvi} **<TWO NOTES: (A) I HAVE TAKEN DR. JOINER'S INSERT AND MADE IT AN ENDNOTE, AND (B) I HAVE OMITTED THE WORD "BELIEVERS," BECAUSE WHAT CAMPBELLITES BELIEVE IS NOT "BELIEVERS' BAPTISM." RATHER THEY SEE THEMSELVES AS BAPTIZING LOST PERSONS, NOT CHRISTIANS. ONLY AFTER BAPTISM IS COMPLETE DOES A PERSON BECOME A CHRISTIAN, HENCE A "BELIEVER.">**preacher for ten years, returning after that to the Baptist fold. Before he became executive secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention, he served as pastor to a number of churches at various places including Micanopy, Leesburg, Ocala, Apopka, Brooksville, and Lakeland.^{xvii} He had served as vice-president of the State Convention in 1896 and 1897 and was serving as Chaudoin's

assistant at the time Chaudoin retired. By that time, his leadership and influence among Florida Baptists were widely recognized. In 1902 Stetson University conferred on him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

Among two problems Geiger and the State Board faced were two which recurred often during the first two decades of the 20th Century were: the lack of money and the shortage of ministers. Both of these problems often impinged on each other. <DR. JOINER'S HANDMARKED CORRECTIONS INDICATE AN INSERT HERE, BUT I COULDN'T FIND THE WORDING> The State Board found it impossible to employ and to pay much needed missionaries.^{xviii} Some churches found it impossible to hold worship services. The State Board report to the 1901 State Convention noted that several county seat towns, some with good houses of worship, had been unable to hold regular preaching services during the past year. Among them were Milton, DeFuniak Springs, Bronson, and Inverness.^{xix} Not only were ministers in short supply in Florida, but the prospects of producing Baptist leadership for the future looked slim. In 1904, only two ministerial students enrolled at Stetson.^{xx} Although there apparently were ministers who wanted to move to the state, Florida Baptists possessed neither the mechanics nor the means for inducing them to come.^{xxi} What is still worse, at least one *Witness* editorial gently suggests that the quality of some ministers left something to be desired. The editorial contended these ministers used sad, unbelievable stories which exalted eloquence rather than logic. The *Witness* editor warned those ministers that thinking men would soon lose confidence in them.^{xxii}

Because of economic difficulties in Florida, the Home Mission Board provided financial assistance to the State Board to help many churches and to employ several missionaries. Also, the State Board defined the duties of the missionaries more specifically than ever before in order to make the best possible use of their efforts. In 1906, the State Board began to require a signed statement by each missionary pledging to: (1) do colportage work (sell and circulate books), the proceeds of which went to the State Board; (2) give special attention to Christian work among the "colored" people; (3) hold meetings for children as often as possible; (4) take, read, and promote the State newspaper; and (5) take an offering for missions in each church at least once each quarter.^{xxiii} Similarly, the Board better defined its work in 1907 when W.A. Hobson made a motion that the State Board itself be organized into departments or committees so that different things coming before them could be referred to a special committee of the Board dealing with that subject. The first such committees named were: evangelism, education, building, and Sunday school.^{xxiv}

In 1909 L.D. Geiger died. During his eight years as executive secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention, gifts to missions increased to \$75,000 the last year of his work from \$13,000 in 1901, the

year he became secretary.^{xxv} However, because the needs enlarged faster than the resources, the State Board was in debt. S.B. Rogers, then pastor at First Church, Gainesville, was elected to replace Geiger.

S.B. Rogers was the first executive secretary of Florida Baptists with university training and theological training. Educated at Mercer University and the University of Chicago, Rogers had served pastorates at Marianna and Chipley before going to Gainesville. A great champion of the temperance cause, he was credited also with uniting a divided State Convention, with moving Florida Baptist offices from Gainesville to Jacksonville, and with the construction of the Florida Baptist Building, later named the Rogers Building in his memory.^{xxvi}

Rogers was an excellent executive and businessman. Although the State Board and the Florida Baptist Convention continued to have financial difficulty during his administration, from his first year in office Rogers made significant moves in the direction of progress. For example, in 1910 he had the Board recommend to the State Convention: (1) adoption of a more systematic plan of giving by the churches; (2) adoption of a percentage basis for all causes supported and fostered by the State Board; (3) employment of a combination Sunday school and Baptist Young People's Union Secretary; and (4) an increase of 20 percent for State Missions giving during 1910. These recommendations were adopted.^{xxvii} It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of these recommendations. In order to appreciate the importance of the adoption of a systematic budget and percentage apportionment, one must realize that the churches' financial contributions had often been designated gifts, which were limited to uses specified by contributors. The result had been that some mission needs received plenty of funds while others were sadly neglected. The new plan was designed to provide for a more equitable distribution of funds according to need.

To implement these plans further, the State Board suggested that the churches adopt budgets which stated dollar amounts to be contributed to state missions and to other causes.^{xxviii} Following the lead of the Southern Baptist Convention,^{xxix} the State Board became so impressed with the southwide emphasis on financial stewardship efficiency that it recommended: (1) the appointment of a budget committee; (2) the elimination of the state office of associate evangelist, letting the pastors help each other with the evangelizing;^{xxx} and (3) the employment of a combination Sunday school and enlistment person whose responsibility would include the promotion of stewardship efficiency in the churches. For a time, this concern for efficiency proved to be a controversial issue among Florida Baptists, as well as for Southern Baptists, because some thought it set evangelism and stewardship efficiency against each other.^{xxxi} Fortunately, the employment of an efficiency staff person to promote stewardship and better understanding of the purpose and results soon convinced many Florida Baptist churches of the worth of

efficiency.^{xxxii} One practical result in the churches was the beginning of the "every member canvas," a financial pledging campaign which brought more money into many churches than they had dreamed possible.

However, Rogers apparently suggested changes in the administrative structure of the State Board which provoked controversy not so easily settled. Rogers and others proposed a unit system of administration in which all work of Florida Baptists, State Missions, Stetson University, and the Florida Baptist Orphans Home would be placed under one board. The single board would consist of one representative from each association, one other from each of four major cities, and an additional number from the area near the state offices of the board. This unified board would then be divided into three committees, each entrusted with supervision of a department of the work, responsible, of course, to the larger board and through that to the denomination.^{xxxiii} Obviously, this proposal would have done away with trustees of Stetson and of the Orphanage.

C.W. Duke argued strenuously against the proposal, focusing upon three issues. First, he denied that such a plan would promote efficiency. Second, he argued that the election of trustees by associations, rather than by the State Convention, would widen the gulf between the State Convention and its agencies and institutions. He contended it would hide the committees behind a "board" fence and create a hierarchy. Finally, Duke argued that the proposed plan would be an experiment and that Florida Baptists were not yet strong enough to experiment.^{xxxiv}

Rogers tactfully pointed out that the proposed plan was not really very different from the plan under which Florida Baptists were already operating.^{xxxv} Rogers had a point, but apparently the State Convention was not willing to make such broad changes in administrative structure as the Rogers unit system plan proposed. Even so, many of his suggestions which were carried out by the State Board and the State Convention greatly improved the administrative efficiency with which Florida Baptists did their work.^{xxxvi} Because of the improved administrative and economic procedures, the State Board was able, despite frequent economic difficulties, to accomplish many things which would otherwise have been impossible.

Toward the end of this period, the new hope which developed in the convention generally was reflected when in 1918 the State Board began authorizing payment of expenses of Board members to attend State Board meetings. In exchange, the Board members were then required to stay until the end of each meeting.^{xxxvii} Also, the earlier skepticism of the enlistment-efficiency (stewardship) move disappeared, for in 1919 three stewardship enlistment staff persons were employed as directed by the State Convention.^{xxxviii} **[NARRATIVE PAGE JUMP]**

CHAPTER FIVE

GROWTH, RECESSION, AND THE BEGINNING OF RECOVERY: 1921-1940

Although between 1921 and 1940 Florida Baptists faced some of the same frustrations they had faced before, they also faced some new challenges, and in retrospect it seems clear that they were better organized, and the resources they needed to meet the crises were provided in most instances.

It was a period of growth and change, with great increase in population, industry, and wealth resulting in the growth of cities. Migration from rural areas to the cities, which accelerated during this period, marked the beginning of the transition from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban state. Between 1920 and 1940 the total population almost doubled, growing from 968,470 to 1,897,414. The greatest increase came between 1920 and 1930 with 51.6 percent. Between 1930 and 1940, when the effects of the Depression were felt, growth slowed to 29.2 percent. The 1929 Depression was, of course, the greatest crisis not only for the state but for Florida Baptists as well. However, they had known economic difficulties before, and despite the fact that they were plagued often with various financial crises throughout this period, they enjoyed remarkable growth in many ways. For example, the editors of the *Witness* pointed out in 1921 that although Florida Baptists were few compared to other Southern Baptists they were in a strong position compared to other denominations in Florida, claiming more than one third of the State's religious population. Of a total denominational estimate of 324,856 in 1921 there were 24,650 Catholics, 114,821 Methodists, and 134,429 Baptists.^{xxxix} Moreover, during this period some of the largest church buildings in the state were erected by Florida Baptists, and Sunday School attendance records were set which made all previous statistics seem insignificant. Cooperative Program gifts in 1920-1921 were \$184,429, and reached a high for this period in 1925-1926, when the total reached \$204,366. By 1933, reflecting the effects of the Depression, gifts reached the lowest level in many years with a total of \$63,661. By 1940, however, the churches were recovering from the financial crisis, and they gave \$137,079 that year.^{xl} In 1921 there were 751 churches with a total membership of 155,965. The larger increase in membership than in total number of churches reflects the phenomenal growth in membership enjoyed by some city churches and the rural-urban migration process mentioned above. Florida was fourth in the United States in per capita wealth, and awareness of this wealth probably contributed to an attitude of optimism even among many Florida Baptists who did not share in the wealth. They had hope for the future of Florida and for Florida Baptists. For example,

editor Mitchell wrote in the *Witness* in 1922: "Certainly this is the greatest day from a religious point of view that this world has ever seen."^{xli}

TWO MORE BAPTIST GOVERNORS:

CARY HARDEE (1921-1925) AND DOYLE E. CARLTON, SR. (1929-1933)

It was a time when Florida Baptists produced two more governors, Cary A. Hardee and Doyle E. Carlton, Sr. Governor Hardee was a Baptist deacon and a native of Taylor County. He had only a public school education and experience as a rural school teacher (a college education was not always necessary in those days) before he studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1898. From 1905 to 1913, he served as state attorney in the 3rd judicial district and as a representative from Suwanee County in the 1915 and 1917 Legislatures. He was elected Speaker of the House in both sessions.

During 1917 he announced his plans to run for governor in 1920. One of the contestants in this race was another Baptist, Lincoln Hulley, president of Stetson University, but Hardee, campaigning on a platform of economy, won easily. Among his achievements were (1) passing a law requiring dipping of cattle, a program to eliminate ticks which began a movement to improve the livestock of the state, (2) abolishing the convict leasing system and replacing it with state supervision of prisoners, (3) passing a constitutional amendment prohibiting state income tax, (4) passing by the legislature a gasoline tax for construction of paved roads, and (5) restoring honesty in government, according to William Scruggs of Monticello.

The next major contribution of Florida Baptists to the public life was the sending of the first native-born Baptist governor, Doyle E. Carlton (1929-1933), to the state capitol. Carlton was a native of Wauchula, and he remembered his father tell of the death of his grandfather at the hands of the Seminole Indians. (His grandfather was wounded in the same battle at Ft. Meade.) Carlton was educated in law at Stetson, the University of Chicago, and Columbia University and, while gaining a good reputation with a prominent Tampa law firm, served in the state Senate in 1917-1918. In 1928 he ran for Governor and won. Taking office in January 1929, he faced an economic situation without parallel. Florida actually felt the beginnings of economic difficulties earlier than 1929 and, though Florida appears to have suffered less on the whole than some other Southern states, the economic setbacks were enough to bring criticism on Governor Carlton. It was apparent to most historians that Carlton could not be blamed. Indeed, he tried to get the Legislature to enact several measures to help the economic situation. The Legislature became so embroiled in debate over race horse gambling and a tax on gasoline that other problems were not touched by the time the Legislature adjourned. Thus, Carlton called them back into session for 20 more days, trying to accomplish something constructive. Despite all his efforts, however,

his administration came to an end with the state heavily in debt. He continued to make significant contributions to his church, his community, the Florida Baptist Children's Home and Stetson University for many years after his service as governor.

THE CONVENTION: PROBLEMS AND RESPONSE

While it is always risky and potentially misleading to generalize about the character of the Convention, it would appear that the character of the Convention changed in many ways during this period. The nature of these changes is difficult to define, but three illustrations may be helpful. For one example, in 1921, in contrast to earlier action, the Convention modified a resolution condemning inter-collegiate athletics so that it condemned only the gambling associated with them.^{xliii} Second, the Convention gave more generously to Stetson than ever before and, though it was tempted again, it refused to repeat the educational tragedy of the preceding era.^{xliii} Third, as the migration to the cities accelerated the process of urbanization and the growth of city churches, leadership of the Convention increasingly gravitated to the cities. The Convention focused its eyes quite naturally on the growing cities, for there was where the greatest needs were. Finally, the Convention came to include a wider variety of leadership with ten different presidents in twenty years. The executive secretary-treasurer never served as president. S.B. Rogers had suggested that change early in his administration. In short, the Convention became more sensitive to the changing times and the resources available.

The Convention of course faced some of the same problems it had known before. Perhaps the greatest was the economic problem, aggravated in this period by hurricanes, by growth in size more than in economic resources, but most of all by the Great Depression of 1929. From the comments in the *Witness* it appeared that the immediate effects of the stock market crash of 1929 were very slight on most Florida Baptists. Its effects became more noticeable in the 1930's. The editor of the *Witness* argued that the real poverty of the land was not economic but spiritual.^{xliv} Whether the Depression was the cause or merely a contributing factor is not clear, but there was considerable unrest, especially in the city churches. W.L.C. Mahon observed in 1931 that the Depression appeared to be lifting in the rural areas, but getting worse in the cities where there was more hunger and unemployment.^{xlv} Remarkably, between 1921 and 1929 the number of churches reported increased from 751 to 908. But by the end of 1930 the number declined to 751, and church membership was 115,705, a considerable increase over the 61,200 members reported in 1921. Apparently some rural churches closed while many city churches grew.

It appears that the Depression had two quite different effects on the churches. In some cases it had a debilitating effect, creating or increasing tensions. In other cases it brought people into the

churches and brought church members closer together. A graphic example of the latter effect was provided in an interview with W.P. Brooks, who was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Sanford for 32 years beginning during the Depression. He was asked which years of his long ministry in Sanford were the best years. Without a moment's hesitation, Brooks replied that the Depression years were the best. When asked whether or not this was because Sanford escaped economic disaster, he said, "No." Then he described the exodus of people from the town and from the church because of the economic stress, and reported that people even tore down houses to avoid or lower taxes. Why, then, were they his best years? He answered that the people who were left were all poor, humble, more sensitive to each other's needs, and more open to the gospel.^{xlvi} Indeed, it appears that despite tensions that were intensified by the Depression, the overall effect on the Convention was similar to effects Brooks saw on the Sanford church.

There was considerable desire for unity. The Convention could never have accomplished what it did without a spirit of unity. The Convention not only paid its pledge on the Seventy-five Million Campaign, but it showed gains in giving when other state conventions did not.^{xlvii} In addition, the Convention contributed heavily to the One Hundred Thousand Club of the Southern Baptist Convention, a plan which sought to enlist 100,000 persons who would give a dollar a month above their regular gifts so that debts of the Convention could be liquidated.^{xlviii} Between 1933 and 1943 Florida Baptists gave more than \$150,000 through this program.^{xlix} Considering the fact that many churches were in debt on buildings recently constructed and that some lost buildings, Florida Baptists indeed made amazing progress. Also, and again despite economic problems, many Florida Baptists continued to rise in social status.

The pastor's conference continued through the 1930's with much the same type programs with which it began. In 1938, the last year the pastor's conference program was published in the *Convention Annual*. The conference featured lectures and discussions on such topics as "Building and Beautifying our Public Worship." W.G. Stracener, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Madison, read a paper on "The Sacrament of Silence."¹ Finally, the Convention produced more foreign missionaries during this period than ever before. In 1930, the list of foreign missionaries from Florida included 14 persons: Mr. and Mrs. William Enete in Brazil; Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Moore in Chile; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Fowler in Argentina; Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Terry in Brazil; Mr. and Mrs. Martin S. Blair in Argentina; Mr. and Mrs. Chester Brand in Mexico; Mary Walters in Japan; and Alberta Lee Davis in Argentina.^{li}

*THE STATE BOARD, ROGERS, AND BRITAIN:
GROWTH AND HARD TIMES*

At the beginning of this period Florida Baptists in general and the State Board in particular were still enjoying the wise and able leadership of S.B. Rogers. Looking back over the past forty years of the Board's existence, Rogers observed in 1922 that whereas in 1880 the Convention had employed two missionaries and had an income of \$150, that in 1921 the Board employed 102 persons, received \$204,770 for all causes, and reported 12,645 additions to the churches. In 1921 there were 826 Woman's Missionary Union Societies and auxiliaries, 111 Baptist Young People's Unions, and 428 Sunday Schools with an average attendance of 42,933.^{lii}

One of the first concerns of Rogers and the Board was for the payment of Florida's part in the Southern Baptist Convention's Seventy-five Million Campaign.^{liii} Rogers reminded Florida Baptists in 1923 of the deficits facing both the Home and Foreign Mission Boards and of the significance of the campaign for erasing those deficits.^{liv} Florida Baptists responded generously, and by the end of 1923 Rogers was able to report that their quota of \$1,300,000 was only \$203,651.47 short of completion.^{lv} By the end of 1924 Florida Baptists had completed their part in the campaign.^{lvi} In the Southern Baptist Convention as a whole, in contrast, the Seventy-five Million Campaign was a failure.

It was out of the failure of the Southern Baptist Convention's Seventy-five Million Campaign to erase the Southern Baptist Convention's deficit that the Cooperative Program was developed, involving a budgeted and percentage distribution of income received to various Convention causes.^{lvii} E.D. Solomon, editor of the *Witness*, traced the idea of the Cooperative Program to M.E. Dodd, who was named chairman of a Southern Baptist Convention committee, to fix amounts for each board and institution to receive from the Seventy-five Million Campaign. In 1923 Solomon, then state secretary of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, was asked to help Dodd on the committee. Solomon later reported that he and Dodd introduced the idea of percentages. If the whole amount was raised each board or institution would get what it requested. If not, then each one would get a percentage. The Southern Baptist Convention adopted the plan in Atlanta in 1924.^{lviii} Many were not satisfied with the plan, however, and, according to Solomon, that is why the Southern Baptist Convention went in debt.^{lix} Apparently, Rogers was sold on the plan, however, and he convinced Florida Baptists of its wisdom. While other state conventions faltered and failed in their part of the campaign, thus increasing the Southern Baptist Convention deficit, Florida Baptists were among the first and the few to complete their pledges.

A second object of concern for Rogers and the Board during this period was for the erection of a building to house the denominational offices. Rogers conceived the idea of constructing a building larger than needed immediately, planning to rent the unused portion to provide revenue for payments on the building and thus providing for future growth. The Board approved the plan and created the Florida Baptist Building Corporation, which in turn had plans drawn up for the building construction, financing and rentals. The financial plan was to sell bonds bearing interest at seven percent and maturing in from two to ten years.^{lx} The building corporation anticipated rentals amounting to \$21,892 per year.^{lxi} In 1924 the building was completed as planned. Unfortunately, however, the revenue received from rentals in the next few years fell short of expectations, partly because of the Depression, and the State Board found itself plagued with debt and pressured by the bank.^{lxii} It must have saddened Rogers, who was a good businessman and administrator, to leave the office at the end of 1925 with the debt unpaid and the pressures mounting. Though negotiations and progress made it possible to keep the building, the debt was not to be retired during the lifetime of Rogers, who died in 1926, or during this period. In 1932 the building was named the Rogers Building in his memory.^{lxiii}

A third concern of Rogers during the last years of his administration was the creation of a loan fund to help many churches to construct buildings. When he suggested that a centennial celebration be held in 1925, he hoped to raise \$100,000 to create such a fund.^{lxiv} He did not reach the goal, but raised \$12,353.52 during the year. Rogers was influential in gaining additional help from various sources for church construction projects. For example, in 1924 the family of A.R. Jones gave \$10,000 in his memory for the purpose of starting a building loan fund, and during the last year of Rogers' administration \$47,811.61 was spent aiding building programs. The total number of churches receiving such aid during his administration was 496.^{lxv}

Rogers understandably had mixed feelings about the boom in church building, because he observed in some cases that spending money on building enlargement created difficulties for the Board.^{lxvi} The Board report in 1925 indicated that at one time the deficit was as high as \$49,235.10. The situation improved somewhat the following year, but the report on foreign missions again suggested that the church building boom had also lowered gifts to foreign missions.^{lxvii} The report defended the building construction, however, observing that better equipped churches would ultimately give more to missions. In 1924 Rogers summarized the progress Florida Baptists had made in the past 15 years. Among the items he mentioned were \$227,824 given for foreign missions, \$219,465 for home missions and \$282,645 for Christian education. Value of church property had increased from \$705,371 to

\$14,002,872, an increase of 567 percent. Total church membership had grown from 37,027 to 77,846, a net increase of 210 percent.^{lxxviii}

In 1926 Rogers resigned his position because of ill health. On December 8, 1926, Dr. Charles M. Brittain was elected executive secretary-treasurer. Having served as assistant secretary for six years before assuming the top office, he knew the problems of the Convention and gave good leadership. Immediately, he faced a new economic crisis affecting many areas because of a devastating hurricane earlier in the year which had destroyed many churches in the Miami area and created economic disaster in many other communities.^{lxxix} In 1928 another hurricane struck, this time in the West Palm Beach area, killing 2500 people and inflicting property loss estimated at \$75 million.^{lxxx} Churches in other areas gave much to help the hurricane victims, but even while help was still being sought to meet the needs constantly confronting the State Board, the greatest blow of all came: the stock market crash of 1929. The Board had already had to borrow money to meet obligations.^{lxxxi} Then it was forced to cut its work back further. In 1930 the budget was \$61,736, the smallest in many years.^{lxxxii} Early in 1931 the State Board sent out letters asking advice on how to cut back. The executive committee met monthly,^{lxxxiii} seeking solutions to the financial crisis. At the March Board meeting, President Hulley offered to return half of the money sent to Stetson University in order to help out in the emergency with the understanding that the old percentage would be restored at the December meeting. The Board accepted the offer and gave Hulley a rising vote of thanks.^{lxxxiv} Apparently the Board's efforts to cut back were not satisfactory to some, for in 1932 a resolution from the First Baptist Church of Orlando complained that the Convention had not adjusted sufficiently to the changing situation and suggested reduction of both staff and salaries. The resolution was referred to a committee,^{lxxxv} and no further action was taken at the Convention. However, when the recommended budget of \$100,000 was presented to the State Board at its January 1933, meeting, it was reduced drastically to \$53,249. Even that reduction was insufficient to some.^{lxxxvi} By such severe reduction in planned expenditures, the Board stayed in control of its debts and did not lose its enthusiasm for planning for better things to come.

Considering the situation, it is amazing that in 1933 the Board reported that Florida was the only state to increase in gifts to missions in 1932.^{lxxxvii} Also, the Board continued to enlarge its staff as the economic situation eased somewhat toward the end of the 1930's; the Board responded to every genuine need its resources would allow.

One of the last needs engaging the Board's attention was the need for a hospital, and the Board responded by appointing a hospital commission.^{lxxxviii}

Another need to which the Board responded favorably was the request of the First Baptist Church of DeLand for help in its building program so that the church might accommodate the increasing numbers of Baptist students attending Stetson University. In January 1931, the Board promised \$5,000 for each of the following five years.^{lxxix}

Finally, in 1939, the Board and the State Convention voted to cooperate with the newly developed Southern Baptist Convention Ministers' Retirement Plan. It was a joint plan involving ministers, churches, and the Florida Baptist Convention, Inc. Under this plan, each entity contributed to a pastor's retirement annuity by the following formula: If the minister contributed 3 per cent of his salary, to be matched by the local church, 3 cent, and the Convention corporation of the State Board, 2 per cent. The plan adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention made possible some assistance to older ministers who had not been in the plan. (It was clear that those ministers who had not been on the plan would receive some help, but those putting money in would receive more.) Others would receive what they put in with interest.^{lxxx} In 1939, 211 Florida pastors and 233 churches were participating in the plan.^{lxxxii}

By 1940 the budget of the Florida Baptist Convention, Inc., was \$100,483, which was above what had been rejected a few years earlier, but the debt also was larger. The Board began the year with a deficit of \$6,393 from the preceding year, and between January and May 1940, an additional deficit of \$6,122 had accumulated.^{lxxxiii} On May 9, because of the debt, the Board's executive committee voted to cut salaries of Florida Baptist Convention employees 10 percent and to raise the percentage of Cooperative Program receipts to be kept for state missions to 65 per cent from 55 per cent. This meant Southern Baptist Convention causes would receive only 35 percent instead of 45 percent. To save money, full Board approval was sought and received by mail.^{lxxxiiii} Apparently, that move was not popular, because in September several Board members resigned.^{lxxxv} By December the financial situation looked better, and employee salaries were restored to their earlier level.^{lxxxvi}

[NARRATIVE PAGE JUMP]

- i.. E.H. Rennolds, "Religious Census of the Legislature," *Florida Baptist Witness*, Apr. 6, 1911, p. 10.
- ii.. Kenneth E. Crouch, "State Songs," unpublished manuscript, University of Virginia Library, 1970.
- iii..Vol. IX, p. 542.
- iv.. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1903, p. 30.
- v.. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- vi.. *Ibid.*, 1905, p. 31.
- vii..L.B. Warren, "Florida's First Missionary," *Southern Baptist Witness*, August 4, 1904, p. 6.
- viii.. Hubert O. Hurt, *A History of Florida Baptist Language*

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- Congregations*. Monograph published by the Florida Baptist Historical Society, 1988, p. 1.
- ix.. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1913, pp. 56-59.
- x.. *Ibid.*, 1914, p. 50.
- xi.. Lassiter, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- xii.. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1916, p. 20.
- xiii.. *Ibid.*, 1920, pp. 9, 17-19.
- xiv.. *Ibid.*, 1903, pp. 6-7.
- xv.. *Ibid.*, 1906, pp. 6-7.
- xvi.. "Campbellite" is a term that referred to a follower of Alexander Campbell who was, for a time, Baptist. But Campbell founded a new denomination, the Disciples of Christ. Although they stress baptism as Baptists do, they believe that baptism is a necessary part of salvation. Here Baptists disagree.
- xvii.. *Florida Baptist Witness*, Apr. 29, 1909, pp. 2-3.
- xviii.. Editorial by L.D. Geiger, *Florida Baptist Witness*, June 27, 1905.
- xix.. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1901, p. 29.
- xx.. Editorial, "Ministerial Education," *Florida Baptist Witness*, Mar. 10, 1904.
- xxi.. *Florida Baptist Witness*, Nov. 15, 1903. Column on "Missions" by L.D. Geiger.
- xxii.. Editorial, *The Southern Witness* (temporary varied name for *Florida Baptist Witness*) Jan. 24, 1907.
- xxiii.. State Board, *Minutes*, Aug. 1, 1906.
- xxiv.. *Ibid.* Apr. 11, 1907.
- xxv.. *Florida Baptist Witness*, Apr. 29, 1909, pp. 2-3.
- xxvi.. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*. 1926. pp. 21-24.
- xxvii.. *Ibid.*, 1910, pp. 17-18.
- xxviii.. *Ibid.*, 1914, p. 18.
- xxix.. Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 177; cf. also Barnes, Chap. XI.
- xxx.. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1914, pp. 25-26.
- xxxi.. W.A. Hobson, "Baptist Efficiency," *Florida Baptist Witness*, Feb. 4, 1915.
- xxxii.. S.B. Rogers, "Efficiency in the Country," *Florida Baptist Witness*, Apr. 29, 1915.
- xxxiii.. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1916, pp. 44-45. The minutes show that G.W. Schofield introduced a resolution in which he suggested a committee to study the unit plan of State Board organization in order to promote more efficient administration.
- xxxiv.. C.W. Duke, "The Unit System for Florida," *Florida Baptist Witness*, Nov. 7, 1916, p. 6. Cf. W.A. Hobson, "The Unit System in Florida," *Florida Baptist Witness*, Dec. 7, 1916. Hobson essentially agreed with Duke, adding that the unit system would involve a dangerous centralization of power. He further argued for changing the charter, which he agreed actually supported the unit system as Dr. Rogers suggested.
- xxxv.. *Florida Baptist Witness*, Nov. 16, 1916, p. 4.
- xxxvi.. State Board, *Minutes*, Feb. 5, 1918.
- xxxvii.. *Ibid.*

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- xxxviii..*Ibid.*, Jan. 16, 1919.
- xxxix.*Florida Baptist Witness*, July 28, 1921, p. 10.
- xl. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1944, p. 150.
- xli. *Florida Baptist Witness*, Mar. 16, 1922, p. 2.
- xlii. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1921, pp. 13 ff.
- xliii. It refused to start an additional college that it could not support. This matter will be discussed in a later section.
- xliv.*Florida Baptist Witness*, Jan. 29, 1931, p. 6.
- xlv. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1931, p. 24.
- xlvi. Interview, Aug. 16, 1967.
- xlvii.Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1932, p. 17.
- xlviii.Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 232; Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1934, p. 6.
- xlix. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1944, p. 150.
- l.*Ibid.*, 1938, p. 6.
- li. *Florida Baptist Witness*, Mar. 27, 1930, front page.
- lii. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1922, pp. 2-3.
- liii. State Board, *Minutes*, Jan. 11, 1921.
- liv. *Ibid.*, Apr. 25, 1923.
- lv. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1923-24, p. 20.
- lvi. *Ibid.*, 1924, p. 12.
- lvii. Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 230.
- lviii.*Florida Baptist Witness*, May 31, 1945, p. 4.
- lix. *Ibid.*
- lx. *Ibid.*, Aug. 9, 1923.
- lxi. Florida Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1924, p. 87.
- lxii. *Ibid.*, 1928, p. 26.

lxiii. *Florida Baptist Witness*, Feb. 18, 1932, front page.

lxiv. The centennial celebration took place on March 12, 1925. Rogers prepared a brief history to commemorate the event. At the Convention the next fall, he called for the writing and publication of a more complete history, and the Convention ordered that some person be appointed to do it. *Florida Baptist Convention, Annual, 1925*, p. 45. Apparently no one was immediately available to carry out the Convention's order.

lxv. Rosser, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

lxvi. *Florida Baptist Convention, Annual, 1925*, p. 15.

lxvii. *Ibid.*, 1926, p. 42.

lxviii. *Ibid.*, 1924, p. 37.

lxix. *Ibid.*, 1926, p. 45.

lxx. Rosser, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

lxxi. State Board, *Minutes*, May 27, 1929.

lxxii. *Ibid.*, Feb. 3, 1931.

lxxiii. *Ibid.*

lxxiv. *Ibid.*, Mar. 24, 1931.

lxxv. *Florida Baptist Convention, Annual, 1932*, pp. 10-12.

lxxvi. State Board, *Minutes*, Jan. 10-11, 1933.

lxxvii. *Florida Baptist Convention, Annual, 1933*, p. 17.

lxxviii. State Board, *Minutes*, Jan. 23-24, 1939.

lxxix. *Ibid.*

lxxx. *Florida Baptist Convention, Annual, 1939*, pp. 28-31.

lxxxii. *Ibid.*

lxxxiii. State Board, *Minutes*, May 9, 1940.

lxxxiiii. *Ibid.*

lxxxv. *Ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1940.

lxxxvi. *Ibid.*, Dec. 3, 1940.

Stuart Beggs Rogers
1909 – 1926

Corresponding Secretary - Treasurer
Florida Baptist Convention

Rogers, Stuart Beggs (b. near Macon, Ga., Sept. 18, 1866; d. Atlanta, Ga., Aug. 16, 1926). Denominational leader. He attended local schools and studied at Mercer University and at the University of Chicago. In 1896 he married Daisy Walker and moved to the pastorate of the Baptist church in Marianna, Fla.

After successful pastorates at Marianna, Chipley, and Gainesville, Fla., he was elected president of the Florida Baptist State Convention in 1904.

On Apr. 29, 1909, following the death of L. D. Geiger (*q.v.*), he was elected corresponding secretary and treasurer of the Florida Baptist State Board of Missions. During this period, Feb., 1921, he was elected a trustee of John B. Stetson University.

Because Rogers was an able administrator, the work of the State Board of Missions was expanded. The Convention built a headquarters building in Jacksonville and named it the Rogers Building in his honor. He faced the difficult period of World War I, the collapse of Columbia College in 1918, and debt which was finally liquidated.

In 1925 Rogers published a brief history of Florida Baptists, for the centennial celebration of the establishment of the first Baptist church in Florida.

S. B. Rogers: 1909 – 1926

(born near Macon, Ga., Sept. 18, 1866; died Atlanta, Ga., Aug. 16, 1926). Stuart Beggs Rogers took the helm as executive secretary of the State Board of Missions just as the effects of the 1908 drought began to place a severe financial strain on the churches that ultimately resulted in less mission dollars being given. Rogers instituted management efficiencies to make the Convention live within its resources.

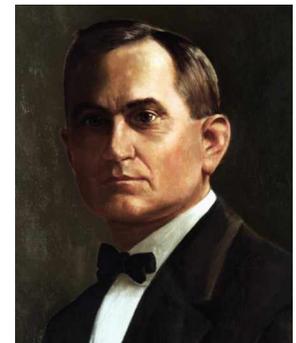
Earlier in 1907, the State Convention had opened its own institution of higher learning, Columbia College. Pledge commitments to financially underwrite the school never materialized which resulted in the college having to close in 1918 and the Convention assumed \$50,000 in debt. To address the sluggish missions giving and the heavy debt, Rogers developed a unified missions' funding plan. The effort proved successful, as the Convention's debt was finally paid off. As the Convention's income improved, Rogers led the Convention to build its first office building in Jacksonville. He started, in cooperation with the WMU auxiliary, an annual offering for state missions which focused upon Florida's mission needs.

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.

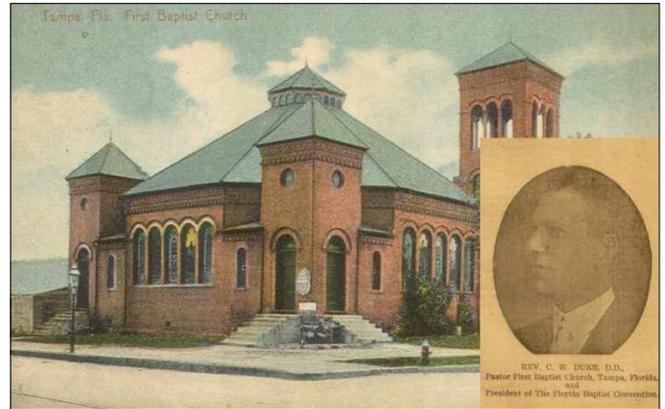
Rogers' denominational role took another turn as a result of the untimely death of L.D. Geiger on April 20, 1909, who was the State Board of Missions' Corresponding Secretary (now called Executive Director-Treasurer). S. B. Rogers' leadership skills and knowledge of the denomination's operation was immediately 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.