

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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Solomon, Edward Davis (1875-1957) was born in Coldwater, Mississippi. He graduated from Mississippi College (A.B., 1898), and did further studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1898-1900). He was awarded the Doctorate of Divinity degree by Stetson University in 1943. Solomon married Josie Crawford on November 12, 1907 and they had three sons. He was ordained in 1898, and served as pastor at First Baptist Church in Kaufman, Texas; First Baptist Church in McComb, Mississippi; Main Street in Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Fifteenth Avenue in Meridian, Mississippi; and St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans, Louisiana. Solomon served as corresponding secretary of the Louisiana Baptist Convention from 1924 to 1930. He is best known among Florida Baptists as the editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* from 1931 to 1949. Solomon served as chaplain in the Spanish American War and World War I. He was a member of the committee that drew up the Cooperative Program in 1925.



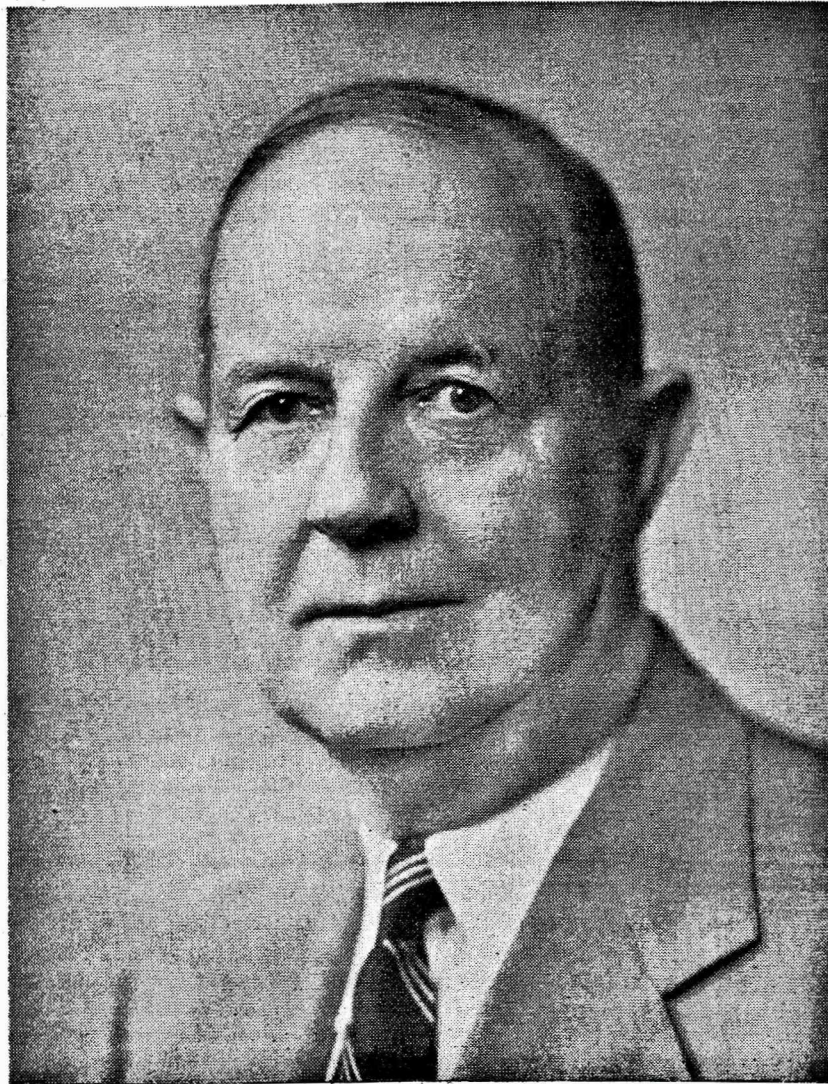
Florida BAPTIST WITNESS

VOL. LXIX

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, SEPTEMBER 19, 1957

No. 38

Departed to be with Christ



EDWARD DAVIS SOLOMON, D.D.

Born December 26, 1875

Died September 13, 1957

Story next page

P 2 - Sept 19, 1957

omon, Former Editor of the Witness and red Denominational Servant, Passes Away

Edward Davis Solomon, 82, Baptist minister for more than 60 years and editor of the FLORIDA BAPTIST WITNESS for 18 years of that time, died Friday, September 13 at Baptist Memorial Hospital, Jacksonville, an institution toward the ending of which he had given much in many ways.

Dr. Solomon's death came on the second anniversary of the opening of the hospital. Ceremonies of the day were planned to be dedicated to Dr. and Mrs. Solomon who gave generously during the progress of the building campaign for the hospital and were influential in reaching many others for sizeable gifts. Mrs. Solomon has also brought flowers daily to the patients at the hospital since it opened.

Editor of the FLORIDA BAPTIST WITNESS from June 1, 1931 until his retirement on August 15, 1949, during which time the circulation increased from fewer than 2,000 paid subscriptions to more than 23,000, he was known and loved throughout Florida for his warm-hearted evangelistic preaching as well as for the vigor of his editorial writing, the stimulating character of his stories, and the healing contagion of his timely sense of humor.

Immediately before coming to Florida, Dr. Solomon served Louisiana Baptists as their State Missions Secretary from 1924 to 1930, following a four-year pastorate at St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans. Previous pastorates included First Baptist Church, Kaufman, Texas; First Church, McComb, Miss.; Main Street Church, Hattiesburg, Miss. and Fifteenth Avenue Church, Medidian, Miss. At three of these churches he had led in the erection of buildings.

A man who was devoted to and active in denominational affairs, he had an unbroken record of attendance at the annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1900 through 1955. He was vice-president of the Convention in 1941-42. He served as a member of the committee which conceived and drew up the Cooperative Program, the mission and benevolent giving plan of Southern Baptists, in 1925. He was also vice-president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention in 1912.

Dr. Solomon's zeal for evangelism had carried him into 12 different Southern states for many evangelistic campaigns. His sermon on Jonah was a classic which is vividly remembered by many throughout the Southland.

Dr. Solomon considered himself a product of Christian education and was a vigorous supporter of Christian schools and colleges wherever he went. He was a graduate of Mississippi College, an alumnus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., studied at Baylor University and at Spurgeon's College in London, England and was awarded the Doctor of Divinity degree by John B. Stetson University in 1943. He was prominent in the founding of Mississippi Women's College at Hattiesburg, Miss. He had served as a trustee of Leland University, Baker, La. He was a member of the advisory council of Baptist Bible Institute, Graceville at the time of his death.

A leading spirit in the establishment of the Southern Baptist Hospital at New Orleans, La., he was one of its trustees for more than 20 years. Through the years

his was always the voice of an enthusiastic booster and effective promoter of other hospitals. He had been a tireless worker in behalf of the Baptist Memorial Hospital at Jacksonville in which he was a patient at the time of death. He had also served as a trustee of the Baptist Hospital at Alexandria, La.

Dr. Solomon was a chaplain of the National Guard in 1909-13 and a chaplain at Camp Polk and Camp Shelby in 1918. He was a member of the American Legion, a Mason (32° Shriner) and a Rotarian.

Survivors include his widow, Mrs. Josie C. Solomon; two sons, Edward C. of Bronxville, N. Y. and J. Crawford of Jacksonville; five grandsons, William and Robert of Ponte Vedra Beach, Gray of Bronxville, N. Y., and James and Crawford of Jacksonville; a brother, Robert Solomon of Valley View, Texas and a sister, Mrs. Josie Harpool of Denton, Texas.

Funeral services were conducted at Southside Baptist Church, Jacksonville at 4:00 p.m. Saturday, September 14 by his pastor, Dr. Malcolm B. Knight, Dr. James A. Stewart, Dr. Madison V. Scott and Dr. Homer G. Lindsay.

1957 Florida Gifts Staying Ahead of Those Made in 1956

NASHVILLE—(BP)—Florida Baptists' contributions to work of the Southern Baptist Convention through Cooperative Program and designated offerings are exceeding their gifts received at the same time in 1956.

Convention Treasurer Porter Routh said here that for the year to date Florida Baptists' Cooperative Program gifts stand at \$568,188 compared with \$502,977 through August, 1956. Designated gifts have risen from \$273,202 to \$332,091.

The state's gifts for the month of August, 1957, totalled \$60,788, exceeding August, 1956, receipts of \$28,264.

Gifts from all states during August totalled \$1,412,078. Of this \$1,212,347 was through the Cooperative Program and \$199,730 was in designated offerings.

None of these figures, of course, includes money kept by local churches and state Baptist conventions for their own activities.

Gifts in August, 1957, in both Cooperative Program and designated categories ran higher than for the corresponding month the year before. Total August, 1956, offerings were \$1,189,559.

To date this year, the Southern Baptist Convention treasurer's office reports total receipts of \$17,526,564 which is 9.23 per cent greater than that received through August, 1956.

Total Cooperative Program gifts for the receipts of \$17,526,564 which is 9.23 per cent) and total designated gifts are \$8,061,286 (up 11.65 per cent).

A \$630,000 disbursement to the Foreign

Full Roll Call Answers When BWA Executive Comm. Meets

HAMILTON, Ont., Canada—BWA—Any doubts that world Baptists can come together for discussion of mutual concerns were dispelled when Dr. Theodore F. Adams, president of the Baptist World Alliance, called the BWA Executive Committee into annual session here.

All 65 positions on the Committee were filled either in person or by proxy. Nationals from 14 different countries were on hand.

The Executive meets annually. The 1956 meeting was in Washington, USA. The 1958 meeting will be at Ruschlikon-Zurich, Switzerland.

Baptist conventions in Malaya and Lebanon were admitted to membership in the Alliance. It was reported also that applications from Baptists in North India are being processed and will be considered when the Administrative Committee meets in Washington Nov. 26, 1957.

Home Mission Board Elects King as Liaison to Canada

Bertram King, pastor, Moreland Avenue Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, has been elected by the Home Mission Board as contact man to serve as liaison between the Home Mission Board and Baptist forces in Canada. This contact is to bring resources of Southern Baptist in programs to the churches in Canada for them to adapt as they desire, rather than to get Canadian Baptists to join the Southern Baptist Convention. King will go to Canada October 20.

Mission Board was the greatest amount paid out to a Convention agency in August. It brought the total Foreign Mission Board disbursement this year to \$10,063,415.

Next greatest disbursement for the month was \$210,000 to the Home Mission Board. Its total for the year increased to \$3,153,747.

FLORIDA BAPTIST WITNESS

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Published Weekly except the weeks of
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W. G. STREACENER Editor-Manager

Florida Baptist Witness Commission

Harold A. Davidson, Chairman
Paul Carmichael Don McIntosh
W. P. Everson H. K. Masteller

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EDITORIAL PAGE

Witness - Sept 19, 1957 p. 4
Editorial Tribute to

DR. EDWARD DAVIS SOLOMON

Minister, Statesman and Brother Beloved

Dr. Edward Davis Solomon, Baptist preacher for more than 60 years and editor of the FLORIDA BAPTIST WITNESS for more than 18 years of that time, 1931-1949, departed this life on September 13, 1957. Baptists of Florida and throughout Southern Baptist Convention territory will hallow the memory of his unique personality and bow in gratitude for his sizeable contributions to Kingdom progress. Characteristics which marked his full life of nearly 82 years call for our reflection.

Love for Christ and Lost Souls

To him the two were inseparable. To love Christ was to love those for whom Christ died. No one who ever heard him plead with God for the salvation of lost souls, or witness to an unregenerate individual personally, or proclaim the Gospel with yearning urgency to a congregation ever doubted either his love for the Lord or for the lost. His evangelistic fervor had borne fruit in many campaigns in 12 different Southern states. Nearly 100 of his meetings were conducted in Florida.

Hatred for Sin

With the same flaming passion he loved sinners, he hated sin. Not only with his preaching, but editorially and politically he fought unrighteousness. The liquor traffic, the gambling interests, corrupting entertainment, political and economic injustices all knew the sting of his spoken and written words. He believed that being like Jesus meant hating what He hated as well as loving what He loved.

Sympathy for the Needy

"Brother Ed" was a name of proven meaning to many another brother in need. Unheralded when they happened are repeated instances of help (not just prayer, but money, too) extended to people in some emergency of need, people to whom he had no obligation whatever save as he felt it in Christ. This interest expressed itself corporately as well as individually in his work for Children's Homes, Salvation Army, Y. M. C. A. and other kindred movements.

Compassion for the Suffering

A leading spirit in the establishment of the Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans and one of its trustees for more than 20 years, Dr. Solomon was always a booster and promoter for other hospitals. He had been an indefatigable worker for the building of the Baptist Memorial Hospital of Jacksonville, where he was a patient at the time of his death. He had never given up his dream of some years ago for five Baptist hospitals in Florida, and remarked to this writer recently, "Well, they didn't come just like we had hoped, but there are three of them (Pensacola, Plant City and Jacksonville) already and if Miami Baptists build the two they are talking about that will make our five."

Love of the Brethren

By the evidence on every hand both he and the brethren knew that he had "passed from death unto life" because he "loved the brethren." This was nowhere more clearly demonstrated than by his abiding interest expressed through the years in young preachers, often young men in whom not too many others were at the moment taking much interest but in whom he saw both promise and need of encouragement.

Loyalty to the Churches

To him there was no institution on earth as significant as a Baptist church, whether the small church in the open country, or the one in the village, or the big city church with its thousands of members. The autonomy of each church was a Divinely ordered right to be zealously guard-

ed. The idea of any centralized or general church was to him repulsive. How many times we have heard him say, "To say 'local' church is as foolish as to say widow 'woman' or 'tooth' dentist. There are no 'local' Baptist churches, only Baptist churches. There is no such thing as The Baptist Church, only Baptist churches."

Devotion to the Denomination

He believed in the far-reaching value of cooperation among the messengers from the autonomous churches, whether in the district association, the state convention, or the Southern Baptist Convention. No one among us loved an association or a convention more than did "Brother Ed," and we always knew he was there, too. He had attended every annual session of the Southern Baptist Convention which was held from 1900 through 1955. Failing health had kept him away from the last two sessions.

His voice was heard on convention floors pleading for many a plan or program or procedure which he thought to be in the interest of progress for Southern Baptists, but his devotion to our fellowship was always more important than his devotion to a method. More than once we have seen him withdraw a motion for something he wanted very much, a motion that had a good chance of passing, simply because he realized during the course of consideration that its passage might damage the fellowship.

During a visit some weeks ago Dr. Solomon expressed to us his own appraisal of the three things which the Lord had let him do for the denomination which had given him the deepest satisfaction.

First was his insistence on writing into the original plan for the Cooperative Program that the State Conventions through the offices of their Executive Secretaries would be the agents for collecting the monies from the churches to be sent to the offices of the Southern Baptist Convention for distribution to the various causes. (He was a member of the committee which conceived and drew up the plan in 1925.) This provision was an automatic safeguard against any overcentralization of authority or power in the hands of denominational leaders or executive committee, and it also brought added significance to the office of the State Missions Secretary in each convention.

Second was his part in wide-scale promotion of the



the budget subscription plan for the state Baptist paper, while he was State Secretary in Louisiana and after he became Editor in Florida. He said the budget plan had been tried with a few churches in other states, but that it became his privilege to secure the first state Baptist convention's (Louisiana) official approval of the church budget subscription plan, and the first to really promote the plan among the churches generally. Of course the budget subscription plan is one of the greatest factors in the tremendous increase in the circulation of all our state Baptist papers in recent years.

Third was his design and installation of what, as far as his extended inquiry and investigation could reveal, was the first baptistry ever to be built in this country which was elevated above the pulpit and choir loft in full and easy view of the entire congregation. This was at the first Baptist Church, McComb, Mississippi in 1906, early in his ministry, he said.

People Will Long Remember

Stories which stimulated person after person and congregation after congregation will be cherished through the years and passed on down to others. Dr. Solomon's storytelling ability has left its deep impression for good.

Humor which blessed was welcomed everywhere. He had as near a Divinely-prompted sense of humor as one is ever apt to find. Time after time we have seen it take him or some other person off a touchy spot, or restore peace to a congregation, or simply relax and refresh listeners with the tonic of a good laugh.

Optimism which challenged others marked his outlook

to the very end. He was an incurable optimist who could always see Kingdom progress in the present and with youthful enthusiasm look ahead to the better things which he just knew Baptists were on the verge of accomplishing.

A Personal Word

I could not close this tribute without expressing my own gratitude to God for the attitude of Dr. Solomon toward me as his successor in the editorial chair.

Eight years ago when I came in as a totally "green" editor he gave me a welcome without any reservations, and has been just as sincerely cordial every day since.

His has been a friendship without any demands which freely demonstrated confidence in a younger successor without ever even an implied hint that he thought I should do one thing differently because of his friendship.

He has given me and the paper support without any conditions. Often he has been the very first to call or to come into the office to express appreciation for some change in or addition to the WITNESS. And the reports have come back to me repeatedly that Dr. Solomon had arisen in some denominational gathering to say in his own inimitable way, "You folks must back up this new editor. He's all right. And I still want you to put the WITNESS in your church budget. Why, this paper has been getting better every week since I left it"—or to give some other similar refreshing boost to our work.

I'm sure no editor ever had a predecessor with a finer spirit, and I shall continue to thank God for Dr. E. D. Solomon, and to hallow the memory of his loyalty to Christ and to his friends.

W.G.S.

THE CROSS STILL STANDS - - -

(Continued from page 3)

again, almost the same type structure as the Bloomsbury Church only a few streets away (they don't have blocks in England), the building is very impressive with the heroic-sized statue of John Bunyan placed in a niche where the corner of the building forms the third story. There is a Baptist Book Store on the first floor where I actually felt more "at home" than anywhere else during the six weeks I was away. On the second floor are committee rooms and a reception desk; and on the third are writing and reading rooms in charge of a hostess who gave me copies of THE BAPTIST TIMES, Official Organ of the Baptist Denomination, established 1855. On page 1, I read about two great Baptist statesmen then in London—Hon. Harold Stassen of U.S.A., and the leader of the Burma Baptist Convention, an M.P. on Commonwealth business. Mrs. Downs, hostess, gave me several small booklets about women's work, and the work of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland; and I bought several pamphlets from the book store for our church library.

The huge statue of Dr. Charles Haddon Spurgeon dominates the foyer of the second floor, and there is a memorial plaque to his less well-known brother, also a Baptist minister. I learned that the great Baptist Tabernacle (presumably the one where Dr. Len G. Broughton served for several years), seriously damaged during the war, was being restored, while the congregation worships in the Walworth Tabernacle, Walworth Road, where I saw the demolition going on. Lack of time prevented a visit to fourth and fifth floors where are to be found offices of

the Baptist World Alliance, and rooms for the great youth program now being launched by British Baptists. These things are mentioned so that any Baptists visiting in London may find a place of worship and interest in the land of origin for many of us Americans.

One more thing of interest to Baptists might be found in an experience on the return ship. At the Sunday morning Protestant service (every ship seems to have on board at least one priest and two nuns for regular Catholic religious services) that last day aboard ship, I found one more note of confidence for the future. The service was conducted in four languages: French, German, Dutch and English. An order-of-worship sheet had been prepared, carrying hymn numbers, worship procedures, and names of ministers, and a short "confession of sin" to be read in unison. The Lord's Prayer was repeated by every one in his own tongue. Being more conversant with German, I found myself listening to Dr. H. G. Rankewitz in his ten-minute sermonette on the Lord Christ and His Sacrifice; but when G. H. Easter, Rector of St. John's, Buffalo, N. Y., spoke, I was truly thrilled to hear him say at the very beginning: "In the 4th Century A.D., the Church began to baptize children—"

Let's go back to Chester Cathedral: "In substituting a font for a baptistry, we have lost the beautiful symbolism..."

Though Baptist Christians will work toward ecumenical unity in respects in which it can be done without compromise of principle, our Baptist heritage is too wonderful a thing to be taken lightly, or to be given up for any trivial consideration. Being a life-long Baptist, I did not have to go abroad to find that—but I found it there, also.

WESTERN UNION

TELEGRAM

ALEXANDRIA LA SEP 14

FLORIDA BAPTIST WITNESS
JACKSONVILLE FLO.

ED SOLOMON MADE A LASTING CONTRIBUTION TO LOUISIANA BAPTIST HISTORY WE PRAISE GOD FOR THE MEMORY OF HIS KINGDOM DEVOTION AND SERVICE.

ROBERT L LEE EXEC SECTY TREAS
LOUISIANA BAPTIST CONVENTION

AVONDALE MINISTER OF MUSIC AND STETSON DEAN DIE IN CAR CRASH

R. Hansford Dicken, 45, minister of music at Avondale Baptist Church, Jacksonville and Dr. Claude Almand, 42, dean of Stetson University's School of Music were killed instantly in a car crash at Atlantic Beach on Sept. 12.

Dicken, who grew up in West Palm Beach, was a graduate of Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky. and was associated with churches in Kentucky and North Carolina during student days. Prior to his Avondale ministry, which began in 1955, he was minister of music for Riverside Church, Miami for three years. He also at one time served Hendricks Avenue Church, Jacksonville.

Dr. Almand, a native of Winsboro, La., was beginning his fifth year as dean of the Stetson University School of Music. Widely known as a composer, he developed at Stetson University one of the most outstanding departments of sacred music in the Southeast. He was a member of the faculty at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky. and of the University of Louisville for 10 years until he came to Stetson in 1953.

SOLOMON, EDWARD DAVIS (b. Coldwater, Miss., Dec. 26, 1875; d. Jacksonville, Fla., Sept. 13, 1957). Pastor, evangelist, denominational executive, editor. Graduate (A.B.) of Mississippi College, 1898; student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1898-1900; studied at Baylor University and Spurgeon's College, London, England; awarded D.D. by John B. Stetson University, DeLand, Fla., 1943. Married Josie Crawford, Nov. 12, 1907; children - Edward C., William H., Crawford. Ordained to the ministry, 1898. Pastor successively of First Church, Kaufman, Tex.; First Church, McComb, Miss.; Main Street Church, Hattiesburg, Miss.; Fifteenth Avenue Church, Meridian, Miss. until 1917; St. Charles Avenue Church, New Orleans, La. 1919-23. Served as corresponding secretary, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1924-30; editor, Florida Baptist Witness 1931-49; vice president Mississippi Baptist Convention, 1912; vice president Southern Baptist Convention, 1941-42. Conducted evangelistic meetings in 12 Southern states. Built three churches and was prominent in founding Mississippi Woman's College, Hattiesburg, Miss. and Southern Baptist Hospital, New Orleans.

Saw service as a chaplain, Second Mississippi Regiment, Spanish-American War; chaplain, National Guard on staff of Governor Noel, 1909-13; chaplain, Camp Shelby and Camp Polk, 1918. He was a trustee of Southern Baptist Hospital, New Orleans; Baptist Hospital, Alexandria, La.; Leland University, Baker, La.; also active in the establishment of Baptist Memorial Hospital, Jacksonville, Fla. He was a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's future program commission which conceived and drew up the Cooperative Program in 1925. One of the earliest proponents of the church budget subscription plan for the Baptist state paper, he secured during his Louisiana secretaryship the first state Baptist convention's official approval and active promotion of the plan among the churches.

W. G. STRACENER

SOLOMON, EDWARD DAVIS

Editor and manager, Florida Baptist Witness, Jacksonville, Fla.; born, Dec. 26, 1875; son of Ella Davis and James Hanible Solomon; education, Miss. Col., Baylor Univ., Sou. Bapt. Theol. Sem.; ordained, March, 1898; married Josie Crawford of Houston, Miss., Nov. 12, 1907, daughter of Sudie Frazee and N. B. Crawford; children, Edward Crawford, Shreveport, La.; William Hudson, James Crawford; pastor, First Ch., Kaufman, Tex., 1900-04; McComb City, Tex., 1905-07; Hele-

SOURCE:

Among Southern Baptists, Vol. 1, 1936-37

By John S. Ramond, compiler, Shreveport, Louisiana, copyright 1936
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ERN BAPTISTS

na, Ark., 1908-10; Main St. Ch., Hattiesburg, Miss., 1911-15; Fifteenth Ave. Ch., Meridian, Miss., 1916-17; chaplain, World War, 1918; pastor, St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, La., 1919-23; Cor. Sec., Exec. Bd., La. Bapt. Conv., 1924-30; editor, manager, Florida Baptist Witness, Jacksonville, Fla., since 1931; chaplain, 2nd Miss. Regt. Vol. Spanish-Amer. Veterans (Capt.); Camp Shelby and Camp Polk, World War; denominational: Bd. of Trustees, Sou. Bapt. Theol. Sem., Tex.; Bapt. Bible Inst., La.; Leland Univ., Baker, La.; Bapt. Hospital, Alex., La.; Sou. Bapt. Hosp., New Orleans; Exec. Com., Sou. Bapt. Conv., Sou. Bapt. Cooperation Program; Philomathian Society; chaplain, National Guards on staff of Gov., 1919-23 (Col.); Mason, Shriner, Rotary International, Spanish-American War Veterans, American Legion. Home address: 713 Largo St., Jacksonville, Fla.

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SOLOMON, JOSIE CRAWFORD
(MRS. E. D.)

Associate editor, Baptist Witness, Jacksonville, Fla.; born, Atlanta, Miss.; daughter of Sudie F. and Nathan Barnett Crawford; education, Blue Mountain College, Miss.; married Rev. Edward Davis Solomon, Coldwater, Miss., Nov. 12, 1907, son of Ella Davis and James H. Solomon; children, Edward C., William H., J. Crawford; teacher, J. O. Y. Class of young women, First Ch., Shreveport, La., 6 yrs.; Assoc. editor of Baptist Witness; denominational: Pres., W. M. U., First Ch., Shreveport, La., 1928; Gen. Chmn., Dodd Col. (Jr. Col. for Girls, Shreveport); financial drive, 1931. Address: Jacksonville, Fla.

SOWELL, MRS. ERMINE
BAGBY

Southern Baptist Foreign Missionary, stationed at Buenos Aires, Argentina; born, Campinas, Brazil, July 25, 1881; came to United States in 1899; education, Baylor University, 1903; appointed June 18, 1903; married S. M. Sowell,

shop and when it went to an "open shop" in 1927 "every man quit, save one." ⁶

P. L. Johnston (1884-1957) became editor in 1928. Pickney Leslie Johnston had served as church editor of the *Miami Herald* before coming to the *Witness* staff. The subscription list remained steady at 7,000, but the financial woes that took hold in America also affected the work of the *Witness*. Johnston noted in 1930 at the convention in Tampa that grief came from "the backwash of the boom, the fruit fly, bank failures and general business depression."

Johnston left the *Witness* in 1930 to work on the advertising staff of the *Christian Index*. In leaving Florida he felt that there was an answer to the financial needs of the paper. "In retiring as editor-manager, may I say that I firmly believe a vigorous circulation campaign at \$2 per year. . . would easily pull the paper out of its present financial difficulty."

Charles Mercer Brittain (1873-1943) served as the editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* from 1909-1911 and from 1930-1931. Brittain was the child of adversity. He became Executive-Secretary of the Florida Baptist State Board of Missions in 1926 one week after his mother died. He saw the depression, severe hurricanes in 1926 and 1927, the stock market crash of 1929, and the threat of Landmarkism in the convention. He became editor in 1930 without pay in a move to assist the paper. It was in 1931 that the paper was taken from the "overloaded shoulders" of Dr. Brittain and placed into the "competent hands of Dr. E. O. Solomon."⁸

Covers the Entire State (1931-1970)

In the Florida Baptist Convention meeting at First Baptist Church in Jacksonville in January 1945, it was announced that the *Florida Baptist Witness* was unique in that, "It is the only paper published in Florida that covers the entire state."⁹

The coming of Edward Davis Solomon (1875-1957) brought new life and new light to the work of the *Florida Baptist Witness*. Solomon was born in Coldwater, Mississippi, and graduated from Mississippi College in 1898. He attended The Southern Baptist Theological

Seminary (1898-1900) and was awarded the Doctorate of Divinity degree by Stetson University in 1943.

Solomon served as pastor in Mississippi and Louisiana before coming to Florida. He was corresponding secretary of the Louisiana Baptist Convention from 1924 to 1930. He was a committed Baptist, well known preacher, and well connected denominational servant.

Solomon was present for the birth of the Cooperative Program and traced the idea of the concept to M. E. Dodd. In 1923 Dodd and Solomon were on the committee that had the responsibility to fix the amounts that each board and institution was to receive from the Seventy-Five Million Campaign. Solomon said that he and Dodd were the ones who introduced the idea of percentages¹⁰



E. D. Solomon

Dr. Solomon served as a chaplain in the Spanish American War and in World War I. His specific education and general background work served the *Witness* well. From his involvement in the Seventy-Five Million Campaign he saw the need for sound financial footing and planning. At the 1932 Florida Baptist Convention meeting in Daytona Beach it was announced by C. M. White that "The *Florida Baptist Witness* does not owe one dollar." This depression era financial success came largely from the hand of editor Solomon.

The new editor from Louisiana entered his new work with experience, enthusiasm and energy. It was reported at the 1933 convention meeting at First Baptist Church Pensacola that Solomon was a "regular dynamo of cheer and optimism." Solomon saw the need to increase the circulation of the *Witness* and in his tenure saw the increase of subscribers reach 23,600 before his retirement in 1949.

Solomon believed in putting forth new ideas for promoting the paper but he felt that a real key to more subscriptions were the pastors and the true hope of the *Witness* was Cooperative Program support.

In 1933 there were 739 Southern Baptist Churches in the state and a total of 915 preachers. Solomon bemoaned the fact that only 100 of the

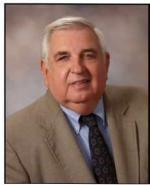
739 churches budgeted the *Witness* and only 238 of the 915 preachers were subscribers.¹¹ Attempting to pry the *Witness* free of outside pressure, businessman Solomon actually owned the press that printed the *Witness*. Dr. S. B. Rogers had bought the press for the convention in 1919 and paid \$8,000 for it. The convention saw the cost of press upkeep and labor problems and decided to sell the press to Mrs. Josephine Crawford Solomon for \$1,000 in 1938 plus a debt of \$2,142.83 that was owed on press maintenance. This agreement with the Solomons ran out on May 31, 1948 and at that time the Solomons had no interest in "renewing" the press contract.¹² It was actually the Witness Commission that brought this whole process to an end. In 1948 the Commission became responsible for the printing, publishing, and distributing of the paper. Dr. Solomon was then "employed" as the editor for a period of one year at a salary of \$4200 and a travel expense budget of \$500. After the one year contract expired a new editor was secured.¹³

The Solomon years saw the paper through the end of the depression and through the paper shortages and labor problems associated with World War II. Dr. Solomon knew that a stronger foundation for the program was needed and at the Florida Baptist Convention in 1947 at Orlando proposed that the "Arizona Plan" be adopted.

The Baptist Convention in Arizona actually placed their paper in the hands of the members of their churches and paid for the paper through the Baptist state convention budget. This made the paper a "house organ" officially but it also gave much needed information to new Christians and new arrivals in the Arizona Baptist Convention. Solomon felt it was time for Florida Baptists to consider such a plan.

In 1947 the population of Florida was 2,540,000. There were 224,884 Southern Baptist church members in Florida and they gave \$6,524,111 for the year. Solomon realized that these members needed to be informed and inspired on a state-wide basis. Although the Arizona Plan was not adopted, there is great merit in the argument for it.¹⁴

Nearly 30 years later the *Florida Baptist Witness* editor was fighting the same battle. Edgar Cooper responded to some of the questions from his critics when he reported: "Some say, 'If they want it (the state



Here & Now

Vol. 7

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

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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...":



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.



E. D. Solomon

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,



Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33
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USS Heron

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

Vol. 13

May, 2021

No. 5

LEGACY, as the monthly newsletter of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, has as its mission to highlight the legacy forged by the people, churches and events in Florida Baptist history. During the next several months this newsletter will feature the story of the development and ministry of the state Baptist news journal, *The Florida Baptist Witness*. The *Witness* was officially adopted and served as an entity of the Florida Baptist State Convention from 1884 until 2017 when it was dissolved as a State Convention agency. During its 133-year history the *Witness* had 33 editors (plus a number of associate editors) and its ownership moved on several occasions between private owners to control by the Convention corporation.



E. D. Solomon 1931 – 1949



E. D. Solomon

Since its 1884 founding the *Florida Baptist Witness*, at various times, was either owned or operated by pastors, laymen and the State Board of Missions. But as the nation was coming out the throes of the Great Depression, a woman – Josephine Solomon – became the owner of record for the *Witness* in 1938. And although Josephine Solomon was the spouse of *Witness* Editor E. D. Solomon, she actively managed the financial operation of the printing facilities that was called Convention Press, the entity that published the state newspaper. More about that arrangement will be noted later.

As previously reported in this LEGACY newsletter, financial difficulties and deficits increased during the first three decades of the twentieth century for the state newspaper, the *Florida Baptist Witness*. Such a condition was only made worse by the coming of the Great Depression in the 1930s. What the State Board of Missions sought for the position of editor was someone who had reporting-editorial experience, as well as financial acumen. The Board had to look no further than to its western neighbor of Louisiana. There they found Edward Davis Solomon who had been serving as the corresponding secretary (executive director) of the Louisiana Baptist Convention from 1924 to 1930. In that capacity he also served

as the business manager for *The Baptist Message*, the state Baptist newspaper. “He was a committed Baptist, a well-known preacher, and well-connected denominational servant,” wrote Dr. Jerry Windsor, in a profile article about Solomon that was published in the 2005 issue of the *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*.

Unique Employment Arrangement

Under the unusual terms of his employment, Solomon was not to be paid a salary directly. Rather he was to lease for one dollar a year the *Witness*’ editorial operation and presses and attempt to generate a profit from subscriptions and advertising. After expenses, including his \$4,000 annual salary, any profits then realized were to be split evenly with the State Board of Missions. The lease arrangement included a \$6,000 annual subsidy paid to the *Witness* by the State Board. In exchange for that subsidy, Solomon agreed to give space in the newspaper for promotional news from the Convention’s programs of work. The contract was reviewed and renewed at the end of each five-year period through much of Solomon’s tenure that concluded in 1949.

By 1935, the State Board of Missions was no doubt glad to learn that the *Witness* finally was operating on a much sounder financial basis. Throughout much of 1936, ongoing negotiations between Solomon and the State Board revolved around the need and associated expenses for replacing and repairing presses used to publish the newspaper. Although the presses were owned by the State Board, the lease agreement was interpreted to require that Solomon, as the lease holder, be responsible for repair and upkeep of the presses. For nearly a year a series of proposals and counter-proposals were exchanged between the two parties. Finally, a State Board study committee proposed and the State Board agreed that the *Witness* printing presses – known as Convention Press – would be sold to the editor’s wife, Mrs. Josephine Crawford Solomon, for \$1,000. Having resolved the equipment issues, the State Board renewed for another five years the one dollar per year lease as well as the subsidy agreement.



Mrs. Josephine
Crawford Solomon

The year-long negotiation process created a realization among some State Board members that the need existed for a *Witness* advisory committee. Such a group, it was proposed, would be responsible “to advise the editor of the *Witness* in matters pertaining to the publishing of the paper.” The initial advisory group was appointed by the State Board, but this group was to be the forerunner to a State Convention elected committee that provided oversight to the state newspaper.

Experience, Energy and Wit

The coming of Edward Davis Solomon (b. 1875; d. 1957) brought new life and new light to the work of the *Florida Baptist Witness* during his 18-years tenure, that ran from 1931 to 1949 – the longest service of any editor up until that time. The new editor from Louisiana entered his new work with experience, enthusiasm and energy.

Solomon brought to the *Witness*’ pages a spice and wit not known before. His first editorials were short, pithy epigrams (terse, witty, or sage sayings) that caught attention. Examples published on July 2, 1931, included the following: “There is no competition in virtue;” “A.D. will soon stand for After the Depression;” and “If the ox falls in the ditch every Sabbath, either fill up the ditch or kill the ox.” Also, another observation stated: “Some are wanting to know if the editor is a Jew. He has some Jew blood in him, but not enough to hurt the Jews.”

Witness Observes 50 Years of Publishing

The *Florida Baptist Witness* observed its 50th anniversary of continuous operation in 1934. To mark the occasion Solomon set a goal to attain a circulation of 10,000 before the year was over. Although achieving the circulation goal took a little longer, by the end of Solomon’s first decade as editor in 1941, circulation had doubled to 10,000 subscribers from 5,000.

Solomon was born in Coldwater, Mississippi, and graduated from Mississippi College in 1898. He attended The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1898 – 1900) and during his Florida years was awarded the Doctorate of Divinity degree by Stetson University.

Prior to his service as the leader of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, Solomon served as a pastor of churches in Mississippi and Louisiana, before coming to Florida.

A Cooperative Program Advocate

One of the noteworthy achievements of Solomon's career was participating in the birth of the Cooperative Program, an idea conceived and proposed by Louisiana Pastor M. E. Dodd. In 1923 Dodd and Solomon were on the Southern Baptist Convention-appointed committee that had to set the dollar amounts that each board and institution was to receive from the Seventy-Five Million Campaign (the predecessor to the Cooperative Program). Solomon later recalled that he and Dodd were the ones who introduced the idea of an annual fund solicitation effort to provide on-going financial support by percentage allocations to the agencies and institutions of the Southern Baptist Convention. That funding effort came to be called the Cooperative Program.

As a result of his involvement in the Seventy-Five Million Campaign, Solomon saw the need for sound financial footing and planning for state agencies, such as the *Witness*. Two years after serving as editor of the *Witness*, and during the 1932 Florida Baptist State Convention meeting in Daytona Beach, Pastor C. M. White announced that, "The *Florida Baptist Witness* does not owe one dollar." This depression era financial success came largely from the hand of Editor Solomon.

Increased Circulation a Priority

A year later, it was reported at the 1933 State Convention meeting held at the First Baptist Church, Pensacola, that Solomon was a "regular dynamo of cheer and optimism." Solomon saw the need to increase the circulation of the *Witness* and in his tenure saw the increase of subscribers reach 23,600 before his retirement in 1949.

Solomon believed in putting forth new ideas for promoting the paper but he felt that a real key to more subscriptions were the pastors and the true hope of Florida's state Baptist newspaper was Cooperative Program support. In 1933 there were 739 Southern Baptist churches in the state and a total of 915 preachers. Solomon bemoaned the fact that only 100 of the 739 churches budgeted the *Witness* and only 238 of the 915 preachers were subscribers.

The Solomon years saw the paper through the end of the depression and through the paper shortages and labor problems associated with World War II. Dr. Solomon knew that a stronger funding foundation was needed and at the 1949 State Convention held in Orlando, he proposed that the "Arizona Plan" be adopted. The plan used by the Baptist Convention of Arizona fully-funded the costs to place their state newspaper in the hands of every member of their churches. Such an undertaking ensured every Arizona Baptist got much needed information on the mission and ministries of Arizona Baptists and Southern Baptists. Solomon strongly believed that it was time for Florida Baptists to consider such a plan. In 1947 the population of Florida was 2,540,000. There were 224,884 Southern Baptist church members in Florida who had given \$6,524,111 through the Cooperative Program. Solomon argued before the State Convention that all Florida Baptists needed to be informed and inspired on a state-wide basis. Unfortunately, Florida Baptists did not commit funding to make the "Arizona Plan" a reality. However, it was a dream that did not die entirely. Nearly 30 years later *Florida Baptist Witness* Editor Edgar Cooper fought the same funding battle without success.

-- continued next month --