

Florida Baptist Historical Society Biography Collection

This link provides the specific resource information which documents and undergirds the biographical resource information on a specific Florida Baptist pastors, church staff or significant laity leaders.

The link you have chosen connects to the specific individual's resource files that provide the basis for information which the Historical Society has used to develop the respective biographical profile. The sources attached may include copies of articles gleaned from back issues of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and other news publications. Other resources include books, historical journal articles and church histories that are cited as documentation for the biography.

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Simmons, Cataline (1806-1883) was born in Beaufort, South Carolina. He was brought to Florida while he was enslaved and reportedly was able to purchase his freedom. Simmons served as the first pastor of Bethel Baptist Institutional Church, Jacksonville from 1868-1880. He served as a Duval County commissioner, 1868-1870 and on the Jacksonville City Council, 1870-1872. He also served as tax collector.



HISTORY OF BETHEL BAPTIST INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

Bethel Baptist Institutional Church was organized in 1838 as the first church of Baptist denomination in Jacksonville. The congregation was racially mixed when the first house of worship was built in 1840 on a recently purchased lot at the northeast corner of Duval and Newnan Streets. A small frame building which seated about 100 people served the members until about 1844, when they moved to Myrtle Avenue between Monroe and Duval Streets. After worshipping at this site until 1861, the congregation moved into the third site on the north side of Church Street between Julia and Hogan Streets. Services in the new church were disrupted during the Civil War and at its close the Negro and White members separated. As a settlement the Negro members received a cash settlement and retained the name Bethel Baptist Church. They purchased the northwest corner of Union and Pine Street, now Union and Main, built a church, and called Rev. Cataline Simmons as their first pastor in 1868.

Rev. Roger D. Dunbar, the second pastor, was about 40 years old when he was called in the year 1880 and served the church five years and two months. Under the pastorate of Rev. Dunbar, the church developed and prospered. He was kind, benevolent and gifted with the faculty of spiritual eloquence. He stood alone in the ability to make his members shout and was distinguished for his magnetism and lovingness. It was during his pastorate that a rupture in the church occurred and the Harmony Baptist Church was founded.

The Board of Deacons was organized by the Rev. C. B. Simmons, with the brothers listed who served until death:

Alonzo Williams, Richard Frazier, James Johnson, Sam Spearing, Charles Singleton, James Williams, Peter Clark, Evans Dukes and Charles Hunter.

The Deacons Board is the oldest organization in the church and represents the key board as to organization and overlooks the spiritual interest of the church. Deacon Samuel Dennis served as Chairman of the Board for many years and was greatly loved and respected by the entire membership. He was Chairman at the time this present site was purchased and had a lot to do in the construction of this edifice. Others who have been privileged to hold this position are: James Johnson, Samuel Spearing, Charles Hunter, E. W. Latson, Sr., J. D. Thomas, Keith C. Hines, W. H. Lee, A. H. Hudson, Samuel Smith, and the present Chairman L. M. Argrett.

Cataline Simmons

Religious and political leader in Florida From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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Cataline B. Simmons (1806 – July 13, 1883) was an American businessman, politician, and religious leader in Florida.

Simmons was born in Beaufort, South Carolina in 1806. He was brought to Florida while he was enslaved and reportedly was able to ultimately purchase his freedom.[1]

Simmons served as the first pastor of the Bethel Baptist Institutional Church in Jacksonville, Florida.[2][3] He served as its pastor from 1868 to 1880.[4]

Simmons served as a Duval County commissioner from 1868 to 1870. He and William T. Garvin then became the first African Americans to serve on the Jacksonville City Council,[5] serving on it from 1870 to 1872.[3] He also served as a tax assessor. At the time of his death, Simmons was noted as one of the wealthiest "colored men" in Jacksonville.[1]

Member of the Jacksonville City Council

In office

1870–1872

Personal details

Born

Cataline B. Simmons

1806

Beaufort, South Carolina, U.S.

Died

July 13, 1883 (aged 76–77)

Occupation

Politician, businessman, pastor