

THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE



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A Newsletter Of +
THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY *****
+ VOLUME I PAGES 25-32 April, 1971

WE ALMOST REACHED MEMBERSHIP GOAL OF 100 BY MARCH 31, 1971.....

As of Tuesday, April 6, 1971, the membership of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society stood at 90 - our goal was 100. It is highly probable that several more applications for membership will be received in the near future.

Since our last report the following paid up memberships have been received:

- Bell, Earl S.
- Borich, Frank
- Brandon, John
- Bratcer, David
- Clore, W.L.
- Dale, Evelyn R.
- Davis, James Burt
- Floyd, J.G.
- Kentucky Building Library WKU
- Lowry, Dr. Mark
- Midcontinent BBC Library
- Sadler, H. Bailey
- South Jefferson B.C. Library
- Spencer, Ward
- Taulman, James E.
- Walker, A.W.
- Williams, Joe
- White, Ralph B.

P.S. We are still looking for the persons(4) who turned in their money at the meeting at Hodgenville last August 14th, but left no name or address.

We shall continue to send complimentary copies of the Newsletter to additional prospects other than those to whom it was sent in the January-March period. Please send us the names and addresses of others whom you think might be interested in becoming members.

NOT ENOUGH ORDERS

Due to the fact that we received only twenty-three orders for the re-print of John Taylor's History of Ten Churches we will be refunding those who sent in money with their orders. Please allow a few days for this to be done as the society will have to arrange for the checks to be made out by the Treasurer and mailed from Middletown. However you should receive your refund by the end of April

OUR ANNUAL MEETING

FRIDAY, JULY 23 CEDAR CREEK B.C.
FERN CREEK, JEFFERSON COUNTY, KY.

William D. Martin, Host Pastor

S.B.C. HIST. COMM. AND SOCIETY

MONDAY-WEDNESDAY APRIL 19-21
NASHVILLE, TENN.

THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT-CURATOR:

Dr. Leo T. Crismon

VICE-PRESIDENT:

Wendell H. Rone, Sr.

SECRETARY:

George R. Jewell

TREASURER:

Dr. Harold G. Sanders

THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

507 Byers Avenue

Owensboro, Kentucky.

42301

Address all communications to the above address.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHURCH TO TAKE OUT
A LIFE OR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP IN THE
KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOC.

KENTUCKY BAPTISTS IN THE GREAT REVIVAL OF 1800

BY
J. H. SPENCER
(1825-1837)

Among the Baptists in Northern Kentucky, where they were by far the most numerous, the great revival began, and continued to its close, in a decorous, orderly manner. In the upper Green River country and East Tennessee, where the Separate Baptists were most numerous there was more excitement, and some "falling" and "jerking!" In Middle Tennessee (then called West Tennessee), "the strange exercises" did not prevail among the Baptists. In the lower Green River country, there were but few Baptists at the beginning of the revival, and we hear of no disorder among them. It is certain that the Baptists of Kentucky were generally exempt from the excesses of the great revival of 1800, that so sorely afflicted the Presbyterians. And instead of its resulting in discord, it healed the only schism there was among them.

The great revival among the Baptists, so far as history records the facts, began on the northern border of the State. Its first appearance was at the mouth of Kentucky river, where was built the village of Port William (now Carrollton). This was a union meeting, the only one of which we are informed, that the Baptists engaged in during the revival. The Baptists were probably most prominent,* but there were Methodists enough present to make the meetings noisy. John Taylor was present at one of the meetings, "very early in the spring of 1800." It was at the house of Benjamin Craig, a brother of the famous Lewis Craig. "From the dullness of my feelings," says Mr. Taylor, I took the text: 'LORD HELP ME.' After preaching, "they continued in prayer, praise and exhortation, with much noise at times, till late in the night. Some were rejoicing, having lately obtained deliverance, others were groaning in tears. Many people tarried all night to talk with me. I never heard the question: 'What must I do to be saved,' more prevalent in my life. A number of them neither lay down nor slept during the night. About sunrise next morning, I took my leave of this blessed company of young disciples. I had no desire to use food that day. I rode on with pensive reflection, calling up in my mind past days, when I had hoped the candle of the Lord shone on me. But by the multiplicity of the business of this little world, my affections had been stolen off from the Lord. My eyes would not only swim, but overflow with tears, as I rode along by myself."#

Mr. Taylor was on his way to what is now Trimble county. It was a new settlement. Being detained there several days on business, he held three night meetings in the cabins of the settlers. In these meetings he saw "some buddings of a revival." Out of these "buddings" grew Corn Creek church, before the year closed. From this place he went with a burdened soul to Clear Creek in Woodford county. Here he preached with "great heart yearning for his old neighbors." That day he sowed in tears, and the harvest was plentiful. He turned

*See history of Ghent church, in Chap. XXIV, pp. 455-456.

#His. of Ten Churches, pp. 131, 132.

his steps towards Bullittsburg, in Boone county, where he lived." "I almost dreaded to go home," says he, "fearing I should be unprofitable. Poor Bullittsburg now appeared like a deserted cottage in the wilderness." When he reached home, he found a new social feature in the neighborhood. A Captain DePew who had married a relative of Mr. Taylor's wife, had encouraged dancing at his house, and the amusement had become so popular that even the church members did not restrain their children from attending the balls. A marriage in the neighborhood had given an occasion for several days' dancing, the last dance being at Capt. DePew's, near the meeting-house, and on church-meeting day. "That night," says Mr. Taylor, "I had meeting near the place. But few attended, though I heard they had a crowded house at the infare. Two young ladies left the dance and came almost alone to the meeting. This was some encouragement that the devil did not reign sole monarch of this lower world. Next day, was preaching at our meeting-house. It was a usual thing, notwithstanding the vanity of youth, for all to come to meeting, especially on Sundays. We had a crowded house, and perhaps all the dancers were there.

Mrs. DePew had endeavored to strengthen her female disciples, before they went to meeting, by saying to them: 'Girls, we shall hear enough of our dancing to-day, but let us not mind what Mr. Taylor says, we are at liberty, and will do as we please, let him say what he will,' I never had been so thoroughly cowed down by discouragement in a ministry of twenty-five years. I really thought I had better be dead than alive, for I felt that Satan had gotten the mastery where I lived. I could say from my soul; "Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, and that I dwell in the tents of Kedar." I preached from the words; 'My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, is, that they might be saved.' Soon after I began, a set of feelings overtook me, that exceeded anything I ever felt in public speaking. They consisted of a profuse weeping that I could not suppress, while I made a comparison of the then state of Israel, with my poor neighbors. The whole assembly seemed to reciprocate my feelings; perhaps there was not a dry eye in the whole house, Mrs. DePew exceeded in weeping. What the Lord did at this meeting, entirely broke up all the dancing in the settlement."*

In this manner the great revival began at Bullittsburg church, early in the spring of 1800. This was a new settlement, and when the revival had continued more than a year, there were comparatively few adults in the neighborhood left out of the church. Within three years, 149# were baptized.

At Clear Creek in Woodford county, the revival progressed during the same period, principally under the ministry of Richard Cave, and the astonishing number of 343# were baptized during the three years. Thus was John Taylor honored by God as the chosen instrument by which the great revival was begun among the Baptists. It will be remembered that the first revival which occurred in Kentucky, was under the ministry of Mr. Taylor, at Clear Creek, in 1785, and that the second revival that occurred in the country, also began under his labors, at the same church, in 1788.

In Franklin county, the revival began under the ministry of William Hickman, of whose labors we have the following account from his own pen: "Previous to that date (1800) the church was under a decline. Zion had gone into her slumbers. At a meeting at my house, on Sunday afternoon, several preachers being present, there came a

(Cont. on next page.)

*His. Ten Churches pp. 134, 135.

#Min. Elkhorn Association.

young married lady to meeting whom I had never seen before, as she had just moved into the neighborhood. In time of preaching I observed tears flowing from her eyes. This gave me an uncommon feeling. I thought she was pierced with the sword of the Spirit. I think it gave me a travailing soul for the cause of God. She became a humble penitent, and, is now, I hope, in glory. Very shortly after this, I heard of three females under trouble, and inquiring the way to heaven. I started out to hunt the lost sheep. The first I went to see was a married lady. I conversed with her, and she satisfied me that she had been born again. I went to see two more that same day. The first was not at home, but had gone to where the other lived. I called there and found them both. We walked into the garden. Neither of them professed to be satisfied, but appeared humble beggars, at a throne of grace. At our monthly meeting which was near at hand, the first one I visited came forward and told us what the Lord had done for her. She was cordially received. My dear Brother Gano (John Gano), though in a feeble state, like old Jacob, leaning on his staff, spoke at the water, and I baptized her in the name of the Holy Trinity. The next meeting the other two came forward, and I baptised them. Blessed be God, the glorious work of God went on and prospered abundantly. Every meeting was crowded and many were converted to God. The work had now spread throughout the state. For two or three years great additions were made to the churches, not only in Kentucky, but also in Virginia and other states. I suppose I baptized more than five hundred in the course of two years."*

It may as well be observed here, that PROTRACTED MEETINGS, as we term them, were not in vogue at that period. Meetings were held monthly, as now (in 1885), at the meeting houses. During revivals, which generally lasted from one to three years, night meetings would be held at private houses, two or three times a week. When people were seeking religion, it was generally known all over the neighborhood. They would often go to the preacher, or to the most pious and intelligent members of the church for encouragement and instruction, and the preacher and other church members would visit them for the same purpose.

As observed by Mr. Hickman by the close of the year 1800, the revival had spread to all parts of the state. Immense numbers were added to the churches. The few churches scattered in the thinly settled portions of the state, lying south of Green River, and north of that stream, below the mouth of the Salt River, were all small, and we have few particulars of their statistics previous to the beginning of the revival; but the general statistics show that the number of Baptists in those regions were more than trebled. From most of the churches in the older settlements, we have official statistics. The revival proceeded much in the same way, in all these churches. The preaching was doctrinal rather than hortatory. The exhortations were fervent and made up largely of Scripture quotations, as were also the prayers. The songs were of Watt's collection, and were sung slowly and gravely.

At Severns Valley, in Hardin County, the revival commenced in 1801. The meetings were conducted by the venerable Joshua Morris. Meetings were held once a month on Saturday and Sunday, and members were received on Saturday and baptized on Sunday following. The church records exhibit the following items:

"In September prayed at opening, and received seven members by experience.

"In October met praying.

"November, had no business to do but to praise God and receive twenty members.

"In December, received nine members.

"In January, 1802, received twenty-two."

(Cont'd on next page)

* Three or four small churches belonging to the Green River Association were in Tennessee; but it is probable that the aggregate membership of these was more than balanced by that of unassociated churches in Kentucky

The effects of the revival, aside from the numbers it added to the churches, were exceedingly salutary. Before the revival, the morals of the people, under the predominating influence of infidelity, were extremely bad, especially in the Green River country. Rev. John Mason Peck, writing to the Christian Review (Vol. XVII, 506-513) in 1852, says:

"INFIDELITY RECEIVED ITS DEATH BLOW DURING THAT PERIOD. Not a few continued infidels and scoffers, but they were shorn of their strength. So many of their number had been converted, some of whom became proficient ministers of the gospel, that infidelity could no longer boast. Multitudes of strong minded men, strong in their habits of free-thinking, were converted in so sudden and impressive a mode as to confound and perplex their associates. In all the preachers who engaged this great work, however deficient in education, moderate in natural talents, or illogical in argument, there was one trait of character prominent in all their ministrations. They gave most convincing proof of their earnestness and sincerity; that they fully believed all they uttered.

"The preachers generally, made no effort at skillful argumentation, and did not attempt to prove the Bible to be the Word of God, or Christianity a divine verity; but they preached its most commonplace truths to the consciences of all classes. Their intonation of voice, impressive gestures, impassioned exhortations, and frequent weeping went directl to the feelings and hearts of their hearers. We have heard men say, who went to meetings infidel scoffers, hardened in sin, and determined to resist every serious impression, that in an instant, and before they had been on the ground ten minutes, their consciences were arrested and their minds filled with indescribably emotions; that they had no time to recollect the objections with which their minds had been fortified against the truth of the Bible. Others could not tell of any process of reasoning in their own minds by which they came to a knowledge of the truth. They would speak of being overwhelmed and borne down with a consciousness of the power of the reality of eternal things. An instantaneous and deep conviction of their exceeding sinfulness and guilt, and their just condemnation by the divine law, would be the description given by others. Equally sudden and irrepresible would be their views of God's pardoning mercy, through Christ Jesus, in removing all guilt, and filling their minds with indescribable joy and rapture. We have conversed with some persons of reflective and meditative turn, in a great degree devoid of emotion, who described their conversion from unbelief and sin as more gradual and attended with more thought; who appeared to have proceeded, step by step, from one refuge to another, without hope and consolation, until, in the hour of despair, they were led to trust in Christ, and after much doubt and hesitation, were enabled to lay hold of the promises."

The period was a turning point in the morals of the people. With the increase of infidelity, public morals had depreciated till they had reached a depth of degradation that was horrifying to contemplate. But, the cause being removed, the effects ceased, and the whole land seemed regenerated. From that period to the present (1885), the morals of the people of Kentucky would compare favorably with those of any part of the country. (Cont'd on next page)

In this manner the work proceeded till one hundred and forty-six were received. In 1801 the church numbered only forty-seven members. Hon. Samuel Haycraft thus described the baptismal scene as it occurred in January, 1802:

"The writer remembers the day, sixty-nine years now past. The weather was mild for the season, and the baptismal scene on the Valley Creek, was a solemn and pleasant occasion. A vast crowd stood upon the banks, as one after another stepped into the stream and was buried with Christ in baptism. At the slight intervals, hymns of praise and shouts of rejoicing rent the air. I can never forget the scene. The venerable Morris was so filled that he seemed as one snatched up into the heavens. Although but a child, I was filled with solemn awe."

At South Elkhorn, the oldest church north of the Kentucky river, the meetings during the revival were conducted by John Shackelford, who was the last survivor of that noble band of Christian heroes who preached the gospel through prison gates in Virginia. In 1800, the church numbered one hundred and twenty-seven. During the revival period, three hundred and eighteen were received.

At Bryant's Station, in Fayette County, the practical and conservative Ambrose Dudley was pastor. In 1800 the church numbered one hundred and seventy. During the revival period four hundred and twenty-one were baptized. This was the largest number baptized in any one church.

Great Crossings is in Scott County. In 1800 it numbered one hundred and seven. Joseph Redding was the pastor. Four hundred and seven were baptized.

In something like these proportions did the churches increase in numbers throughout the state, except within the bounds of Bracken Association, where a revival to a considerable extent had prevailed in 1797. Happily our statistics for 1803 are nearly complete, so that we can approximate very closely the numerical gain to the churches during the three years in which the revival prevailed.

At the beginning of the revival in 1800...there were six associations, besides that part of Mero District Association (Tennessee) which lay in Kentucky, and several unassociated churches. Comparative tables show the gains:

| <u>ASSOCIATIONS</u> | | <u>NO. OF CHURCHES</u> | | <u>NO. OF MEMBERS</u> | |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| <u>1800</u> | <u>1803</u> | <u>1800</u> | <u>1803</u> | <u>1800</u> | <u>1803</u> |
| Elkhorn | Elkhorn | 26 | 40 | 1642 | 4404 |
| Salem | Salem | 22 | 18 | 497 | 890 |
| S. Kentucky* | | 18* | -- | 1184* | ---- |
| Tate's Creek | Tate's Creek | 12 | 23 | 579 | 1905 |
| Mero District | | 6 | -- | 234 | ---- |
| Bracken | Bracken | 10 | 16 | 623 | 776 |
| Green River | Green River | 9 | 30 | 350 | 1763 |
| Unassociated | | 3 | -- | 60 | ---- |
| | North District | -- | 24 | ---- | 1745 |
| | South District | -- | 24 | ---- | 1468 |
| | North Bend | -- | 9 | ---- | 429 |
| | Long Run | -- | 25 | ---- | 1715 |
| | Cumberland | -- | 10 | ---- | 400 |
| <u>TOTALS</u> | | <u>106</u> | <u>219</u> | <u>5119</u> | <u>15,495</u> |

* Number of Churches and Members estimated. Association dissolved in 1801 to become North and South District Associations. Cumberland took the place of Mero District. North Bend and Long Run were new in 1803.

(Cont'd on next page)

The effect of the revival on Christians was permanently good. It imbued them more deeply with the spirit of the Master, and gave them clearer views of the spirituality of religion. It turned their minds away from the metaphysical abstractions about dogmas, and inspired a greater earnestness for spreading the gospel of salvation. They became more interested in sinners being "born again" than in determining the comparative orthodoxy of Calvin and Arminius; and were more desirous to promote love and harmony among brethren, than to discover indistinguishable shades of heterodoxy in each other's creeds. The ~~are~~ forms of religious morals, ceremonies, and learning catechisms, gave way to firm belief in the necessity of experiential religion.

The revival had an especially happy effect on the Baptists, in disposing them to make more efforts to heal some unhappy divisions that existed among them, and in enlarging the spirit of missions. Hitherto their missionary operations had been confined to sending their ministers to look after the destitution among their brethren in Kentucky and Tennessee, and the borders adjacent in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. But, in 1801, at the meeting of Elkhorn Association, which comprised one-third of the Baptists of the state, and probably more than two-thirds of their wealth and influence, a request came from South Elkhorn Church, "to send missionaries to the Indian nations."

The association took this subject under consideration, and "agreed to appoint a committee of five members to hear and determine on the call of our ministers, and, if satisfied therewith, to give them credentials for that purpose; to set subscriptions on foot, to receive collections for the use of said mission; and it is recommended to the churches to encourage subscriptions for said purpose, and have the money lodged with the deacons, to be applied for that purpose, whenever called for by the committee. The following brethren were appointed: David Barrow, Ambrose Dudley, John Price, Augustine Eastin, and George Smith." Any three of these brethren were authorized to act in the absence of the others. Unfortunately we have no record of the results of this transaction, except that John Young was approved by the committee, and sent as a missionary to the Indians. But we have no knowledge of the length of time he spent among the red men, or the results of his labors. After his return from his mission, he settled on Little Sandy River, and was instrumental in building up the first churches in Greenup County.

At the same session of Elkhorn Association, full correspondence was established between that body and Tate's Creek Association. The latter fraternity had been formed...of four churches which split off from the South Kentucky Association of Separate Baptists, in 1792, and, in imitation of the Virginia brethren, had taken the name of UNITED Baptists (From a union of REGULAR and SEPARATE Baptists WHR). Several attempts had been made to form a union between the two bodies, to no avail. But now, under the influence of a happy revival, the difficulties disappeared, and a lasting union was consummated.

At the same meeting of the association, measures were adopted to provide for the support of John Gano, John Sutton, and David Thompson, aged ministers, who had worn themselves out in the Master's service, and were now in indigent circumstances. The contributions of the churches for this purpose, were to be distributed among the venerable fathers, as an expression of the love and care felt for them in their old age. This was true indication that the revival was of God. "By their fruits shall ye know them."

-- HISTORY OF KENTUCKY BAPTISTS, Vol. I, 535-544

(The story of the union of the Regular and Separate Baptists, in 1801, and told so effectively by Dr. Spencer, will be given in a later issue of The Kentucky Baptist Heritage WHR)

KENTUCKY BAPTISTS' FIRST CHURCHES

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>TYPE OF BAPTISTS</u> | <u>DATE ORGANIZED</u> | <u>COUNTY THEN</u> | <u>COUNTY NOW</u> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| SEVERNS VALLEY | Regular | June 18, 1781 | Jefferson | Hardin |
| CEDAR CREEK | Regular | July 4, 1781 | Jefferson | Nelson |
| GILBERT'S CREEK* | Regular | Dec. 9, 1781 | Lincoln | Garrard |
| SOUTH FORK-NOLYNN | Separate | Summer of 1782 | Jefferson | Larue |
| FORKS OF DIX RIVER | Separate | 1782 | Lincoln | Garrard |
| GILBERT'S CREEK | Separate | 1783 | Lincoln | Garrard |
| SOUTH ELKHORN | Regular | Fall of 1783** | Fayette | Fayette |
| BEAR GRASS | Regular | January 1784 | Jefferson | Jefferson |
| PROVIDENCE | Separate | April 3, 1784 | Fayette | Clark |
| COX'S CREEK | Regular | April 17, 1785 | Nelson | Nelson |
| GREAT CROSSINGS | Regular | May 28, 1785 | Fayette | Scott |
| CLEAR CREEK | Regular | June 18, 1785+ | Fayette | Woodford |
| LIMESTONE | Regular | 1785 | Fayette | Mason |
| POTTENGER'S CREEK | Separate | 1785 | Nelson | Nelson |
| BRASHEAR'S CREEK | Regular | 1785 | Jefferson | Shelby |
| RUSH BRANCH | Separate | 1785 | Lincoln | Lincoln |
| HEAD OF BOONE'S CRK | Separate | 1785 | Fayette | Fayette |
| TATE'S CREEK | Regular | 1785 | Lincoln | Madison |
| BOONE'S CREEK | Regular | Nov. 13, 1785 | Fayette | Fayette |
| BRYANT'S STATION | Regular | April 15, 1786 | Fayette | Fayette |
| TOWN FORK (Lex.1st) | Regular | July , 1786 | Fayette | Fayette |
| TATE'S CREEK | Separate | 1786 | Madison | Madison |
| MARBLE CREEK # | Regular | June 15, 1787 | Fayette | Fayette |
| COOPER'S RUN | Regular | August , 1787 | Bourbon | Bourbon |
| LICK CREEK | Separate | 1787 | Nelson | Nelson |
| BOONE'S CREEK | Separate | 1787 | Fayette | Fayette |
| HANGING FORK-DIX R. | Regular | 1787 | Mercer | Boyle |
| HEAD OF SALT RIVER | Separate | 1787 | Mercer | Mercer |
| FORKS OF ELKHORN | Regular | June 14, 1788 | Woodford | Franklin |
| BUCK RUN | Regular | Oct. 1, 1788 | Fayette | Woodford |
| SHAWNEE RUN | Separate | Nov. 21, 1788 | Mercer | Mercer |
| HUSTON'S CREEK | Separate | 1788 | Bourbon | Bourbon |
| ROLLING FORK | Regular | 1788 | Nelson | Nelson |
| MAY'S LICK | Regular | Nov. 28, 1789 | Mason | Mason |
| HARDIN'S CREEK | Regular | 1789 | Nelson | Nelson |
| JESSAMINE CREEK | Separate | 1789 | Fayette | Jessamine |
| COLUMBIA | Regular | Jan. 20, 1790 | Ohio Terr. | Hamilton |
| MT. PLEASANT | Separate | July 24, 1790 | Woodford | Franklin |
| INDIAN RUN | Regular | 1790 | Fayette | Clark |
| UNITY | Separate | 1790 | Fayette | Clark |
| HICKMAN'S CREEK | Separate | 1790 | Fayette | Fayette |
| HEAD OF BEECH FORK | Separate | 1790 | Mercer | Mercer |
| HARDIN'S CREEK | Separate | 1790 | Nelson | Washing. |
| W. FORK COX'S CRK | Separate | 1790 | Nelson | Nelson |
| WHITE OAK RUN | Regular | 1790 | Nelson | Nelson |

* The famous Lewis Craig Traveling Church. ** S.H. Ford gives date of July 31, 1784 from old minutes. + S.H. Ford gives this date from old minutes. Taylor gave April, 1785 from memory.