SPRING MEADOWS
CENTENNIAL
1869-1969

A Century Of
Christian Care
For Children
To Walnut Street Baptist Church must go the praise and glory for the origin of the idea and for the organization and promotion of the Louisville Baptist Orphans' Home. To George Lorimer, pastor of the church in this critical period of our nation's history (1862-1865), must go the credit for seeing the need and putting the responsibility on the hearts of the right persons to carry the project through. And to Miss Mary A. Hollingsworth must go the credit for developing the idea into actuality and for serving as the first superintendent of the Home.

The "Ladies Aid Society" of Walnut Street Church was the group to whom Dr. Lorimer appealed about the needs of children. In 1866, this group formed the "Orphans' Aid Society" and set out to turn their dreams of a home into a reality. For almost three years funds were collected which were to go to the building of the Home which was even then beginning to loom steadily upon the horizon.

In March, 1869, the work was broadened to include other churches in Louisville. On June 21, 1869, the ladies of the different Baptist Churches in the city met to formulate plans for definite work. The name chosen for the organization was "The Society of the Baptist Home for Helpless Children". This Society had also hoped to start a day nursery but the other part of the work grew too fast to admit the additional effort.

Art. 8 of the Constitution reads: "This Society shall hold itself ready to transfer its work entirely into the hands of the Baptist brethren of this city whenever these shall have organized for the establishment of a permanent Home."

The Ladies' Board of this Society was a strong representative body, and they lost no time in arranging to go on with the work. On the memorable day of June 30, 1869, "The Home for Helpless Children" was opened at 828 West Walnut Street, Louisville. The three little children who were the first occupants of this Home were installed amid joy and thanksgiving. Mrs. M.J. Brown volunteered as a work of love, to care for the children till the proper person could take permanent charge.

On July 6, 1869, God sent the woman He had chosen for the work. The Society had centered upon her, and Dr. Lorimer had singled her out, but through it all there was the divine leading. She was in truth, a worker of God's own choosing, and many have arisen to bless the mission and name of Mary Hollingsworth.

A charter for the Home was received on January 29, 1870. Mrs. J. Lawrence Smith made extensive gifts to the Louisville Baptist Orphan's Home. Early in 1870 a lot 200 feet square at First and St.
Dr. George Lorimer

Catherine Streets was given by Mrs. Smith to be the permanent building site of the Home. Ground breaking exercises for the first building were held at the site on March 21, 1870. Construction seems to have started immediately and good progress was made so that the first wing of the Home was completed by December 19, 1870 and dedicated.

The first issue of The Orphans' Friend was published on January 1, 1872, with Miss Mary Hollingsworth and Miss E. J. Robertson as "Editors". Two purposes of the paper were to furnish information to persons interested in the Home and to enlist support for the Home from out over the state. As of January 1, 1872, there were 48 children being cared for in the Home.

STATE-WIDE EMPHASIS

In 1873 the work of the home was broadened by the thorough canvas of Professor J. W. Rust among the Baptists of the State. The aims of the Home were explained, and committees appointed to look after the work in the churches. Great interest was awakened, and with the help that began to come in from all quarters, a greater number of children came too, to share in the advantages of the Home.
Pictures of the Home in The Orphans’ Friend up through December 15, 1892 show only one “wing”, three stories, at a street intersection (St. Catherine Street) to the left, or on the south. The building faced First Street, on the west side. As of January 15, 1893 the pictures show an additional, larger central wing, to the north, with passageways for all three floors. A “north wing” was never added.

The new building contained twenty-seven large rooms, with dining room and chapel, each 45 by 25 feet in size. The rooms were named for different individuals, societies and churches that had paid for the furnishing, and, in many cases, for future care.

Twenty-five children who once lived under the friendly roof of the Louisville Baptist Orphans Home, but who were happily situated in homes of their own or of their adopted parents, came to the anniversary services held in 1894 for the 25th milestone in the operation of the Home.

Mrs. Arthur Peter was the first President of the Ladies Board, an office she held until her death in 1902. She was an inspiring leader and the members of the Board had paid her the unusual honor of electing her “Perpetual President”.

She was succeeded in 1902 by the Vice President, Mrs. T. B. Duncan, a woman of wise counsel and rare loveliness of character. She took up the work with ease and ability.

MISS MARY RESIGNS

Miss Mary Hollingsworth

In March, 1905, Miss Hollingsworth gave up her great work at the Home for causes which everyone learned with sorrow. The following extract is from Dr. J.B. Marvin’s article published at the time in The Orphans’ Friend, Argus and Western Recorder: “Our dearly beloved Superintendent, Miss Mary A. Hollingsworth, owing to the infirmities of age, and a cataract in her eye necessitating two operations (and she will have to return to the infirmary for a third operation) has been forced to relinquish all active work at the Home. The Board of Managers has granted Miss Hollingsworth an indefinite leave of absence on full salary. We sincerely hope that by rest and change, her health may be restored and her life prolonged. We cheerfully bear witness to the great and noble work she accomplished for the orphans in the State during the past thirty-six years. Miss Mary E. Abercrombie, the Secretary and Assistant Superintendent, has been appointed acting Superintendent by the Board, and the general management of the Home will devolve upon her”.

Miss Abercrombie - “Miss Abbie”, as the children lovingly call her - had thought of work in the missionary field, but she was called into the Home to help Miss Hollingsworth. Happy call - for it was God’s call, too. It gave the Baptists a capable, earnest worker, whose wise, intelligent management has done a great deal for the Home.

In January, 1911, Miss Mary Hollingsworth died at the home of a niece at Howell, Indiana. The funeral took place at the Home and she was buried in the home plot in Cave Hill Cemetery.

Later that year in October, 1911, after an active service of nearly seven years, Miss Abercrombie resigned the charge of the Home. The question of receiving a new superintendent was considered at some length by the Boards, and they, by unanimous action selected Miss Mattie Priest of Henderson, Kentucky. She accepted the responsibility
and took charge of the Home on February 1, 1912. Her sister, Miss Nannie Priest was named as the assistant superintendent.

FIELD AGENTS JOIN THE STAFF

For some years the Home had field agents who worked in the state visiting the children who had been put out into homes. In 1907, Rev. L. S. Sanders began his work in this capacity and continued until 1912. He was joined in 1910 by Rev. Samuel Humphreys. Mr. William Moses began his work as field agent in February, 1916 succeeding Rev. Humphreys who had resigned earlier. Mr. Moses continued for a year until his death.

Dr. O. M. Huey came into this field agent position in February, 1918. Dr. Huey had earlier been pastor of Crescent Hill Baptist Church of Louisville for a period of five years.

Miss Mattie Priest continued as superintendent until her death in August, 1919.

Dr. Huey was promoted to superintendent in November, 1919. In 1919 the General Associations of Baptists in Kentucky was urged to include the Home in the state budget and to recognize and give authority to trustees elected by the churches to operate the Home.

Miss Grace Bartlett became Assistant Superintendent in June, 1929. On Sunday, January 24, 1937, the children (117 of them) had to be vacated from the Home by Greyhound busses to Norton Hall at the Seminary because of the flooding of the Ohio River. On Tuesday, January 26, they were taken by private automobiles to Columbia, Kentucky, where provisions were made for them in the High School building until Friday, February 5, when they once again moved, this time to the First Baptist Church. They stayed there for six days and then returned to the Home in Louisville on Thursday, February 11.

Dr. Huey continued as superintendent up through 1938, when he was retired by the Board of Trustees at the age of seventy-six years. In 1944 the same Board made him Superintendent Emeritus. Dr. Huey died October 26, 1950.

BUILDING NEEDS BECOME CRITICAL

As early as 1940 attention was called to an urgent need for money for "repairing the buildings". In 1941 the report read "A considerable part of the deficit was caused by the necessity of having to do some repair work on the buildings. The present building needed to be replaced by a new and more adequate building. In 1942 this statement appeared, "The present quarters are becoming old and antiquated. That a new building will be necessary before long was re-emphasized in a recent written report made by an investigation committee from the State Board of Health". In 1944 it was announced that a new Home was planned for post-war period. The location of this proposed Home was not yet known.

Dr. A.M. Vollmer

Dr. A.M. Vollmer was named Superintendent of the Home sometime after the retirement of Dr. Huey. Miss Grace Bartlett who had continued as assistant and Mr. L. B. Snider who became field agent in 1938 were largely responsible for the operation in that interim.

In June, 1944, Miss Bartlett resigned and Mrs. Virginia R. Fields was named assistant. Miss Virginia Gregory came into the program as social case worker at about this same time.
In 1943, the Board of Managers had invited the Child Welfare League of America to make a survey of the Home. The League recommended as follows. "If the present building and equipment cannot be adopted to a different program then the Board should consider ways and means for providing adequate substitute environment for those children who were removed from their homes to the institution. It was recommended that the Board should consider moving to a different location. Also it might be considered in relation to the possibility of combining the work of the two Baptist institutions in order that each agency could serve the Baptist children in need and yet not duplicate the work of the other."

As a result of the study by the Child Welfare League, the Board of Trustees voted to discontinue operations at the location at First and St. Catherine Streets in Louisville and to purchase property on the outskirts of Louisville to build a new cottage-type institution. In 1945, 160 acre building site was purchased at Buechel, Kentucky which was nine miles from downtown Louisville. This would enable the institution to have plenty of space on which to build and allow plenty of room for the children to have outside activities, yet at the same time would be close enough to have all the advantages of services of the city of Louisville.

In June, 1946, Dr. A.M. Vollmer resigned as Superintendent to become Executive Secretary of the new Kentucky Baptist Foundation. Mrs. Virginia R. Fields, Assistant Superintendent, became acting head of the Home upon his resignation.

In June, 1947, Rev. Sam Ed Bradley assumed his duties as Field Superintendent of the Louisville Baptist Orphans' Home. In December of the same year the Louisville Home changed its charter.

Rev. Sam Ed Bradley

In December, 1947, the institution formerly known as Louisville Baptist Orphans' Home came under the complete control of the General Association. Under the new agreement the charter was written officially and legally to change the name of the institution to Spring Meadows. The trustees hereafter were to be elected by the General Association, one from each of the main regions into which the territory of the State was divided, and seven laymen from the Louisville area.

Before construction was begun at Buechel, another site became available at Middletown, Kentucky. The Board of Trustees decided that the Middletown location had more to offer for the future expansion of the program.

When the decision was made to give up the buildings at First and St. Catherine and to move to the site near Middletown, it gave oppor-
tunity to put into effect a method of child care which was not entirely new. They were not yet in a position to adopt the cottage plan, but they hoped that in the near future to be able to do this, because it seemed to be the ideal plan. In the Western Recorder for September 6, 1945, there appeared a picture and a floor plan of a cottage with this heading: "One of the Proposed Cottages for the New Louisville Home." Below this, the following appears: "The above is the architect’s drawing of one of the proposed new cottages. It is hoped that funds available will enable us to build some six or eight of these cottages. Each cottage will have 15 to 20 children. Experts in children’s institutions have endorsed the cottage plan as the best in meeting the needs of children."

In June, 1948, seventy-six acres of land were purchased on Shelbyville Road, near Middletown, and the name Spring Meadows was given to the property. Later fourteen acres were added, making a total of ninety acres. The Buechel property was later sold.

Within ten years at the Middletown location, two cottages had been added to the original seven and the work continued to grow. In 1957, Mr. Claud A. Turpin was added to the staff to begin a program of social work services. In 1959, the Board of Child Care established an overall centralization of administration and Rev. Bradley was elevated to the newly created role of General Superintendent. The centralized office including the business functions were moved from Spring Meadows to rented quarters in Middletown. Rev. Bradley continued in that role until his retirement in early 1963. In September of that same year he died in his native state of Arkansas. Rev. C. Ford Deusner, Glen Dale Superintendent since 1947, succeeded him as General Superintendent.
Scenes from the past

PRESIDENTS OF
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Dr. Wm. B. Caldwell 1884-1892
Dr. J. B. Marvin 1893-1913
Mr. Frank Miller 1914-1925
Mr. Junius Caldwell 1926-1929
Mr. F. H. Goodridge 1930-1934
Mr. John S. Long 1935-1942
Mr. V. V. Cooke, Sr. 1943-1956
Mr. Joseph P. Stopher 1957-1960
Mr. W. Ray Moss 1961-1964
Mr. Tom Barbee 1965
Mr. Joseph P. Sanford 1966
Mr. John M. Peterson 1967
Dr. Kenneth P. Crawford 1968-

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Mrs. Encil Deen, President (April 8, 1969 - )
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Mr. Joseph P. Sanford
(deceased)

Mrs. James Keightley    Rev. Ira McMillen

Rev. Larry Maddox

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Promotion .................... Mr. Joe Cross
Pastor's ...................... Rev. E. Kevil Judy
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Associational ............... Rev. J.V. Case
Development ................ Mr. Tom Grissom, Jr.
History ...................... Dr. Leo Crismon
Budget ....................... Mr. John Peterson

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