

THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE



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A Newsletter Of The
KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOC.
507 Byers Avenue, Owensboro, Ky.
42301

(Return Requested)

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MEMBERSHIP STILL UP

Membership Report142
(As of December 15)

ANNUAL DUES\$ 2.50
(Personal and Institutional)
LIFE MEMBERSHIP\$25.00
(Personal and Institutional)

Send Membership Applications to
address given above

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS

PENDERGRAPH, G.R.
QUINN, EUGENE F.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHURCH AND MEMBERS
TO TAKE OUT AN ANNUAL OR A LIFE
MEMBERSHIP IN THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

IS IT TIME TO RENEW?

Has the renewal time arrived for
your Annual Membership Dues to
the Historical Society? Please
check your records to be sure. Re-
new promptly.

NOW AVAILABLE

SOUTHERN BAPTIST ENCYCLOPEDIA
Volume III

At Your Baptist Book Store

Order your copy of THE DIRECTORY
OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCHES from
Church Literature Services, SSB
of SBC, 127 9th Ave. N., Nashville,
Tennessee, 37203. Cost - \$6.00.
A new and needed publication. This
book has many uses.

MERRY XMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Officers and Members of the
Kentucky Baptist Historical Commi-
sion and the Officers of the Ken-
tucky Baptist Historical Society
extend the above greeting to all
the members and friends of the so-
ciety and to the Kentucky Baptist
Convention for helping to make the
work of the society and commission
the most prosperous and far-reach-
ing it has been in its entire his-
tory.

Let us enter the year 1972 with
renewed determination to honor our
God-given heritage by intensified
efforts to gather, preserve, and
publish for posterity the history
of the Baptists of Kentucky.

THE HERITAGE TO BECOME QUARTERLY

Beginning on January 15, 1972,
the Kentucky Baptist Heritage will
become a 24 page Quarterly publi-
cation. Better and more lengthy ar-
ticles will be forthcoming.

PIONEER BAPTIST PREACHERS

BENJAMIN TOLBERT

The pioneer of all the pioneer preachers of the Green River Country is the subject whose name appears above. Few men were better known, or more revered, in this section a century and a quarter ago, than Elder Benjamin Tolbert. His ministry is the beginning of the Baptists of this section of the State. Elder Tolbert is supposed to have been a native of North Carolina. His date of birth was probably about the year 1760. He came to Muhlenberg County, Ky., as a settler in the 1790's from the central part of Tennessee. As far as is known he was among the first preachers to settle in the Green River Country and is therefore to be considered as the founding father of a large number of the Baptists in this large and populous territory. Tradition holds that he has been heard to say, that, while a soldier in the cause of liberty for his country, he was caused to see himself as a sinner in the sight of God on suffering from a wound by the enemy's gun, which casualty he believed was ordered by Providence. The wound left a cavity in his thigh like the mark of Grace in his heart and was borne through life. He learned to read after marriage by the aid of his wife. Nothing else is known concerning him prior to his entering into the constitution of Hazel Creek Church in Muhlenberg County on December 3, 1797. Then he was a man with a family settled in what was then Muhlenberg County and a little later became Butler County. Investigations have led many to conclude that he had connections with Cox's Creek Church, in Salem Association, before coming to this section of the State. He was of small stature, but of large resolution, making journeys to his appointments through perils, often bearing his gun, and while preaching to the hardy settlers, his horse would eat on the ground the corn brought in a wallet, or graze in the woods. He was not embarrassed in preaching without his coat in warm weather, and he said that he considered no good done when he preached unless someone laughed, wept or got mad. Faultfinding church members he called the "devil's dogs." Sinners, deeply penitent, he compared to the cattle in the Pedee Swamps of North Carolina. (From this we see he must have been a native of that State). The more they strove the deeper they sank in the mire. A religious professor of crippled influence, he said, was like a sheep recovered from a fall into the water. If he did not like the story of an applicant for church membership, he would tell him to wait till another time.

Some ministers who envied him, or were suspicious of his orthodoxy on the subject of preaching the Gospel to every creature, attended one of his appointments to advise a cessation of his tone. While they sat on the platform Tolbert spoke to the people, saying he would preach his doctrine if the devil was at his back.

At an Associational meeting in a prosperous region, some familiar brethren, willing to please the people, cautioned him, that if he were invited to preach, not to speak as plain as common. Sure enough, in his sermon he said that the people of the Green River Valley were like hogs, living fat all the year, but never looking from whence the acorn came.

We are little surprised that such a courageous man was a successful minister of the Gospel. From his little spiritual fort on Hazel Creek he went forth in all directions bearing the message of peace to all settlers in a strange land. He was instrumental in planting many of the oldest churches in the Green River Valley and ministered to them until God raised up preachers to take care of them. Among these are to be found: Hazel Creek in Muhlenberg County in 1797; Beaver Dam in Ohio County in 1798; Nelson Creek in Muhlenberg County in 1803; Sandy Creek and Monticello in Butler County, both founded in 1805; Buck Creek in McLean County in 1812; Yelvington in Daviess County in 1813; Walton's Creek in Ohio County in 1814; Pond Run in Ohio County in 1820 and perhaps others of which we have no information.

His work was mainly in the Gasper River Association of which he was a member from its organization in 1812 until his death 22 years later. He served that body as Moderator from 1824 through 1830, and preached the Annual Sermon on six different occasions.

Hazel Creek Church received his pastoral ministrations from her organization to the time of his death, a period of 37 years. He also pastored Beaver Dam for 28 years, 1803 through 1831; Nelson Creek from 1803 through 1813, a period of 11 years; Sandy Creek from 1805 through 1834, a period of 29 years; Walton's Creek from 1814 through 1832, a period of 19 years; and Pond Run from 1820 through 1833, a period of 14 years.

His death occurred on November 10, 1834, in his 74th. year. The Gasper River Association erected a monument over his grave, in 1867, which is located about eight miles from Rochester, Ky., in Butler County. It is a marble slab about four feet in height and about twenty inches in width, bearing the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF

ELDER BENJAMIN TOLBERT

WHO WAS A PIONEER BAPTIST PREACHER IN THE GREEN RIVER COUNTRY. THE TIME AND PLACE OF HIS BIRTH UNKNOWN, DIED NOVEMBER 10, 1834. AGED ABOUT 74 YEARS.

"His toils are passed, his work is done,
And he is fully blest;
He fought the fight, the victory won,
And entered into rest."

His final resting place was only a few feet behind the cabin in which he lived and died. Small pieces of stone may still be found on the ground showing the remains of the chimney of his home. The tombstone was cracked but is now in a good state of repair.

Elder Tolbert was a man of great decision of character. His purposes once formed were seldom changed. Heavy rains, high waters, and hard winds were seldom obstacles between him and his churches. A man of rare talents, his gifts of exhortation were seldom equaled. He rarely delineated the sufferings of Christ except in tears. He traveled and preached much and received very little compensation. Though he never lived to see the formation of the Daviess County Association it would be an act of ingratitude to not include him among the fathers of this large body of Baptists as well as the Gasper River, Ohio Coun-

ty, and Muhlenberg County Associations.

By Wendell H. Rone, Sr.
In "A History of Daviess-McLean
Baptist Association, 1943,"
p.p. 280-283

JOHN LANSING BURROWS, D.D.

This noble man of God was born in the city of Albany, New York, on the 14th. of February, 1814. He was the son of Samuel and Elizabeth Burrows. His father was a sailor and in consequence his duties called him away from home. He died of yellow fever in 1822 in the city of Mobile, Alabama. The widowed mother left with three children went to live with her father-in-law, Nathaniel Burrows. Here young John L. went to the schools at hand and still later to College. His first experience at college life was at Lafayette, in Easton, Pennsylvania. Then at Union College, Schenectady, New York, and finally at the Andover-Theological Seminary, Andover, Massachusetts. It was during his college days that he became concerned in religious matters under the preaching of that wonderful pulpit orator, Bartholomew Welch, who was the pastor of the Pearl Street Church in Albany. The religious background of young Burrows was not Baptist. The whole family had united in the communion known as the Dutch Reformed. While not opposed by his family, it is at this period that we find him starting for himself. The date of his conversion and baptism are not known; but as the two events were contiguous in time, so the determination to preach was entered upon and encouraged by Dr. Welch.

In 1835, Mr. Burrows became of age and also an ordained Minister of the Gospel. The Church at Poughkeepsie, N.Y., was charmed with the youth and called him as their pastor, and so he was ordained over them. But this relation was not lasting. Some difficulties arose which he could not cope with. He resigned and became assistant to the aged Dr. McClay of the Mulberry Street Baptist Church in New York City. The Church raised a purse in 1836 for the purpose of sending him as an agent for the China Mission to the State of Kentucky. He came, with his wife, to Shelbyville, Ky., where he taught school for one year with the venerable J.E. Farnham. He went from there to Elizabethtown, Ky., where he taught, preached, and also worked as editor with John L. Waller. A daughter was born to the young couple while at Elizabethtown.

In 1839, his wanderings took him to Owensboro, Ky. While here a great revival broke out and hundreds were brought to a knowledge of the truth. As this incident is of particular interest to the history of this Association and related Churches we wish to dwell on his experience here. From records we learn that in May, 1839, Elder Burrows began a series of meetings in the Court House at Owensboro. Elder Ben Crouch, a Methodist, was holding a quarterly meeting. Burrows proposed a union meeting, which Crouch refused and went on with the meeting until Wednesday night and closed. Elder Burrows then went into a union meeting with the Methodist Circuit-rider and Sam Calhoun, a local preacher of the Cumberland Presbyterians. The people came only to hear Burrows so after a few days he did all the preaching. The meeting lasted about six weeks and over 200 people were converted. About half of this number joined the Baptist Church here. Elder Burrows went from Owensboro to Pleasant Grove Church, where another revival ensued which resulted in over 100 conversions and additions to the Church. We next find him

at Henderson, Ky., where another revival resulted in the organization of a Baptist Church of about 100 members.

Brother Burrows was immediately called to pastor the Churches at Henderson and Owensboro, preaching two Sundays at Owensboro and one at Henderson. This task he accepted and performed for some time. Hundreds united with other Churches as a result of the revivals and his fame spread far and wide over the Green River Country and the Ohio Valley. But his stay here was to be short. In September, 1840, he returned east to attend the Triennial Convention of the Baptist Denomination at Philadelphia. His fervid oratory, his excellent spirit, his grace of manner, so impressed the people of the Sansom Street Church in Philadelphia that they insisted that he should not return to his old Kentucky home but abide with them. He accepted the call to the regret of the Churches of Owensboro and Henderson. In 1844, he founded the Broad Street Church in Philadelphia and was its successful pastor for ten years. In 1854 he accepted the care of the First Church in Richmond, Virginia a relation which was sustained for twenty years with much delight and success. He returned to Kentucky after an absence of almost thirty-five years, in 1874, and became pastor of the historic Broadway Church in Louisville. He remained here until 1882, when he accepted the call of the Free-Mason Street Church in Norfolk, Virginia. This pastorate lasted for ten years, until 1892. Owing to ill health and advanced age he was forced to resign. The First Church at Richmond kindly took care of him during the remainder of his earthly life. He died in the city of Richmond, Va., on January 2, 1893, at the age of 79.

In the year 1887, he attended the Jubilee Meeting of the General Association of Kentucky Baptists at Louisville, Ky., and told of his experiences 50 years before when the Association was organized. He was a messenger from the Severn's Valley Church at Elizabethtown, Ky., to the Association at its organization in 1837.

Besides the one daughter already mentioned, two sons were also born to Brother and Mrs. Burrows. Mrs. Burrows died in 1874 and Brother Burrows was left in a sad and dreary state but with a phlegmatic determination to try again he entered with energy into his work and his later days were crowned with as much success or more than his first. He had no connection with this Association as it was formed about four years after he returned east; but his labors in and adjacent to the cities of Henderson and Owensboro will last in the monumental labor and life of the First Baptist Churches of these respective cities. Cathcart considered John Lansing Burrows, D.D., one of the greatest pulpit orators and most useful men the Baptist Denomination has ever had.

By Wendell H. Rone, Sr., in
"A History of Daviess-McLean
Baptist Association," 1943,
pp. 255-256.

THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE
KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY --- 1871

- I. This organization shall be known as the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society.
- II. Its object shall be the collection, preservation, and publication of Baptist historical material; the stimulation of interest in our history; and the diffusion of a fuller knowledge of the past of our denomination and its leaders.
- III. There shall be an annual meeting of the society in connection with the sessions of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, or at some other convenient time; when one or more addresses on historical subjects shall be delivered.
- IV. Any person may become a life-member of this society on the payment of Twenty-five (\$25.00) Dollars; or an ordinary member by paying an annual fee of Two Dollars and Fifty cents (\$2.50). The payment of the annual fee will entitle the members to all the publications of the society for the corresponding year, and to its other privileges.
- V. The officers of the society shall be a President, a Vice-President, and a Secretary-Treasurer, who shall be elected annually by the members of the society. These officers shall constitute the Executive Committee of the society, together with the other members elected annually. The President shall preside over the meetings of the society, superintend the work of publication when ordered by the society, and in general promote the interests of the society. The Secretary shall preserve the records of the society, receive and hold all funds, and disburse the same on the order of the Executive Committee, and in general promote the interest of the society. The Custodian of the Archives shall act as custodian of the materials gathered
- VI. The Executive Committee shall have charge of all the business of the society in the interim, order the disbursement of all funds, prepare the programs for the annual meeting, make arrangements for the publication of historical material, etc. Either the President or any two members of the Executive Committee can call a meeting of the Committee, of which three shall constitute a quorum.
- VII. The Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, shall be the depository of all historical materials collected.
- VIII. This constitution can be changed only after one year's notice and a vote of a majority of the members present.