

Feb. 4, 1896; son of Kate Ella Gould of Shubuta, Miss., and Rev. Green Berry Rogers of Woodville, Miss.; education, A.B., Baylor University and 3 yrs., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; ordained, First Baptist Church, Waco, Tex., May 22, 1921; married Mildred Coit of Renner, Tex., June 19, 1921, daughter of Florrie Routh and Henry William Coit; children, Florence Katherine, James Leslie and Mildred Louise; pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Sioux Falls, S. Dak., 3 years; pastor, Baileyville Baptist Church, Baileyville, Tex., 2 years; pastor, Morgan and Kopperl, Tex., 2 years; pastor, First Baptist Church, Vinton, La., 7 years; pastor, First Baptist Church, Orange, Tex., 1935 to date; president, Lake Arthur Baptist Encampment, Lake Arthur, La., 2 years; clerk, Carey Baptist Association, Louisiana, 1 year; 1st Lieut., U. S. Army, World War, 1917-1918; president, student body, Baylor University, 1921. Home: 207 Seventh St., Orange, Tex.; office: Box 378, Orange, Tex.

ROGERS, WALLACE ROLAND

Pastor, First Church, Hope, Ark., born, Knoxville, Tenn., June 19, 1900; son of Lucy Gray Leek and Luther Gideon Rogers of Knoxville, Tenn.; education, A.B., A.M., Univ., Tenn.; Th.M., Sou. Sem.; ordained, Sept., 1927; married Mary Alline Westmoreland of Booneville, Ark., Jan. 31, 1932, daughter of Elizabeth and Ed. Westmoreland; children, Jane Elizabeth; pastor, Beech Grove Ky., 2 yrs.; First Ch., Booneville, Ark., 18 months; First Ch., Hope, Ark., since July 1, 1932; Denominational; Chmn., Exec. comm. Concord Assn., Ark., 1931; member, Ark., State Conv., Exec. Bd., since Jan., 1934; Mason. Home address: N. Washington and Old Fulton Highway, Hope, Ark.

ROPER, WILLIAM ALLEN

Pastor, Meridian, Miss.; born, Bladen Springs, Ala., July 3, 1867; son of Alice Corley and Franklin Asberry Roper, Alabama; education, Mississippi College and South-

ern Baptist Theological Seminary, receiving A.B., Th.B. and D.D. degrees; ordained March 18, 1888; married Mattie Lyon of Heidelberg, Miss., March 15, 1888, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Lyon; children, C. A., Hazelhurst, Miss., Mrs. J. S. Nobles and Avie Rowe Roper (deceased); pastor, Clark, Jasper, Jones and Forest, until 1903; pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss., 4 years; pastor, Highland Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss., 1 year; pastor, First Baptist Church, Biloxi, Miss., 2 years; pastor, Kosciusko First Baptist Church, Kosciusko, Miss., 9 years; pastor, Wynne, Ark., 3½ years; pastor, Tylertown, Miss., 9 years; Crystal Springs Baptist Church, Walthall County, Miss., and Samaria and McCool, Attala County, Miss.; pastor, Lawrenceberg, Ind.; State Mis. Board, Arkansas and Mississippi; trustee, Mississippi Baptist Woman's College; moderator, Kosciusko, 6 years; clerk, Wathall County Association, 3 years; clerk, Lauderdale Co. Assn., 3 years. Address: 1709-36 Ave., Meridian, Miss.

ROSSER, JOHN LEONIDAS

Pastor, Riverside Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; born Campbell County, Va.; education, public schs., A.B., Roanoke Col., Salem, Va.; Th. M., Southern Baptist Theol Sem., Louisville, Ky., 1903, honorary degree D. D., Roanoke Col., 1920; married Evelyn Craig, Selma, Ala., 1909; work; pastor, Memor. Bapt. Ch., Hampton, Va.; 2 yrs.; assistant pastor, Grove Ave. Ch., Richmond, Va.; First Bapt. Ch. Selma, Ala.; First Bapt. Ch., Bristol, Va.; pastor, Riverside Bapt. Ch., Jacksonville, Fla.; denominational; President, Bapt. General Assn. of Va.; 1927; member of many boards of trustees; member State Bd. of Missions of Fla. Bapt. Con., and of the Exec. Committee of that Board; work for the Baptist Sunday School Board; author: "Paul the Preacher," 1916; "Our Southern Quintette and other Poems. Address: Riverside Bapt. Ch., Jacksonville, Fla.

ern Baptist Theological Seminary, receiving A.B., Th.B. and D.D. degrees; ordained March 18, 1888; married Mattie Lyon of Heidelberg, Miss., March 15, 1888, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Lyon; children, C. A., Hazelhurst, Miss., Mrs. J. S. Nobles and Avie Rowe Roper (deceased); pastor, Clark, Jasper, Jones and Forest, until 1903; pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss., 4 years; pastor, Highland Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss., 1 year; pastor, First Baptist Church, Biloxi, Miss., 2 years; pastor, Kosciusko First Baptist Church, Kosciusko, Miss., 9 years; pastor, Wynne, Ark., 3½ years; pastor, Tylertown, Miss., 9 years; Crystal Springs Baptist Church, Walthall County, Miss., and Samaria and McCool, Attala County, Miss.; pastor, Lawrenceberg, Ind.; State Mis. Board, Arkansas and Mississippi; trustee, Mississippi Baptist Woman's College; moderator, Kosciusko, 6 years; clerk, Wathall County Association, 3 years; clerk, Lauderdale Co. Assn., 3 years. Address: 1709-36 Ave., Meridian, Miss.

ROSSER, JOHN LEONIDAS

Pastor, Riverside Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; born Campbell County, Va.; education, public schs., A.B., Roanoke Col., Salem, Va.; Th. M., Southern Baptist Theol Sem., Louisville, Ky., 1903, honorary degree D. D., Roanoke Col., 1920; married Evelyn Craig, Selma, Ala., 1909; work; pastor, Memor. Bapt. Ch., Hampton, Va.; 2 yrs.; assistant pastor, Grove Ave. Ch., Richmond, Va.; First Bapt. Ch. Selma, Ala.; First Bapt. Ch., Bristol, Va.; pastor, Riverside Bapt. Ch., Jacksonville, Fla.; denominational; President, Bapt. General Assn. of Va.; 1927; member of many boards of trustees; member State Bd. of Missions of Fla. Bapt. Con., and of the Exec. Committee of that Board; work for the Baptist Sunday School Board; author: "Paul the Preacher," 1916; "Our Southern Quintette and other Poems. Address: Riverside Bapt. Ch., Jacksonville, Fla.

SOURCE:

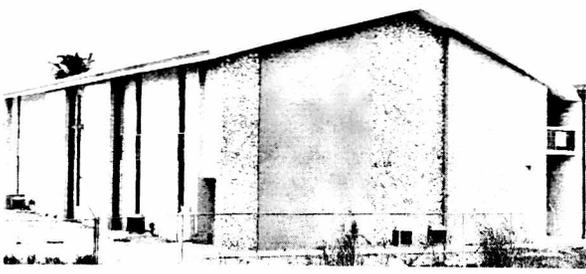
Among Southern Baptists, Vol. 1, 1936-37

By John S. Ramond, compiler, Shreveport, Louisiana, copyright 1936
Western Baptist Publishing Co., Kansas City, Missouri

each
orgia

Southwest Fla. Association
Elects Missions Leader

almes
pastor of
church,
Ga.
ast four
accept-
all from
church,
each to
pastor,
June 18.



Flagami Church, Miami Enters New Education Building

Flagami Church, Miami recently began using this new education building. These facilities, geared for ministry to 375 more adults, include a cafeteria, fellowship hall and adult education space. The building is completely carpeted and air-conditioned.

Pastor O. Charles Horton states the new building will serve the needs of the membership in many different kinds of functions. The church voted a \$275,000 bond issue to finance this project.

E. Milford Howell, director. Missions and Stewardship Department, Baptist Convention of Maryland since 1966, will become superintendent of missions in Southwest Florida Association August 1.



A native of Texas, Howell is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University and Southwestern Seminary. For 21 years Mr. and Mrs. Howell were missionaries in Nigeria, West Africa. He served as interim pastor of Crescent Park Church, Odessa, Texas for one year while on furlough and has held the following pastorates: First Church, Thackerville, Oklahoma; First Church, Meridian, Texas; and North Lake Church, Dallas, Texas.

er Sarah
ey have
nd Lee,

ching
Years

Robert E. Wacker Goes to Riverside Church, Miami

Riverside Church, Miami recently called Robert E. Wacker to serve as minister of evangelism. Emit O. Ray is the pastor.



A native of New Jersey, Wacker studied at Nyack Missionary College, the University of Oklahoma, San Diego State College and the University of San Marcos in Peru.

Mr. and Mrs. Wacker were missionaries with the Wycliffe Bible Translators in Peru for 20 years. Since January, 1971 he has served as interim minister of evangelism at Wayside Church, Miami.

The Wackers have four children, all grown: Debbie, Susan, Barry and Charles.

John L. Rosser, Former Florida Pastor, Dies

John L. Rosser, retired, died June 5 in Bristol, Va. Funeral services were held in the First Church, Bristol, where he was pastor emeritus.

Dr. Rosser was a former pastor of Riverside Church, Jacksonville and Ancient City Church, St. Augustine. While in St. Augustine, he wrote "A History of Florida Baptists," which was published in 1949. He retired from the active ministry in 1948.

Surviving are two sons, James C. Rosser, Bristol and Dr. George T. Rosser, Chapel Hill, N.C.; and a daughter, Mrs. Henry P. King, III, Bristol.

The Howells have three children: Mrs. Fred Posey, Paris, Texas; Daniel Andrew, 14; and William Wilson, 12.

Saint Andrew Church Calls Minister of Activities/Youth

Wayne Kimbrough of Jackson, Mississippi has been called as minister of activities and youth by Saint Andrew Church, Panama City. Bill Montgomery is the pastor.



A graduate of Mississippi College, Kimbrough attended New Orleans Seminary. For the past few years he has served as summer youth director in several churches.

associa-
ah Asso-
cheduled
He has
his asso-

Owens Joins Faculty of Luther Rice Seminary

B. Lezelle Owens has joined the faculty of Luther Rice Seminary, Jacksonville as Academic dean.

A native of Pensacola, Owens is a graduate of Stetson University and the New Orleans Seminary. While at the seminary he was a professor's aide and a graduate fellow.

Owens has served churches in Florida, Louisiana and Tennessee as both a staff member and pastor. His ministry includes a three-year pastorate at the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Mrs. Owens is the former Barbara Christoffers of Keystone Heights. They have three children: Kyle, 16; Erin, nine and Eric, seven.

25-Year Attendance Record

George Beasley of Central Church, Fort Myers received a 25-year pin and a 25-year wreath for perfect attendance in Sunday School. Conner Miles, his Sunday School teacher, presented the awards on June 4.

Jasper W. Smoak is the pastor.

Revival Report

Hope Church, Jacksonville, Evangelist Wade Clemons, 19 for baptism, 10 by letter. Ronnie E. Reid, pastor.

New Staff Member



David A. Wilson recently joined the staff of Murray Hill Church, Jacksonville as activities director. Hugh P. Garner is the pastor.

Wilson, of Ormond Beach, is a senior at Stetson University.

lage

William
ern Semi-
years a
now ad-
Baptist

ll Smith,
ble Insti-
available
service.



JOHN L. ROSSER:
FLORIDA BAPTISTS
FIRST OFFICIAL
HISTORIOGRAPHER

Mark A. Rathel
Associate Professor
The Baptist College of Florida

After nearly fifty years of discussing the need for a history of state Baptists, Florida Baptists published their first history, *A History of Florida Baptists*, in 1949. John L. Rosser, a Virginia native and retired St. Augustine pastor, wrote this officially authorized historical book.¹

History of Florida Baptist History

An understanding of the history of Florida Baptist history underscores the significance of Rosser's accomplishment. Rosser had few secondary sources available for his research; everyone who followed him depended on his work.

Early efforts to preserve, research, and write a history of Florida Baptists was the work of one man. E. H. Rennolds, Sr. served as convention appointed historical secretary from 1894-1912. In 1903, a special committee recommended the formation of a Florida Baptist Historical Society with the purpose of collecting materials, raising funds, and publishing a history of Florida Baptists. Upon the death of Rev. Rennolds, historical work within the Florida Baptist Convention died.

After the efforts of Rennolds, numerous parallels exist between the status of history, historical societies, and historical writings in the Southern Baptist Convention and the Florida Baptist Convention. During the 1920s the Southern Baptist Convention appointed a Committee on the Preservation of Baptist History. Floridian A. J. Holt served as chairman of the SBC committee and a member of a five-person Florida committee on Baptist history appointed after the SBC.

In March-April 1925 Florida Baptists observed five centennial celebrations in Campbellton, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, and Tampa. The emphasis celebrated the organization of the oldest continuous Baptist church associated with the Florida Baptist Convention, the First Baptist Church of Campbellton.² The centennial celebration prompted the writing of two brief historical sketches of Florida Baptists. Dr. Rufus Weaver, president of Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, delivered an historical address on Florida Baptist history at the Campbellton celebration.³ Executive-Secretary S. B. Rogers wrote a twenty-five page pamphlet *A Brief History of Florida Baptists 1825-1925: A Century of Service and Progress*.

In 1936 the SBC approved a resolution establishing a Committee on the Preservation of Baptist History. The Committee on the Preservation of Baptist History became the Southern Baptist Historical Society. C. M. Brittain, Florida Executive-Secretary, served as a member of the SBC committee. Through the influence of Brittain and Gordon Reeves⁴, research assistant in Baptist history at Stetson University, Florida Baptists established a Committee on Florida Baptist History in 1938. The Committee on Florida Baptist History constantly appealed to the Florida Baptist Convention for the formation of a historical society and the publication of a historical book. Upon the recommendation of the Committee, the Florida Baptist Convention authorized Executive-Secretary C. M. Brittain to write a history of Florida Baptists. Unfortunately, Brittain's health prevented him from completing the project. When Brittain died in 1943, the Florida Baptist Convention approved a motion from the Committee on Florida Baptist History that the State Board of Missions complete the work, and approved the suggestion of Gordon Reeves as author. In 1944, the State



Dr. John L. Rosser
Pastor, Ancient City Baptist Church
(1939-1948)

Board of Missions, however, chose John Rosser, chairperson of the Committee on Florida History over fellow committee member Gordon Reeves.⁵ In the same year, the Convention established a committee, chaired by John Rosser, to explore the possibility of a commemorative memorial at the location of the founding of the Florida Baptist Convention in 1854.

Rosser delivered his manuscript to the State Board of Missions, then to Broadman Press in 1948. Again, the parallels with the SBC are striking. Southwestern church historian, W. W. Barnes wrote the first published history of the

SBC through the centennial year 1945; Rosser wrote the history of Florida through 1946.⁶ After completion of the manuscript on Florida Baptists, Rosser retired and returned to his native Virginia. In his absence, the 1948 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual* contains a written personal report on *A History of Florida Baptists*. Rosser concluded his written report with the following words.

The author makes no claim to being a trained historian, and has perhaps violated accepted canons of historical writings; but Florida Baptists had to make a beginning on the long-desired and long-postponed project, and this volume is that beginning. It is believed that few factual errors will be found, and it is further believed that readers will learn more of Florida Baptist history than they have known before. I trust that the book will be cordially welcomed by our people and widely distributed. In the

light of what God has wrought through them in the past, Florida Baptists are justified in attempting for and expecting from God greater things in the future.⁷

After the publication of Rosser's book, Florida Baptist historical work continued the parallels to developments within the SBC. In 1947 the SBC recognized the Southern Baptist Historical Society as its official historical agency by turning the Society into the Historical Commission.⁸ Florida Baptists followed the SBC lead when the Convention adopted a motion by Stetson Professor, Pope Duncan, that set in motion a process that resulted in the creation of the Florida Baptist Historical Society (FBHS) as a convention entity. In the same year that the SBC adopted *A Covenant for a New Century*, a plan for structural reorganization, which dissolved the convention historical agency, Florida Baptists dissolved the FBHS as a convention entity. In 1995 Jesse Fletcher authored the sesquicentennial history of the Southern Baptist Convention; in 1997 Earl Joiner delivered a revised manuscript of his 1972 *A History of Florida Baptists* to Convention personnel. The Florida Baptist Convention plans to release Joiner's revision in 2004, including updates since 1997, as the sesquicentennial history of Florida Baptists.

Rosser's contributions to Florida Baptist history are significant. Other than a twenty-five page pamphlet by Executive Secretary S. B. Rogers, Rosser worked totally with primary sources. He corrected a common misunderstanding about the origins of Florida Baptists, and thereby, traveled where angels fear to tread. All researchers into Florida Baptist history after 1948 stand on the shoulders of John L. Rosser.⁹

John Leonidas Rosser: Pastor, Teacher, Writer

John L. Rosser¹⁰ was born to a farm family in Campbell County, Rustburg, Virginia, on December 1, 1875. John was the third of five siblings. Rosser was spiritually born again as a nineteen-year-old college student and received baptism in September 1896.

Rosser graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, a college affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran

Church in America, in 1897. Roanoke College granted Rosser an honorary doctorate in 1921. He earned a Master of Theology degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. While a student at Southern Seminary, the McFerren Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, ordained Rosser to the gospel ministry in July 1901.

Rosser served five churches as pastor: Memorial Baptist Church in Hampton, Virginia (1903-1905); First Baptist Church in Selma, Alabama (1906-1913); First Baptist Church in Bristol, Virginia (1913-1932); Riverside Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida (1932-1938); and Ancient City Baptist Church in St. Augustine, Florida (1938-1948).¹¹

While Rosser served as pastor at Selma, he married Evelyn C. Craig in November 1909. John and Evelyn had five children, four sons and one daughter. Evelyn was an effective servant in her own right. In Florida, Evelyn served as the state stewardship chairperson of the Hundred Thousand Club and the Centennial Fund, fund raising attempts to help eliminate SBC debt. She also served on a committee that attempted to raise one million dollars for Stetson University. From 1943 to 1948, Evelyn served as President of the Florida Women's Missionary Union.¹²



Church members at Ancient City Baptist Church during Dr. Rosser's pastorate. (Seated *l-rt*) Elsie Priester, Mrs. James E. Creech, Dr. Rosser, Mike Gaines, Mrs. A. W. Strickland, Mrs. W. G. Braddock, Mrs. J. A. Sapp. (Standing, *l-rt*) Mrs. A. W. Farrow, Mrs. F. A. Morgan, Mrs. W. F. Cox, Mrs. Marjorie (Mike) Gaines, Mrs. J. L. Grubbs, Mrs. W. J. Preister, Mrs. F. S. Matheson, Mrs. W. D. Truett, Mrs. Rosalie Crutchfield, Mrs. C. E. Russell, Mrs. W. S. Middleton, Mrs. T. M. Gibbs, Mrs. Lika Griffen, Mrs. J. B. Kitchens.

John Rosser actively served Southern Baptists at the associational, state convention, and Southern Baptist Convention level. He served as a trustee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary on the national level. In Virginia, he served as Vice-President and President of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, a member of the Virginia Board of Missions and Education, and a trustee at the following Virginia Baptist agencies: Virginia Baptist Hospital, Virginia Intermont College, and Bluefield College. In Florida, Rosser served as a member of the State Board of Missions, chairman of the Committee on Florida Baptist History, and chairman of the Memorial Committee. The St. Johns River Baptist Association elected Rosser as moderator.

In addition to *A History of Florida Baptists*, Rosser wrote two books, several tracts, and hymns. He published a collection of his poems, *Our Southern Quintette and Other Poems* in 1908. In 1906 he published *Paul the Preacher*, a 106-page analysis of Paul's sermons in Acts. He authored the following tracts: *It is Wrong*, *Ridgecrest*, and *A Personal Evaluation*. While he served as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Selma, Alabama, Rosser wrote the words for a hymn used in a dedicatory service for a new building.¹³ The hymn is included in the *Baptist Hymnal* 1956 edition as *Dedicatory Hymn*.

Rosser completed his active ministerial career when he retired from the Ancient City Baptist Church at the age of 73 in 1948. He moved to Bristol, Tennessee, and First Baptist Church of Bristol, Virginia, named Rosser Pastor Emeritus in honor of his twenty year ministry at the church.¹⁴ During his retirement, he preached as he had opportunity, taught a men's Bible class, and broadcast over radio teachings based on the International Sunday School Lesson every Sunday.

John Rosser died on June 5, 1972, at the age of 97. His wife, Evelyn, and two sons preceded him in death.¹⁵

A History of Florida Baptists

Nineteen chapters comprise Rosser's *A History of Florida Baptists*. The work includes the following appendices: historical tables, charter of the Florida Baptist State Convention, membership, and contributions by

decades. The book lacks an index and footnotes, small details that hinder researchers. For example, Rosser would have helped his successors if he stated in footnotes the location of his resources. The structure of the book is topical, yet chronological within chapters. For example, two chapters discuss in chronological order the progress of Florida Baptists under each of the Executive Secretaries up to the advent of John McGuire. Each chapter follows a similar format: religious setting in Florida, progress on the chapter topic, and interpretation by Rosser. For this researcher, Rosser's interpretative comments are priceless. In contrast, Earl Joiner's latter book by the same title narrated well the history of Florida Baptists, but his work lacked the interpretative analysis of Rosser, except when Joiner interpreted the relationship between Stetson and the Florida Convention.

Rosser's writing style is picturesque, gripping, and entertaining at times. He intersperses his narrative with prose. At times, Rosser quotes the famous poets of bygone eras, yet, at times, the prose appears to be original to Rosser. For example, he concludes his chapter on the early pioneer preachers in Florida with these words: In all enterprises there are foundation men, and those early Baptists belong to the class of founders. Their names are written in the book of life.

O God, to us may grace be given To follow in their train. ¹⁶

Rosser incorporated numerous poetic passages throughout his narrative without citing sources. Given Rosser's past publication of poetry, this researcher concludes that numerous prose passages are vintage Rosser.

The selection of topics reveals both biases and Florida Baptist failures up to 1946. Rosser devoted the greatest amount of space to education; three chapters in the book are devoted to the topic: early education efforts, Stetson, and Columbia College. The chapter on Stetson is the longest, nearly twice as long as the next longest chapter treating the Florida Baptist Children's Home. For the sake of price and length, Rosser, or the more likely, the Broadman editors, deleted a chapter on Florida Baptists Woman's Missionary Union.¹⁷ The chapter of Florida and Foreign Missions reveals the dearth of Florida Baptists

progress by 1946. Again, because of space the chapter on foreign missions was deleted; Rosser delivered the chapter manuscript to the State Board and simply recounted the financial contribution of Florida Baptists in a scant 2.5 pages.¹⁸ However, the inclusion of the chapters on Foreign Missions and WMU would have enriched Rosser's work. In the opinion of this researcher, the Broadman editors could have found room for these important topics by shortening the chapter on Rogers Building and deleting the chapter on Ministerial Relief. The chapter on ministerial relief, for the most part, is the narrative of early pension plans offered by the Relief and Annuity Board of the Southern Baptists Convention, not the story of Florida Baptists. While Rosser's work is a treasure, poor editing limited the emphasis on missions by neglecting the WMU and the contributions of Florida Baptists to foreign missions.

Rosser blazed a new trail in tracing the origins of the first Baptist church in Florida. Rufus Weaver, S. B. Rogers, and a strong tradition claimed that First Baptist Church of Campbellton founded in 1825 was the first Baptist church in Florida. Rosser corrected this historical error by going against popular tradition by documenting that Pigeon Creek Baptist Church established in Nassau County in 1821 was the first Baptist church in Florida. Pigeon Creek became a Primitive Baptist Church; consequently, Campbellton has the distinction of being the oldest continuous church affiliated with the Florida Baptist State Convention.¹⁹

Florida Baptists experienced a fortuitous benefit because of the timing of Rosser's book. Rosser conducted personal interviews with individuals that have passed from the scene. Individuals like G. W. S. Ware who lived most of the history Rosser narrated. Ware was alive when Rosser wrote; a servant of God who attended convention meetings during the time of the old convention prior to the reformation of the Florida Baptist Convention in 1880. Rosser commented that most old timers fondly called W. N. Chaudoin Uncle Chad. Treasured insights such as these reveal the importance for Florida Baptists to update historical works frequently before the treasures die.

¹John Leonidas Rosser, *A History of Florida Baptists*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1949. Surprisingly, John Maguire, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, stated in the introduction, I have read only one part of the whole book and from what I read, I wholeheartedly recommend this book. (italics mine)

²Isom Peacock and Fleming Bates organized the first Baptist church in Florida, the Pigeon Creek Baptist Church, in 1821. The church became associated with the Suwanee River Primitive Baptist Association.

³In addition to being a fine scholar, Dr. Weaver's involvement is noteworthy because the Mercer family pioneered early Baptist churches in the Florida Panhandle.

⁴Stetson University named Reeves to the position of research assistant in Baptist history after he completed his Master's degree thesis *A History of Florida Baptists* in 1938. In addition, Reeves performed a valuable service to Florida Baptists in his role as Church Historian of the Florida Historical Survey of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of President Roosevelt's administration. The Florida Historical Records Survey published inventories of the records and brief historical sketches of Baptist associations and churches.

⁵After years of laboring in Florida Baptist history and being mentioned in every Convention Annual from 1938-1944, Gordon Reeves disappeared from subsequent Convention Annuals after the choice of Rosser as the official author of Florida Baptist history.

⁶W. W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1953: The First History of a Great Denomination*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1954. SBC Executive-Secretary Porter Routh wrote the chapter covering 1945-1953. Barnes' book was the first published history of the SBC. In 1916, the SBC authorized the Sunday School Board to release a history of the Convention. The Sunday School Board recruited B. F. Riley as the author and he dutifully submitted his history; however, SBC officials deemed his work unsuitable and the history was never published.

⁷*Florida Baptist Convention Annual 1948*, p. 87.

⁸*Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*. S. v. Southern Baptist Historical Society, by Judson Boyce Allen.

⁹Jack P. Dalton completed a doctoral dissertation on *A History of Florida Baptists* at the University of Florida in 1952. He mentioned Rosser's *A History of Florida Baptists* neither in his text nor in his bibliography. Dalton served as a member/officer of the Committee of Florida Baptist History/Florida Baptist Historical Society from 1950-1952. It is inconceivable to me that a person holding such a position would be ignorant of Rosser's important work published in 1949. Although he does not mention Rosser, Dalton followed the trail-blazing research of

Rosser in the origins of the first Baptist church in Florida.

¹⁰The researcher derived the information about Rosser's life from the Operation Baptist Biography Data Form available from the Southern Baptist Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee.

¹¹The present author talked extensively with the pastor-search committee of Ancient City Baptist Church about the possibility of becoming pastor over a decade ago. Through the committee, I learned the following. Although the oldest city in America, a Baptist church related to the Florida Baptist Convention was not organized in St. Augustine until 1897. Because Spain granted freedom to slaves entering Florida, the First Baptist Church in St. Augustine is an African-American church. Ancient City Baptist Church is the first Anglo Baptist church started in the city.

¹²Information about Evelyn Rosser is found in Martha Trotter, *Faithful Servants: The Story of Florida Baptist Woman's Missionary Union 1894-1994* (Jacksonville, FL: Florida Woman's Missionary Union, 1994), 123, 134. And Edward Earl Joiner, *A History of Florida Baptists* (Jacksonville, FL: Convention Press, 1972), 194.

¹³William J. Reynolds, *Hymns of Our Faith: A Handbook for the Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1964), 217. Rosser used a tune named ELLACOMBE, named after a town in Devonshire, England.

¹⁴Bristol is located on the state line of Tennessee and Virginia.

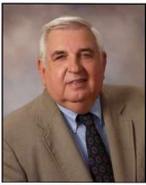
¹⁵John L. Rosser, Former Florida Pastor, Dies. *Florida Baptist Witness*, 15 June 1972, p. 11.

¹⁶Rosser, 15.

¹⁷Since Rosser's wife served as President of the Florida WMU at the time he wrote the book, this decision must have produced interesting conversation in the home of the Rosser's. In the Forward, Rosser stated that he submitted the chapter on WMU to the Union with the claim that this group planned to publish the chapter as a subsequent volume. To my knowledge, the Florida WMU never published Rosser's chapter. Martha Trotter does not refer to this manuscript in her history of the Florida WMU.

¹⁸In truth, any chapter on foreign missions by necessity would be short. Florida Baptists sent their first missionaries to the foreign fields a mere forty years before Rosser's book.

¹⁹Earl Joiner stated that Pigeon Creek Baptist Church is extinct. Joiner, 20, footnote 22. A recent doctoral dissertation suggests the church still exists. The St. Mary's River Association, which contains Pigeon Creek Church, the oldest Protestant church in Florida, totters on the brink of non-existence. John Gordon Crowley, *The Primitive Baptists of South Georgia and Florida* (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1996), 183.



Here & Now

Vol. 7

An update for Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors and Friends

No. 11

November, 2015



Directors

Elaine Coats
Fernandina Beach

Jerry Chumley
Lake Mystic

David Elder
St. Augustine

Thomas Green
Jacksonville

David Hecht
Panama City

Judith Jolly
Chairman
Dade City

Thomas Kinchen
Graceville

Dori Nelson
Miami

Paul Robinson
Pensacola

Jerry Windsor
Sec. Treas.



Penny Baumgardner
Administrative Assistant

Dear Board Members and Friends of the Florida Baptist Historical Society,

War clouds are not new to Baptists. The Revolutionary War, the Civil War, Spanish American War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam and Mideast war experiences have affected American Baptists in very special ways.

It appears to be that facing a war on terrorism calls for a Baptist recollection of how we as Florida Baptists have responded to war in the past.

I want to take one snap shot of Florida Baptists and war, from the January 15, 1942, *Florida Baptist Witness*. I think there are some important wartime considerations from that one issue.

First. Florida Baptists seemed willing to face the facts. In the 1942 issue there were sermons, an editorial, appeals and reports of the war. The war was only five weeks old, but a reality check was called for by the paper.

Second. There was a sermonic response. "Remember Pearl Harbor" was a published topical sermon by pastor Fred D. Gant of Bethany Baptist Church in Plant City. The sermon calls for Florida Baptists to face the grimness of war with faith in God, faith in ourselves, faith in our fellowman, and stubborn determination.

Third. There was an emotional response. A. B. Cannady published an article entitled, "The Preacher and the War." Cannady suggests two actions to be taken by all Florida Baptist preachers. He stated that preachers should preach that every person may have peace in his soul through the gospel, even when war is raging. He also noted that we must "get on with the war." At this point Cannady slipped into dramatic charges and name calling. Cannady said, "For years we have been selling scrap iron to Japan and now she is shooting it back at us." He also referred to the "Japs" and "gangsters," that were our enemies. His patriotism turned into personal vendetta when he said, "We must get on with the war 'till every gangster is captured...":



E. D. Solomon



Colin P. Kelly

Editor, E. D. Solomon gave a personal testimony of his military service in WWI. Solomon served as a chaplain in WWI, and observed that he had great difficulty reaching some of the hardened veterans in his tank division. This changed he said when he learned to "serve them" rather than criticize them.

Rev. William C. Kernan was heard from in an article entitled, "Sacrifice for Peace." Kernan made the appeal to peace as opposed to an attempt to gain prestige and power. There is an appeal to logic, common sense and accountability. Kernan reminded Florida Baptists that "communion with God" is the only valid source of peace and power.

Gant in his Pearl Harbor sermon bordered on emotional manipulation when he recalled the heroism of Florida Baptist war hero Colin P. Kelly. Gant said, "I believe that ringing in the ears of that hero, that native son of Florida, Capt. Colin P. Kelly, as he threw his plane into that dive that carried him down! Within the very mouth of those belching anti-aircraft guns to release the bombs that were to send that Jap battleship to the bottom of the ocean, was those very words, REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR!"



J. L. Rosser

Pastor J. L. Rosser had a more measured response in that fateful 1942 issue. Rosser told the story of the warship *Heron* and its successful fight against fifteen Japanese planes. Rosser recalled that the commander of the *Heron* had been baptized by Rosser when the naval leader was a boy. Rosser concluded that each of us is at war with the world, flesh and the devil and we need to be true to Jesus Christ, our commander-in-chief.

In January, 1942, war brought out recollections, reflections, denunciation and challenges from various Florida Baptists. But there were also some wartime lessons that could serve us well today. Note some of them.

Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. There is no other way and no other hope. World missions, Lottie Moon offerings, the Co-operative Program are instruments with an aim. They are to introduce people to the Prince of Peace and the joy he brings.

There is no shame in Christian citizenship. Jesus said, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The church has a voice that needs to be heard. In wartime people are hurt, confused, afraid and in doubt. A clear Biblical trumpet sound of hope in Jesus is light in darkness.

Name calling, denigration and hate has no place in a Christian heart. Rules of war may be valid or not, but Christian hearts never have place for hate and discrimination.

Terrorism is wrong in Pearl Harbor and Paris. Christian love and confidence has its place in all of history.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Windsor".

Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33
jmwindsor@baptistcollege.edu



USS Heron

Bee Ridge Baptist Church, Sarasota, will be celebrating it's 100th Anniversary on February 7, 2016. All are invited to attend.