

THE
KENTUCKY BAPTIST
HERITAGE



LEO TAYLOR CRISMON

A PUBLICATION OF
THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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A TRIBUTE TO DR. LEO TAYLOR CRISMON

No one has meant more to the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society and the Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission in this century than the one whose name appears at the head of this brief sketch.

My first contact with Dr. Crismon was in the Fall of 1936, now fifty years ago, when I enrolled as a student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Louisville, Kentucky. He was the Assistant Librarian of the Seminary at that time, working under the saintly and dignified Dr. Thomas A. Johnson, the Librarian. He had come from the State of Missouri (the "Show Me" State), and was destined to spend the remainder of his useful life in Kentucky, having become acquainted with, and having been "shown" the wealth of material pertaining to Baptist Life in Kentucky. His interest was deepened and intensified by encouragement from the late Dr. William Owen Carver (1868-1954), who had led in the organization of the Southern Baptist Historical Society in 1938.

Dr. Crismon led in the reviving of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society in 1939, as it had ceased to function from 1919 until that time. He became the president of it, and was elected annually to the office for forty years, through 1979. Dr. F. M. Masters, the Kentucky Baptist Historian, served with him as the vice president from the beginning through 1955. George Raleigh Jewell served as the secretary-treasurer during 1939-1974; and, the writer (Wendell H. Rone, Sr.,) served as the vice president from 1956 through 1974. C. Ford Deusner served as the vice president in 1975-1979. James Taulman served as the Secretary in 1975-1977, and Jack Birdwhistell in 1977-1979. Franklin Owen served as the Treasurer in 1975-1979.

The Society had been chartered for the first time on March 21, 1871 with headquarters at Frankfort. On May 12, 1890, the Charter was revised to provide for the headquarters to be in Louisville, with the depository to be at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Library. In 1903, seemingly without knowledge of the previous actions, the matter of a Charter was taken up again and the Society was chartered on June 20, 1905. From 1939 through 1984 Dr. Crismon served as the Curator of the Kentucky Society's and the Commission's Collection, located at the Seminary. It consisted of about 500 volumes of books and about 3,000 issues of annual minutes of associations within the bounds of the State.

In 1943, Dr. Sydnor L. Stealey, Southern Seminary Church History Professor, made a motion (unanimously passed) that the Society memorialize the General Association to consider bringing Dr. Spencer's "History of Kentucky Baptists" up to date. It was done in 1944, approved by the General Association, and Dr. Crismon was made chairman of a committee to carry it out. Dr. Stealey and Wendell H. Rone, Sr., were appointed to serve with him. Stealey left the Seminary in 1951 to become President of Southeastern Seminary. George Raleigh Jewell was appointed to succeed him. Plans progressed so that

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Dr. F. M. Masters was employed on a contract to begin work in writing "A History of Baptists in Kentucky" on December 1, 1946. It was ready for publication by the Messenger Job Printing Company, Owensboro, in October 1949. Proofreading, compiling an index, etc., occupied the attention of Dr. Crismon and George Jewell in 1950-52, and it was finally ready for the bindery. About 2,000 copies were printed and bound. The State Mission Board advanced \$1,500.00 on the project to begin it, and loaned an additional \$6,000.00 to assure its completion. It was ready for distribution in 1953.

By 1957, the number of Masters' "History of Baptists in Kentucky" had been reduced by sale to 190 copies, and the debt reduced to \$2,700.00. By this time the Executive Board and Committee cancelled the balance. By 1961, only 50 copies were still available for sale. The success of the endeavor may be attributed to Dr. Crismon's leadership and patient persistence.

In the meantime, in 1945, Dr. Crismon led the Association to approve of the printing of the Tables on Obituaries from 1837 to 1945, compiled by George Raleigh Jewell, in the 1945 Minutes of the General Association. After Dr. W. C. Boone became Executive Secretary-Treasurer of Kentucky Baptists, in 1946, Dr. Crismon wrote and the Society published (in 1946) his pamphlet on "The Boone Family and Kentucky Baptists," containing thirty-two pages. This was followed by his excellent "Tribute to J. H. Spencer", in 1947, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Kentucky Baptist Historian's death. It is found on Pages 117-123 of the Association's Annual for 1947. (Note: It is republished in this issue of the Heritage.) In 1954, he presented a sketch of the life of "John L. Waller", and the same was printed on Pages 34-36 in the Association's Annual. Also, in 1954, he lead out in the participation of Kentucky writers in the monographs of historical materials from Kentucky to be included in the new Southern Baptist Encyclopedia (Two Volumes). The work was completed in 1956 and published in 1958.

Dr. Crismon supervised the microfilming of the Kentucky Baptist Convention Minutes of 1832-1837, the General Association of Kentucky Baptists for 1837-1953, and the Executive Board Minutes for 1837-1851 in 1955. In 1957-59, he saw that the Minutes of Churches and Associations (all available) in Kentucky were also microfilmed.

In 1960, he began work on a "Kentucky Baptist Atlas," which was pursued painstakingly through 1964 and 1,000 copies were printed initially in January, 1965. A total of 24,000 were produced in a second printing. Previous to the publication of the above, Crismon had written the article "Baptists and Religious Literature" for the book "Baptist Advance", published in commemoration of "The Achievements of Baptists of North American for a Century and a half." (1964, Pages 404-418)

In 1960 the Kentucky Baptist Convention approved the setting up of a permanent Committee on Kentucky Baptist History or Historical Commission.

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Dr. Crismon was made a Permanent Member and Curator. Dr. Carl Fields served as Chairman in 1960-62, and Wendell H. Rone, Sr., served as Chairman in 1963, and again in 1965-1973. L. C. Ray served as the Chairman in 1964. Dr. Crismon served as the Assistant Chairman in 1960-73. He became Chairman of the Commission in late 1973 and continued to fill the office through the year 1983.

Beginning as early as 1963, the Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission and Society began to make plans to observe the Bi-Centennial Anniversary of the first recorded Baptist Preaching in Kentucky (1776-1976). Plans were finalized in 1969. Dr. Crismon was made a member of the Committee. Also, in 1970, it was announced that Volume III of the Southern Baptist Encyclopedia had been completed and was ready for publication (1971). Dr. Crismon was on the General Committee from Kentucky and supervised the securing of monographs on Kentucky's part, writing some of them himself. He did the same for Volume IV, published in 1982. In addition, in 1971, he was named as Editor of the Bi-Centennial Volume on "Baptists in Kentucky 1776-1976", published by the Kentucky Baptist Convention and printed by the "Western Recorder." It was a volume of 330 pages containing 15 chapters, of which he was the writer of three - on "Kentucky Baptist History 1950-1976," "Theological Education in Kentucky," and "Kentucky Baptists and the Nation."

In the period 1970-73, he assisted in the preparation of sketches of the lives of former Executive Secretaries and Corresponding Secretaries of the General Association and State Convention as portraits of them (15) were presented to the Convention and placed in the Baptist Building at Middletown.

In appreciation of his long and useful services to Kentucky Baptists in the collection, writing, and preservation of their history, he was made a Member Emeritus of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission in 1983, remaining as such until his death in February, 1986. He strongly favored and lived to see, after participating in their preparation, the new Constitutions of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission and its auxiliary, the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society. One of his last acts was to work with Dr. Ronald Deering, his successor as Librarian at Southern Seminary, in making a thorough inventory of the Commission and Society holdings at the Seminary Library, in preparation for a beginning of an Archives Collection at the Baptist Building in Middletown to be supervised by Archivist Doris Yeiser, a long-time friend and Secretary of both the Commission and the Society.

Kentucky Baptists owe a debt of deep and lasting gratitude to this humble, faithful, and laborious servant of the Lord. Because of him we have a greater love for and appreciation of our Baptist Heritage.

--- Wendell H. Rone, Sr.
Kentucky Baptist Historian

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LEO T. CRISMON, SECRETARY
OF THE
KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION

Leo T. Crismon served as Assistant Secretary and Secretary of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky and the Kentucky Baptist Convention from his first election in 1957 to the time of his death in 1986.

Twenty-two years as Assistant Secretary and six years in the Secretary's chair gave him the second longest tenure of any Secretary in the history of the General Association/Convention.

Dr. Crismon recorded several rather dramatic changes during his years of service.

Of unusual significance was the change in the name of the body from the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky to the Kentucky Baptist Convention. The change of name and the accompanying changes in the Constitution became effective in 1961.

The tenure of the presiding officer was shortened from two years to one year and the title was changed from Moderator to President.

Another change experienced by Dr. Crismon was the decision to make the officers of the Kentucky Baptist Convention automatically the officers of the Executive Board of the Convention.

Dr. Crismon was noted for his meticulous work in keeping minutes of the proceedings of both bodies which he served. He was very zealous for preciseness in his preparation of the reports and Annuals, working closely with Administrative personnel of the Executive Board, especially Doris Yeiser, of the Executive Secretary-Treasurer's office, who worked with him throughout his tenure. He was the first person to make use of audio equipment to insure completely accurate recordings of the procedures of the meetings.

Dr. Crismon was most circumspect in attendance at all meetings - never absent, never tardy, never away from the action. His scholarly approach, his love for history and his skill as a writer made him a most valuable officer of the Convention.

A very quiet man, he was nevertheless, friendly and congenial with everyone always. He left a rich legacy of faithfulness, fidelity and friendliness for his successors.

---A. B. Colvin
Retired Division Director
Kentucky Baptist Convention

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DR. CRISMON'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTHERN SEMINARY

Leo Taylor Crismon came as a new student for the ministry to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the fall of 1930. He had just graduated with the A. B. degree from William Jewell College. The new campus of the seminary on Lexington Road was just four years old. He completed the Master of Theology degree in the normal three-year period and graduated in the class of 1933. He continued his studies for two more years in graduate school studying under Dr. William Hersey Davis in the Greek New Testament. In 1935 he received the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a dissertation relating to the fine points of the use of certain conjunctions in Hellenistic Greek.

Dr. Crismon, while having served student pastorates in Missouri as a college student, admirably prepared himself to be a college or seminary teacher during his five years at Southern. No teaching position having opened to him upon receipt of his doctorate, he returned to his first calling of the pastorate. He served the Glasgow Baptist Church in Glasgow, Missouri, from May, 1935 until August, 1937, a calling he was again to pick up later when he served as pastor for six years of the New Liberty Baptist Church in Henryville, Indiana (1940-1946) after returning to the seminary.

Dr. Thomas A. Johnson who served as Librarian at Southern Seminary from 1916 until his death in 1939 (first under Dr. John R. Sampey and beginning in 1928 under Dr. William Hersey Davis as Director of the Library) was feeling the need of help in the work of the library. No doubt under the guidance of Dr. Davis, Dr. Johnson turned to Dr. Crismon as a promising candidate, and on August 1, 1937, recruited him to accept the position of Assistant Librarian. He filled this position through the death of Dr. Johnson on November 9, 1939, and became Associate Librarian under the supervision of Dr. Davis on July 1, 1941. He served in this position until the illness that soon took the life of Dr. Davis, and was named Acting Librarian on April 19, 1949, serving in this capacity three years. On March 13, 1951, he was named Librarian of the seminary to serve in his own right as head of the library. He served in this position twenty years until his retirement on July 31, 1971.

In all Dr. Crismon faithfully served Southern Seminary's library for a period of thirty-four years. He helped design, and in 1960 inaugurate the use of the then world's largest theological seminary library building, the magnificent James P. Boyce Centennial Library. He was additionally very effective in building up the basis of the modern collection of the seminary's library holdings, the establishment of the Church Music Library, and the recruitment and development of a full staff of five professional career librarians.

He also led the seminary library to significant involvement with other theological libraries both nationally and internationally. He was co-host

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for the first organizational meeting at Louisville in 1947 of the American Theological Library Association. Leading the library to become a charter member of the Association, he served a six-year term (1962-1968) as a member of its Commission on Lilly Endowment Scholarships (and as Chairman, 1967-68), and also a two-year term as a member of the Executive Committee of the Association (1967-68). He led out in the 1940's and early 1950's among Southern Baptists nationally in helping found the Southern Baptist Historical Commission in Nashville, Tennessee. Internationally he contributed significantly to theological librarianship as a consultant to Southern Baptist foreign missions seminaries before his retirement in South America, and even after his retirement in the Far East, including Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. In 1973 as the crown of his contribution to Southern Seminary he was named Librarian Emeritus.

--- Ronald Deering
Librarian
James P. Boyce Centennial Library
The Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF LEO T. CRISMON to the HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC and SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

For almost half a century Leo T. Crismon made significant contributions to the cause of Baptist history. In recognition of this important facet of his ministry, the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention presented to him the DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD in 1983. Through this presentation the Commission paid tribute to Crismon as one who "exhibited rare and unusual dedication to the cause of Baptist history" on both state and national levels. He was most deserving of this award which honored him as a collector, preserver, and writer of Baptist history and as an outstanding leader of state and national Baptist historical organizations.

The greatest contribution made by Leo T. Crismon to the Historical Commission, SBC, and its auxiliary, the Southern Baptist Historical Society, was his consistent work in collecting, preserving, and servicing Baptist historical materials. When the Southern Baptist Historical Society was founded in 1938, Crismon was serving as assistant librarian of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He joined with William O. Carver, president of the Society (and professor of missions at Southern Seminary), in establishing a collection of historical materials for the Society. Crismon began to assemble books, periodicals, annuals, pamphlets, photographs, and other historical materials for this special collection. He searched used book catalogs, listing of duplicates in his own and other libraries, new book listings, etc., for books and pamphlets by and about Baptists. His diligent work resulted in the development of a significant collection of historical materials by 1951. In that year the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention was established as the national history agency of the Convention, and the Southern Baptist Historical Society was rechartered as an auxiliary of the Historical Commission.

Crismon catalogued the historical materials that he collected. When the Historical Commission, SBC, worked out an agreement with the Sunday School Board for the operation of a joint library for the two agencies, the transfer of the collection from Louisville to Nashville went smoothly. The new Dargan-Carver Library opened its doors in 1953. Then, serving as librarian of the Seminary, Crismon continued to look for Baptist historical materials and assisted the Historical Commission in strengthening the holdings of its library. When the Historical Commission needed to have an in-depth study made of the operation of its library as a joint venture with the Sunday School Board, the Commission asked Crismon and Wilbur Helmbold, of Samford University, to conduct the study. Their report to the Commission was most helpful and resulted in a smoother, more efficient operation of Dargan-Carver Library.

The Southern Baptist Convention elected Leo T. Crismon to serve as one of the original members of the Historical Commission, SBC, in 1951. He rotated off of the Commission three years later, but the Commission elected him to four-year terms in 1974 and 1978. During many of those eleven years

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as the Kentucky member of the Commission, Crismon served on the agency's Administrative Committee. The Commission's administrators, Norman W. Cox, 1951-59, Davis C. Woolley, 1959-71, and Lynn E. May, Jr., 1971+, all sought and profited from the wise counsel of Leo Crismon regarding the agency's library and archives and many other facets of its work. His deep interest in Baptist history, his experience in state Baptist historical work, and his knowledge and skills as a librarian and historian enabled Crismon to make significant contributions to the work of the Historical Commission.

In the early 1950's the Commission launched an extensive program to microfilm Baptist historical materials. As librarian of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Crismon loaned books, annuals, newspapers, periodicals, manuscripts, and other materials from the Seminary Library to the Historical Commission to be microfilmed. Crismon's assistance enabled the Commission to expand its holdings of Baptist historical material in a significant way.

Crismon also contributed to Conventionwide Baptist historical work as a researcher and writer of Baptist history. When Norman W. Cox launched the development of the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, Volumes I and II, he enlisted Crismon to help plan this major project and write articles for it. He also served as a state chairman and contributed numerous articles for Volume III (1971) and Volume IV (1982). As state chairman for Kentucky for all four volumes of the Encyclopedia, he planned Kentucky-related input for the volumes, enlisted writers, and did preliminary editing for the Kentucky articles. He also prepared a major article for the Baptist Jubilee volume, Baptist Advance (1964), edited by Davis C. Woolley of the Historical Commission.

Across the years Crismon remained active in the Southern Baptist Historical Society. He served as an officer and director of the Society and helped undergird and support this Conventionwide organization in promoting the history interests of the denomination.

The Historical Commission and Southern Baptist Historical Society are deeply indebted to Leo T. Crismon for his many contributions, some of which are delineated above. It is fitting that the Commission presented its Distinguished Service Award to Crismon in 1983, three years before his death, so that he might know of the Commission's appreciation for his outstanding contributions to the cause of Baptist history.

---Lynn E. May, Jr.
Executive Director-Treasurer
Historical Commission, SBC

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T A B L E

O F

C O N T E N T S

FROM VISION TO VICTORY - The 2
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TRIBUTE TO J. H. SPENCER, 8
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FROM VISION TO VICTORY

THE STORY OF CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST SCHOOL

In 1926, a preacher who knew the value of higher education, began a school at the Clear Creek springs, as the area was then known. Dr. L. C. Kelly, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Pineville, felt a God-given burden for the preachers who faithfully ministered in the mountains. The name he gave to the school, Clear Creek Mountain Preachers Bible School, indicated his desire to minister to their educational needs.

The first session, held in the summer of 1926, lasted 2 weeks. Twelve students were taught by Dr. Kelly and Dr. R. P. Mahon, a long-time friend and co-visionary. From 1926 to 1929, this "annual session" provided God-called men in the mountains with training and encouragement. In 1930 the session was extended to four weeks and in 1946, having received its charter from the Kentucky Legislature, Clear Creek began holding classes nine months each year. Meanwhile, Clear Creek deepened its ties with Kentucky Baptists through summer assemblies for R.A.'s and G.A.'s. Today, many of our finest Baptist laymen and pastors reminisce about those assemblies and the impact they had on their lives.

In 1939 Dr. Kelly began raising funds to construct a building to house the students, provide classrooms, a kitchen and a chapel. Coming on the heels of a devastating depression, this project was slow in gaining support. Only through the untiring efforts of Dr. Kelly and Dr. Mahon and their friends and members of First Baptist was the construction of Kelly Hall finished in 1943. Other construction completed under his administration include nineteen student cottages on Holly Hill which were put under roof in a single day by workers from churches and associations in Kentucky and surrounding states. He also led in the construction of student housing in what is now called The Courts and the building of Mitchell Hall and the Mahon building. In 1951 Dr. Kelly led in the building of a church furniture factory which not only produced income for the school, but also provided student workshops.

Dr. Kelly continued his duties as pastor at First Baptist Church of Pineville until 1943 when he became the full-time president of Clear Creek. He completed twenty-eight years as the school's president in 1954. Throughout his ministry he sought out men committed to the Gospel and scholarship to teach at Clear Creek. One such man, D. M. Aldridge, came to teach at Clear Creek in 1946 at Dr. Kelly's invitation. A graduate of the University of Southern Illinois and Southern Seminary, Dr. Aldridge taught at the school until 1950. In 1954, when Dr. Kelly retired, he became the new president. By this time Clear Creek had been officially adopted by the Kentucky Baptist Convention and yearly financial support had begun.

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In many ways history seemed to repeat itself under Dr. Aldridge. He, too, was a builder. After the church furniture factory had burned and been relocated on the main road to the campus, it was renovated for use as an administration building. The Aldridge building as it is now called, houses the president's office, classroom space, office space and a chapel. It was also during Dr. Aldridge's term that Moore Hall and Alumni Hall were erected for student housing. Classroom space was added during his administration by the construction of the Correll building. A child care center was also built on the campus.

The vision of Dr. Kelly was safe in Dr. Aldridge's hands. He continued to dream the dream of a school vital to Kentucky Baptists and their pastors. In 1959 he led in changing the school's name to Clear Creek Baptist School and an annual summer session was added. The first Adult Literacy Program in the SBC was begun in 1959. A radio ministry of the school was started in 1961. In 1974, a degree program was initiated.

Dr. D. M. Aldridge retired in 1982. Like Kelly, he had given twenty-eight years to a dream that God had blessed. He was privileged to see the 1,000th student graduate in 1981.

The vision continues today under the leadership of Dr. Leon D. Simpson. Inaugurated as president in 1982, Dr. Simpson brings to Clear Creek visions of God's glory from experience as an associate pastor at the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. Prior to his ministry with that great church, he served Kentucky Baptists as Director of Ministerial training at Cumberland College. A graduate of Texas Technological University, Moody Bible Institute and Southwestern Seminary, Dr. Simpson brings a broad educational perspective and a basic Bible-believing outlook to Clear Creek.

Meeting the needs of Kentucky and Southern Baptist pastors continues to be a priority at Clear Creek. The curriculum has been totally revised with a new emphasis on major areas of study. A new class schedule, the only one of its kind, was implemented this fall. It allows the busy pastor flexibility in receiving training. The three-day/two-day schedule groups classes into Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday and Thursday-Friday sessions. This allows a minister, or any person seeking training for ministry, to attend classes on Monday through Wednesday only and receive up to 16 hours of credit or on Thursday and Friday only and receive up to 12 hours of credit.

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A vital part of an institution's longevity is its involvement in the larger academic community. Recognizing the vital importance to alumni of the school's continued academic improvement, Dr. Simpson has led the drive for accreditation with the American Association of Bible Colleges. When achieved, this affiliation will make Clear Creek Kentucky Baptists' only four-year Bible college. And Clear Creek will be the only Southern Baptist Bible college listed among the 125 schools which make up the AABC.

Dr. Simpson, too, is a builder. Under his guidance, Kelly Hall's dining area has been completely refurbished. The old print shop now serves as the home of the campus bookstore, post office and student center. It has been named "The Foxes Den" in honor of Bro. and Mrs. Claude Fox who served so many faithful years.

On Friday, October 24, 1986, the dedication of The Dudley Thomas and Jean Asher Family Life and Conference Center began to meet the recreational needs of the 600 member Clear Creek community. Dr. Pomeroy, professor of pastoral care at Clear Creek, and Mrs. Pomeroy had dreamed of a facility which would minister to the whole man. The new center, named in their honor, provides over 23,000 square feet of space for recreation, conferences and training in ministry.

The vision of Dr. Kelly, now celebrating its 60th year, lives on. Clear Creek stands as a testimony to the Biblical principle of discipleship which is precious to Southern Baptist in Kentucky and elsewhere. We are proud to be a part of Kentucky Baptists' heritage in the mountains and ask you to join us in praying for God's continued blessing.

--- James P. Majors
Clear Creek Baptist School

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PRESIDENTS OF CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST SCHOOL



Leon D. Simpson
1982 to Present

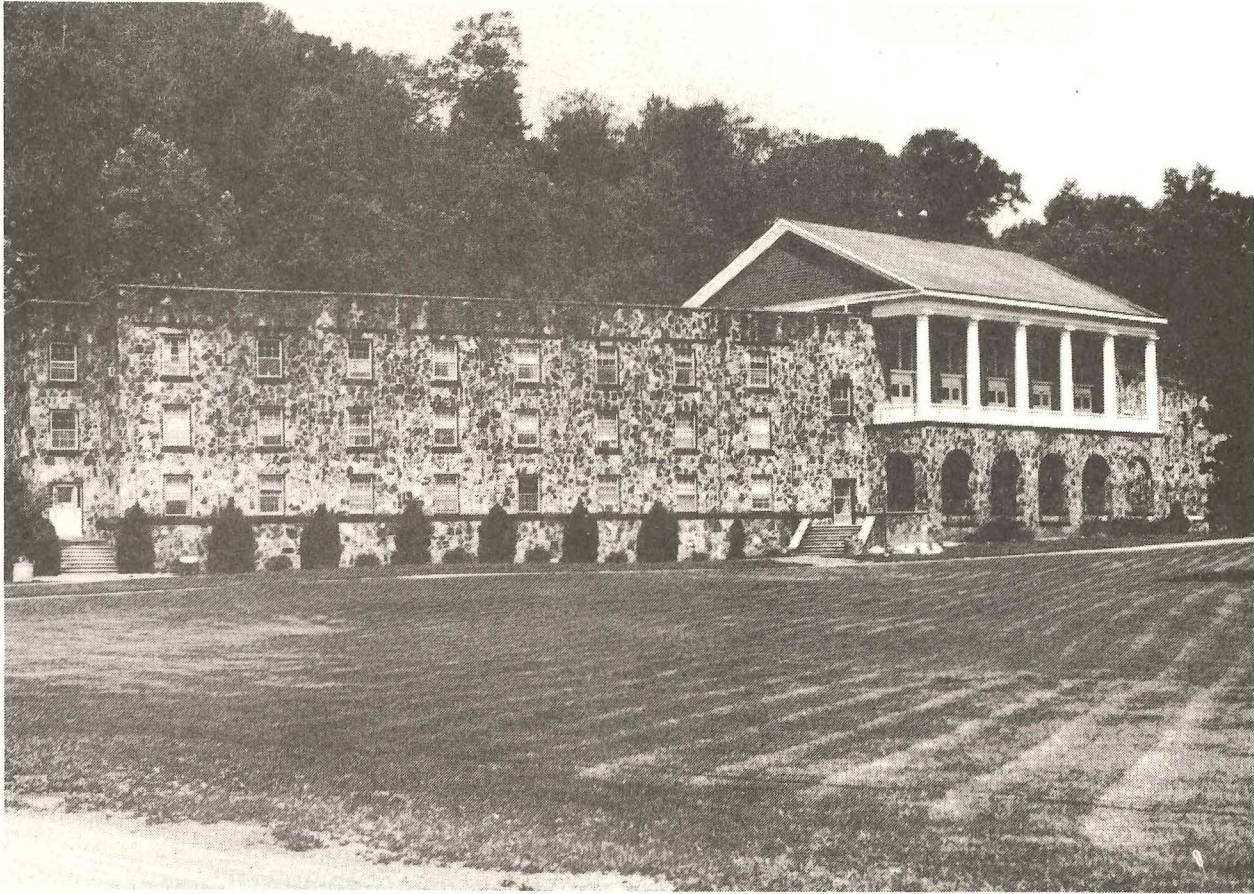


L. C. Kelly
1926-1954

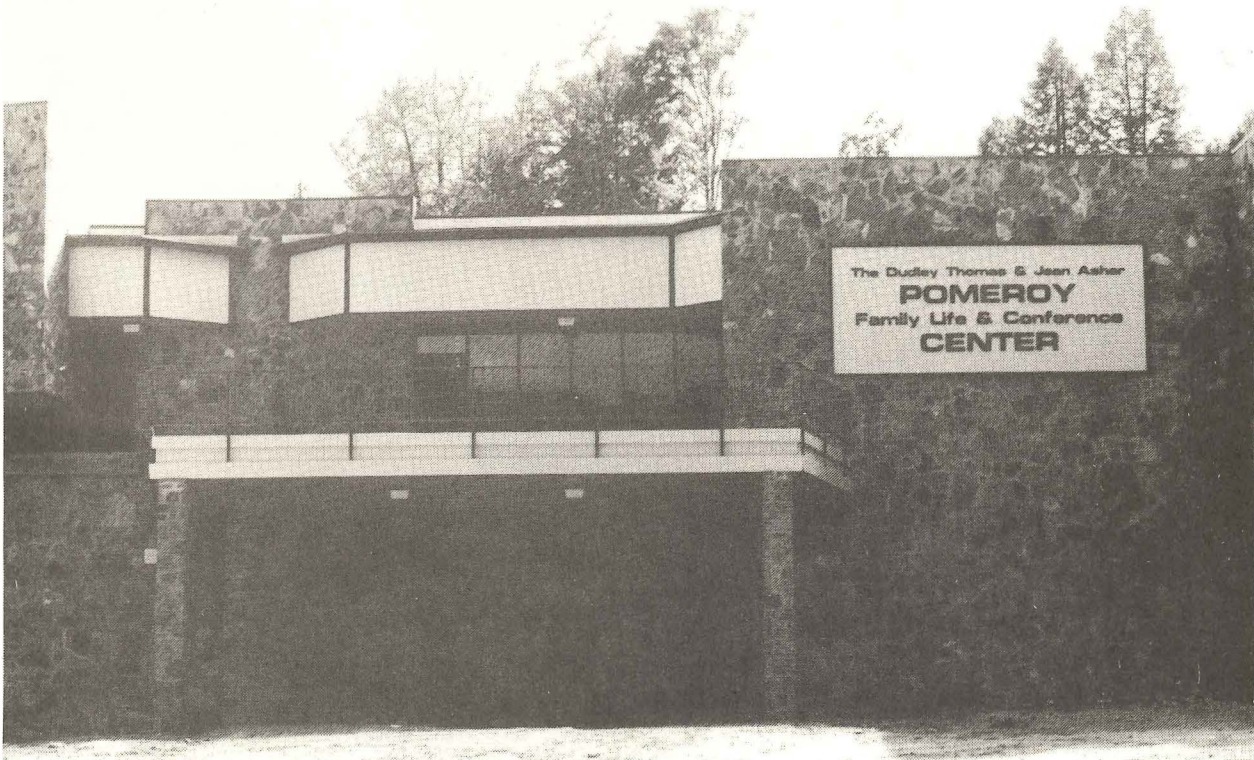


D. M. Aldridge
1954-1982

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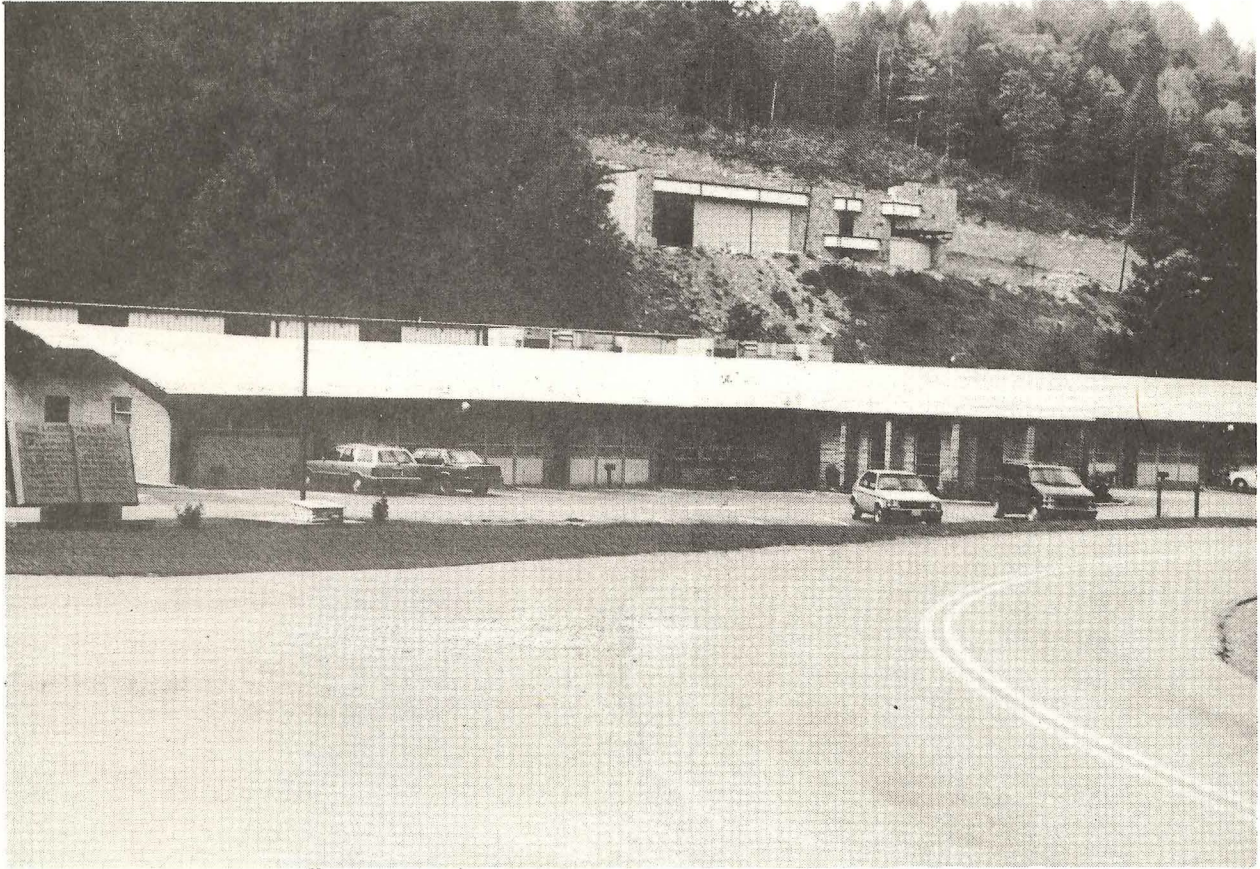


Kelly Building
(Oldest Structure on Campus. Built between 1935-39)

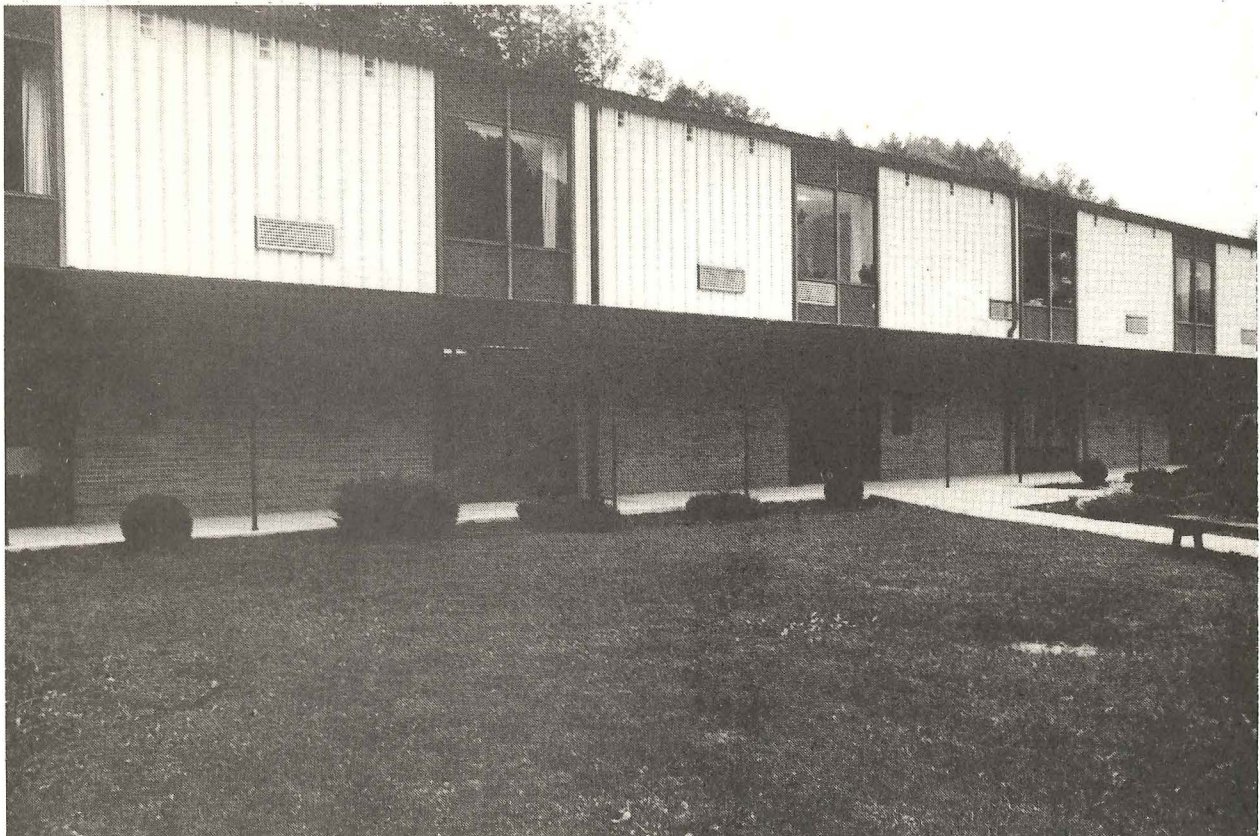


The Dudley Thomas & Jean Asher Pomeroy Family Life & Conference Center
(Newest Building. Dedicated October 24, 1986)

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Foreground: Aldridge Administration Building
Background: Pomeroy Family Life & Conference Center



The Covell Building
(Houses Classrooms, Library & Music Offices)

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TRIBUTE TO J. H. SPENCER, HISTORIAN, ON THE
50th ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH

By LEO T. CRISMON, President
Kentucky Baptist Historical Society
Louisville, Kentucky

(Editor's Note: This article was published in the 1947 ANNUAL of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky now known as the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Since Baptists depend so heavily upon the history contained in the two volumes written by J. H. Spencer that it seemed appropriate to publish it in the Kentucky Baptist Heritage so the younger Baptists would know something of his life. It is so done in memory of Spencer and in memory of Leo T. Crismon who penned these words and to whom this issue is dedicated.)

The ancestors of John Henderson Spencer were English, coming by way of England, to Virginia, to South Carolina and Georgia, then to southern Kentucky as early as 1796. The name of one descendent of the family, Captain Spear Spencer, who fell in the battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, was given to a county in Kentucky and to another in Indiana.

John Henderson Spencer, son of William Spencer and Sally Caldwell Richey, was born September 9, 1826, in Allen County, Kentucky, a few miles southwest of Glasgow. He grew to young manhood in that and immediately neighboring communities. He states in his autobiography that his recollection of those early scenes went back to the time when he was only one year of age.

In a day and country where there were few schools and teachers, the story of his education reads like a romance, for a period of almost 25 years, - private schools, individual instructors, self education, college, himself teaching. An interesting item comes from his seventh or eight year. He had an uncle and an aunt who were feeble minded. He said that it occurred to him, as he heard grown up people discuss many things which he could not understand, that he did not know any more than "Uncle Mose" or "Aunt Kitty". For a long time he pondered the question as to whether he was an idiot, as his uncle and aunt were incorrectly styled. He argued that if he had "good sense" he should know as much as his parents and other people with whom he talked. He kept silent on the subject for very shame. Finally the idea occurred to him that people got wiser as they grew older, and that he might get to know as much as other men by the time he grew to manhood. He says that this thought greatly relieved and comforted him.

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Through his persistence and effort at learning, by the time he was twenty-one he knew more than any teachers in the community. So he then became a teacher himself, teaching a part of the year, and going to school in other months of the year, or studying at home. He also became interested in music, and began to study it, attending a night singing school, and learning to play a few instruments, including the flute, the accordion, and the violin.

His father and mother were morally and religiously inclined, but not members of any church. However, his grandfather, John Spencer, was a Baptist and the clerk of Bethel Baptist Church (organized, 1808) in Allen County. Allen County was settled principally by Baptists from Virginia and the Carolinas. John H. Spencer had the benefit of their heritage and influence, though he did not have the opportunity to attend worship services frequently in his youth. On January 19, 1849, at a "protracted meeting" at Hopewell Baptist Church, he was converted, and joined the church the following day.

After conversion and church membership he continued his pursuit of learning, attending schools at Scottsville, Allen County. He then heard of Georgetown College, and determined to attend that school, but after arriving there by a rather round about way, from Bowling Green down Green River to Evansville, Indiana, then up the Ohio River to Louisville, by rail to Frankfort, then by stage coach to Georgetown, and having been examined by the faculty, he was told he was not qualified to enter college or to take even a course in English. That was in December, 1850, and he was twenty-four years of age. He stayed at Georgetown about four weeks, did some work in the preparatory department of the college, realized what further work was necessary to qualify himself, a whole year of study, the cost of a college education, etc., and with a heavy heart, turned his face towards home.

Since he had known no life except that of a farmer, he now decided to make this his life-work. But after one season, because of physical weakness, he turned to the school room again, then decided to prepare himself for teaching as a profession. In the fall of 1842 he went to Louisville and bought a small library, including history, science, and the classics, to help him in his preparation.

While he was absent on that occasion, Hopewell Baptist Church, to which he belonged, brought up the matter of licensing him to preach. There was some opposition, in that he played the flute, accordion, and worst of all the violin, and that he played "carnal tunes" on it. The matter was referred to a future meeting, and in April, 1853, with Dr. Spencer himself present, the church voted unanimously to license him to preach. He began immediately to preach at every opportunity, and on May 6, 1854, he was ordained by the same church. He then moved his membership from Hopewell Church to Bethel Church, the church of his ancestors. After his visit to Georgetown he had decided not to go to school any further, but having been ordained he felt the need of further preparation and began making plans to enter school again.

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So, a few days after his ordination, in his twenty-eight year, he started to Russellville to enter Bethel High School, later called Bethel College (1856). He stayed there a little more than two years, then, because of his physical condition, he left school to become missionary in Bays Fork (now called Allen County) Association, November, 1856, thus entering on a ministry, going from church to church and holding meetings, which he continued for almost forty years. In May, 1857, he attended the meeting of the General Association and of the Southern Baptist Convention in Louisville, and he met many Baptist leaders whose friendship he cherished the rest of his life.

For two years, October 1857 through October 1859, he was pastor of the church at Cloverport, but he soon decided that he was not fitted for the pastoral office. He said that during these two years he was practically a missionary in a broad field with Cloverport as the center, rather than the pastor of the church in that village. For nearly all the rest of his active ministry he served as an evangelist, either independently, or as a missionary, for Nelson Association(1861), Long Run Association (1864), or the General Association (1870), organizing new churches, reviving dead churches, strengthening weak ones, helping pastors in revivals (and on at least two occasions engaging in debate), in Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, Illinois,, Missouri and at one time going to Kansas and Colorado for his health (1873). He and A. B. Miller preached at old Long Run Baptist Church on Sunday, September 8, 1861, the day following a meeting of Long Run Association with that church, to an audience estimated at 5,000 people.

In his autobiography Dr. Spencer gives an interesting account of his marriage to Miss Alice Lavelia Everhart, daughter of Captain G. W. Everhart, a steamboat man on the Ohio River. He became engaged to her in March 1861. Later they set the date for the wedding for Sunday, September 15, 1861. On Thursday before, he met the captain in Louisville and obtained the license. On Saturday night he preached at Knob Creek in Bullitt County. On Sunday morning he rode to the house of Captain Everhart, and was married to his daughter before breakfast, by Dr. W. E. Powers. When they arose from breakfast, he says that he walked with his bride into the parlor, and without sitting down, he said to her, "Now, my darling, you are all of this world to me; but my duty to the cause of Christ is all of the next world." He says that he then printed the first kiss on her lips, bade her adieu and hurried away to his appointment at Knob Creek at 11:00 o'clock, and he did not see her again for six days. He went to Little Flock Church in Bullitt County on Sunday night where he had made an appointment to commence a protracted meeting for that time before the day for the marriage had been fixed. He closed the meeting on Friday night, then went back to Beechland on Saturday night, met his bride, and after preaching, went home with her.

In October, 1862, he accepted a call to the church at Henderson, Kentucky, and stayed with the church for fourteen months. Since this was during the Civil War, he confined his ministry more closely to his pastorate than he had at Cloverport, and devoted more time to study

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than he had since leaving Bethel College. In September, 1863, he and his wife went back to Beechland for a meeting in which her father, Captain Everhart, a profane swearer and a skeptic, was converted. According to Dr. Spencer's record he held about fourteen special meetings at Beechland from 1858 to 1876. They seem to have made their home at Beechland until her death August 19, 1872.

As early as 1866 Dr. Spencer says that he began to learn this history of the churches in which he preached and the biographies of the brethren. In that year he wrote and published a biography of the gifted pulpit orator, Thomas J. Fisher (born April 9, 1812) who had fallen in the strength of his manhood by the hand of an unknown assassin, on the night of January 8, 1866, on the streets of Louisville. Now in 1867, a new feature was added to his labors which became a paramount element of his work for the next twenty years.

Through his interest in Kentucky Baptists he had decided that a true account of their transactions should be collected and published in permanent form. At this time he added to his ministerial labors the task of searching records, gathering old documents, and interviewing aged men and women wherever he went. When he was not engaged in preaching, he would canvass such portions of the state as he had not been able to reach while engaged in his ministry.

On May 11, 1875, three years after the death of his first wife he married Burilla Burton Waller, a member of the noted Waller family which gave to Kentucky Baptists John Lightfoot Waller (1809-1854). After the marriage for some years they lived at Lacona (until 1877), then (1877-1885) at Pleasure Ridge Park, Jefferson County (about five miles south of the limits of Louisville and about two or three miles from the river), then later (1885-1897) they lived at Eminence.

In 1876 the centennial of our national independence was observed. In Kentucky this was also the centennial of Baptist preaching (Thomas Tinsley and William Hickman at Harrodsburg, 1776) and this phase was added to the observance. J. H. Spencer was called on to visit several churches and to deliver addresses in the campaign for Christian education in connection with this observance.

In the Preface to The Baptist Encyclopedia, published by William Cathcart in 1881, the name of "J. H. Spencer, D.D., Kentucky, is included among the able brethren who have rendered assistance to the Editor.

As early as 1865 Dr. Spencer was appointed on a committee of the General Association (See minutes, 1886, p. 34,35) to make plans for writing a history of Baptists in Kentucky. "In 1866, the General Association so amended its constitution as to make it a part of the business of the body: 'To collect and preserve our Denominational History of Kentucky.'" But in 1876, through failure on the part of the committee to procure facts or to obtain a historian, it transferred the whole matter into the hands of Dr. Spencer who personally had already been at the task for ten years.

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For nine years longer Dr. Spencer worked, through continued illness in the last years, and in April, 1885, he completed the work and submitted it to the publishers, at the same time announcing that the book would be sent to pre-paying subscribers at the estimated cost of publishing (\$5.00 a set). He states that by the time he needed the money to pay the publishers, he had received every dollar for which he had asked (1,500 subscribers had been requested). It was necessary to order a second edition of the book to supply all the orders which came in.

In 1887 (October 20-22), at Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky Baptists observed the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky. At this meeting Dr. Spencer read a paper entitled "Fifty Years of Baptist Progress in Kentucky," and it was printed in the Jubilee Volume, published in 1888.

In 1889, perhaps, Dr. Spencer began writing his autobiography which has been preserved in his own handwriting and from which I have drawn largely for this address. He seems to have progressed very slowly with it because of the infirmity of his age. At the time of his death he had brought the record up only to August, 1876. The manuscript is now in the archives of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society, and recently a typed copy has been made and bound.

Dr. Spencer was known widely as a historical and devotional writer, as well as an effective evangelist. His first publication was a small pamphlet on The Action of Baptism(1863). After he became too afflicted to get away from home, he continued to write for periodicals.

During his active ministry as an evangelist he preached as many as 572 times in one year, and travelled as many as 5,679 miles in a year. There were as many as 147 added to the churches under his ministry in a single year, and it is estimated that 5,000 persons professed faith under his preaching. None of his sermons had been preserved, but he has said that he usually preached about an hour at each service. His descriptive powers are evident from passages of his autobiography, one of which describing the scenes of his boyhood is as follows:

"We lived and labored among the deep solitudes; our recreations were taken amid verdant glens and wild, romantic gorges; in flowery, wooded vales and forests of giant oaks and spreading beech and elms; along the base of rock-crested hills and among foaming cascades and leaping cataracts of crystal waters, and in light canoes on the bosom of a clear bright river. Our companions were the deep-throated wood-lark, the light-grey fawn, the chattering squirrel and the sportive bass. Our worship was in God's great temple of nature; our matins were the songs of the thrush and mocking-bird; our noon refrains, the chorus of the zyphers; our vespers, the hum of insects among the woodbines; and our athems, the roar of waterfalls and the thunder of the heavens."

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After several years of suffering from rheumatism Dr. Spencer died at his home at Eminence on Tuesday, December 21, 1897. Funeral services were held at Eminence by Dr. W. P. Harvey and Dr. T. T. Eaton, then at Beechland by Dr. W. E. Powers.

He was buried beside his first wife in the Bell Cemetery, across the highway from Greenwood School, about a mile and a half west of Beechland Church. His second wife who died November 27, 1915 now rests by his side.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The next meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society
and
the Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission will be Friday
March 20, 1987 in the Franklin Owen Chapel at the Kentucky
Baptist Building, 10701 Shelbyville Road, Middletown.

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KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

BAPTIST RESOURCES

The purpose of this page is to furnish our readers with the Title and Author of books which reflect the history of Baptists.

Gano, John. BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF THE LATE JOHN GANO OF FRANKFORT.
New York: Southwick and Hardcastle. 1806.

Hickman, William. A SHORT ACCOUNT OF MY LIFE AND TRAVELS, FOR MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS: A PROFESSED SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST.
Originally published 1828: republished 1873 and this typed copy 1969.

Ranck, George C. THE TRAVELLING CHURCH. Louisville, Kentucky: Baptist Book Concern, 1891.

Ranck, George C. A HISTORY OF LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY.

Taylor, John. A HISTORY OF TEN CHURCHES. Cincinnati, Ohio: Art Guild Reprints, Inc.

Bond, Gladys, Dixie Froman, McDonald, John L. HISTORY OF GHENT BAPTIST CHURCH.

Newman, A. H. A CENTURY OF BAPTIST ACHIEVEMENT. Philadelphia, 1901.

Spencer, J. H. A HISTORY OF KENTUCKY BAPTISTS. Louisville, 1886: Reprinted Lafayette, Tennessee - Church History Research and Archives, 1976.

Sample, Robert Baylor. HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS OF VIRGINIA. Originally published in 1810: Revised in 1894, reprinted in 1972, Polyanthos, Inc., New Orleans, 1972: Reprinted by Church History Research and Archives Affiliation, Corp. Lafayette, Tennessee, 1976.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SOUTHERN BAPTISTS, Broadman Press, 1958.

Cathcart, William. BAPTIST ENCYCLOPEDIA. Philadelphia, 1883.

Masters, Frank M. A HISTORY OF BAPTISTS IN KENTUCKY. Louisville, Kentucky, 1953.

Benedict, David. HISTORY OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION. First published in 1813; reprinted in 1971, Books for Libraries Press, 1971.

The Lancaster Woman's Club. PATCHES OF GARRARD COUNTY. Danville, Kentucky, Bluegrass Printing Co., 1974.

Twelve writers. BAPTISTS IN KENTUCKY 1776-1976. Edited by Leo T. Crismon, Louisville, Kentucky 1975.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

A MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP
TO THE
KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

_____ Zip Code _____

Desiring to be a member of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society, I hereby make application for membership.

It is my understanding that upon the payment of annual dues I will be entitled to receive all the publications of the Society for the corresponding year, as well as its other privileges.

Signed _____

Annual Dues \$5.00 (Personal and Institutions)

Life membership \$25.00

(NOTE: Current members are mailed a notice of membership fees due on or near their anniversary date of joining the Society)

Mail to: Kentucky Baptist Historical Society
Kentucky Baptist Convention
P.O. Box 43433
Middletown, Kentucky 40243