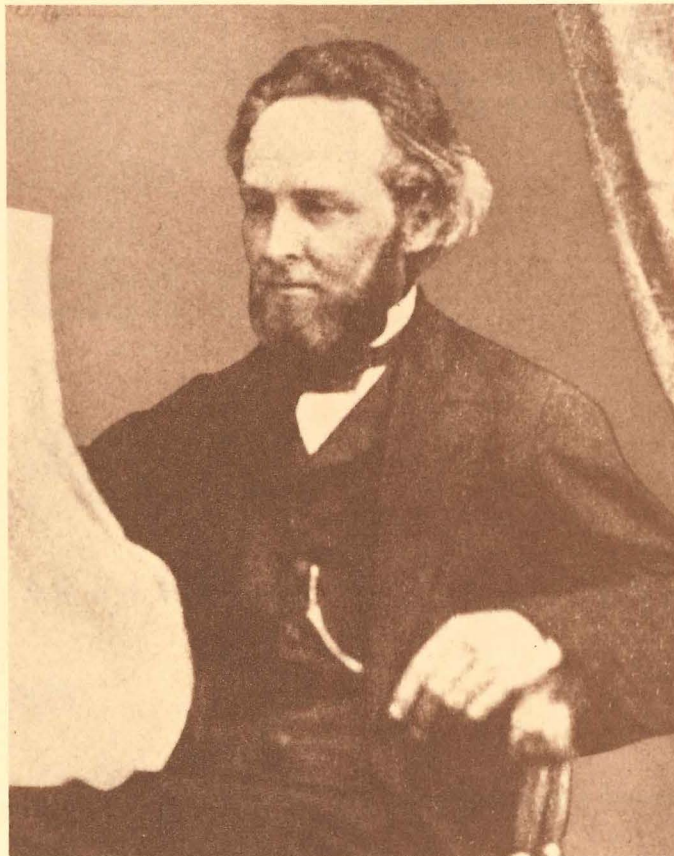


THE  
KENTUCKY BAPTIST  
HERITAGE

Special Convention Issue



**Basil Manly, Jr.**  
Then President of Georgetown College,  
who addressed the Centennial Convention  
of the General Association in 1876

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

KENTUCKY  
BAPTIST  
HERITAGE

"A Kentucky Baptist Periodical"

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*Manuscripts for publication are solicited. Material dealing with Kentucky Baptists in a general or specific way should be sent to Leo Crismon. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced. Only those manuscripts submitted with a stamped, self-addressed envelope will be returned.*

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L . . .

This issue of Kentucky Baptist Heritage is the first for your new editor. The standards set by the previous editor, Jim Taulman, are high; and the task is a challenging one.

We do hope to publish Kentucky Baptist Heritage quarterly during this year, in the hope that we can get to you as much information as possible on the rich history of Kentucky Baptists. But to do this, we need your help. Here are some things each member can do:

- (1) Enlist friends in the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society. The more members we have, the better the job we can do.
- (2) Urge your church librarian to subscribe to Kentucky Baptist Heritage. We believe every church should be receiving every issue of our publication.
- (3) Encourage local historians to submit materials for publication. The editor desires to be an editor whose main job is selecting which materials will be published.
- (4) Scout around your church and family records, etc., to see whether you might not have some item worth submitting for KBH.

As Kentuckians, we have such a lively history! But much of it will be gone forever if we do not preserve it. The KBH is one good means of preserving that heritage.

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Thanks for your support!

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On May 25, 1876, Basil Manly, Jr. President of Georgetown College, addressed the Centennial meeting of the General Association of Kentucky Baptists in Louisville. According to the Western Recorder, the speeck was warmly received, and it was later published.

The following excerpts reveal the genius of Manly's style and the profundity of his historical analyses.

"THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST PIONEERS"

The occasion which calls us together is impressive, not only in the circumstances which surround us, in the fixed attention, the varied emotions, the lively expectations of this vast assemblage, and in the presence of these venerable men (God bless them), whom the Lord has spared to meet with us today; but it furnishes us a sort of elevated point of view, an outlook from the summit of a mountain pass along our road, whence we may survey the past, and look forward to the future.

If to praise past times is the tendency of the old, to observe past times has always been the mark of the wise. Yet, what we commend is not that barren study of the past, which records, but does not imitate; which engraves, like old morality, inscriptions on tombstones, but gives no love to the present, no blessing to the future; it is that which studies history, in order to prepare for making history, for performing deeds worthy of ever-enduring remembrance.

We shall make no apology, then, for endeavoring to take you back with us a hundred years into the past, that we may compare Then with Now, observe the changes that have occurred with their causes, as far as we can trace them briefly, and draw suggestions and stimulus for our future work.

If, however, we limit our view to precisely one hundred years ago, and to Kentucky, we shall find very meager materials, and no profitable results. Our sketch would resemble that which, it is said, an indolent

painter, with more wit than genius or industry, made by contract of "The Egyptians Drowned in the Red Sea." When the noble Lord, for whom it was done, and who, in the excess of his liberality, had paid for it beforehand, came to inspect, for the first time, the finished work, he saw a huge mass of billows, exceedingly stormy and very red! "Where is the picture?" "There, sir; don't you see it--the Red Sea?" "But where are the Israelites?" "Gone over!" "And where are the Egyptians?" "Gone under!"

A hundred years ago, there was no Kentucky, except that the river, called sometimes Chenowee, sometimes Louisa, sometimes Kentucky, was flowing just as it is now. This lovely country, lovely even in its native wildness, was but a part of Fincastle county, Virginia.

Let us plant ourselves, then, in imagination, upon some commanding height in history, one hundred years ago, and look around us, backward as well as forward.

On the banks of the silently flowing South Elkhorn, in Franklin County, three humble but memorable graves may be found, almost in sight of each other. There rest three of the noted pioneers among Kentucky Baptists, Hickman, Taylor and Gano, men who would have been remarkable anywhere, but who are brought especially near to us by the circumstances of their toil here, and by the comparative fullness with which their record has been preserved. I hold in my hand the autobiography of each of these men; and it were a fitting tribute to them, and to their compeers, to reprint these three scarce and precious volumes in one, with such additions as suitable editorial care and research might suggest, as a memorial of them and their times.

Happy the people who so remember the worthy deeds of their ancestors; happy the people who have such ancestors to remember.

The spread and present prevalence of



Baptist sentiments in the United States, and especially in Kentucky, is sufficiently obvious and striking. How has it been brought about?

If it were said, that it is owing to the intrinsic truthfulness of our views, no Baptist of course, would deny the proposition. But it must be added that it is not a sufficient reply, because in other times and other countries the same results have not followed the declaration of those views. For a doctrine to be true, and to deserve acceptance, is not always enough to gain success for it in this world.

If it is added, that our progress has been owing to the blessing of God upon the agencies employed, and to His power giving efficiency to His own truth, this is also what we all acknowledge with grateful humility to God. But this itself presupposes agencies employed, which God blessed, that in accordance with the established principles of His government, He has, in this case as well as others, worked not without means, but with, by and upon means, employing them, and us in the use of them, to accomplish His grand designs.

.....

To what instrumentalities, then, has our progress in the past been due?

Not in any large degree to immigration. The increase of the population of the United States, from this source, has gone mainly to other bodies of progressing Christians. The great mass of immigrants have belonged to the Roman Catholics, a portion to the Episcopalians, a portion to the Lutheran and German Reformed Churches, and portion, viz.: the Scotch and French Protestants, to the Presbyterians. The Baptists who have immigrated to this country, while including some of our most efficient and valued brethren, have been comparatively few in number. No State was settled by them nor any considerable section of a State. It must be borne in mind, in this connection, that, while the greatest increase to the population of the States by immigration has been at the North, the largest accessions to the numbers of the Baptists have been at the South.

It is not attributable to denominational tracts and books, though these have been of no small value. The Baptist General Tract Society, and its worthy successor, the American Baptist Publication Society, have done noble work, and merit not only honorable remembrance, but cordial sympathy and liberality. The two Southern Publication Societies have also accomplished something valuable.

.....

But Baptist books seem to have been the consequence, rather than the cause, of the spread of Baptist sentiments. The people became Baptists from reading and hearing the Word of God, and then books were written and read by them suited to maintain the views thus arrived at. Denominational newspapers come under the same head; yet, while these, when well conducted, add almost immeasurable to the influence, and elevate the standing of any body of people, they evidently do not go before Baptist population and create it, but follow after it, and are both originated and nurtured by it.

Neither have single learned and eminent men been the principal agents in our increase--either as preachers, writers, or men of political or monied influence. While we have not been without our share of these, and while the sanctified use of these varied talents have been often and very abundantly blessed, it would be preposterous to ascribe our growth to that source. Other denominations have had greater men--some of them in much greater eminent proportion to their size than we; some of them possibly in a greater absolute number. How is it that they have not advanced with similar, or even greater rapidity?

Neither do organized home missions, sustained by any central board, deserve the credit of these vast results. Their means have ever been far too limited to enable them to effect such a mighty revolution. The seed they have sown has indeed sprung up in good ground, and yielded, some thirty, some sixty, and some a thousand fold; but they have not been the principal agents. The increase has been more in some of those states where these central boards have scarcely operated, than in those to which their efforts have been principally directed.



We are reduced, then, at last, to the conclusion that the real ultimate instrumentality, the lever by which God moved the masses, is to be discovered in the silent, unperceived and unrecorded actions of thousands of unimportant individuals; in the sacrifices and zeal of a large number of comparatively unknown ministers and private members; in the faithful preaching of Christ by the one, and the faithful practice of Christianity by the other.

The modern Apostles who, under the blessing of God, have been instrumental in gathering this great army of soldiers for Christ, have been for the most part, like their prototypes, poor men; generally slenderly educated, meagerly furnished with funds of their own, and very scantily supplied by the liberality of others. The old-field, back-woods, country preachers, however some may be disposed to sneer at them, and turn away with exclusive admiration to the refinements of other times and circumstances, these were the fathers of our churches; they have done more to advance the cause of truth, and the cause of holiness and uprightness in the land, to rear up a generation of honest, industrious, godly men and women than numbers of men of more shining qualities, and sustained by the most generous expenditures.

Not the rich, so much as the poor; not the eminent, but the unknown; not the talented few, but the simple, earnest, working many have done the deed; and God hath chosen the foolish things, and the weak things of this world, yea, and the things which are so significant in our eyes, that they seem as though they were not, hath God chosen, so that they have been powerful in pulling down the strongholds of Satan, and exalting the blood-stained banner of the cross, and giving us the heritage we enjoy in a land filled with Bibles, smiling with Sabbaths of rest, and crowned with harvests of plenty.

By such means has grown to its present size and importance a body of churches, destitute of almost every element of success which seemed promising to human eyes; without bishops to plan its campaigns and direct its operations without an organized conference of itinerant clergy to concentrate its powers, and bring into harmony of thought and effort its various parts; without even a representative head or central authority to control it, or a general

assembly, which should bring its scattered members into acquaintance with each other and systematic cooperation; without the aid of the wealth which the world calls mighty, or the social influence which the world considers potent, or the superior learning which the world reckons influential; a church with no head but Christ, no creed or liturgy but the Bible, no principle of union but love to Christ and to the truth, depending on no human assistance, and receiving no support but the voluntary efforts and contributions of its thousands of hearts.

.....

By the means of the masses God operates. He influences them, molds, animates, and then uses them. Let us learn to work the work of Him that sent us in His way. Let us study this divinely-taught principle of efficiency. Let us seek to reach and rouse the masses, and employ those measures which operate upon, and may be operated by them.

The difference between the methods we now refer to, such as God uses and sanctions by His blessing, and those which men devise and put into execution, may be compared to the difference between a genial and plentiful shower from the skies, and the watering pots with which human industry strives to supply the defficiency. The one exerts, with the greatest ease and quietness, an immense influence widely diffused; the other, by great labor, accomplishes the result not as well, and in a very limited and scanty degree.

.....

We shall scarcely be suspected of a desire to undervalue the efforts of missionary boards, the circulation of books and publications, the improvement of the ministry, or the education of the young in sound learning and piety. The argument for these is a simple and conclusive one; and it might be shown, were it necessary, that it is greatly strengthened rather than weakened, by a proper view of the considerations which have been suggested.

.....

We love these societies, then, these General Associations and Conventions; we love



them all; but let it never be forgotten that their chief, their only value is, in being subsidiary to the proclamation of Christ crucified, and the promotion of ardent individual piety. Let it never be forgotten that it is by the simple preaching of the Gospel, and the honest practice of the Gospel, that God has ordained to spread His truth and His glory throughout the world.

We value home missions, because they send the ambassadors of Christ to the destitute in our own land; the foreign missions, because they send them to perishing millions abroad. We love Sunday schools and Bible societies because they bring the Word of God to the eyes and hearts of young and old, and lead them to search the Scriptures daily to see if the things they hear preached are so. We love the Publication societies because they give to the departed preacher a living voice, and to the fleeting words of wisdom a permanent form, and an extent of audience, which they could not otherwise enjoy. We love all the reforms and improvements in virtue and education, because they help to prepare the way of the Lord, and open a door for the preaching of the Word, and bring within reach of the Gospel those who must else have remained ignorant of it, and unblessed by it. We love education societies and colleges and theological seminaries, because their object is to aid in giving those, whom God has called to preach, the intellectual furniture and training, which, by His blessing, may augment their usefulness.

We love them all. We will not stifle our benevolent impulses by pleading it as an excuse, that there are "so many calls" but rather thank God that there are so many channels, opened by His providence, in which the energies of His church may run. We will help those we can, as much as we can, and pray for them all, and rejoice in the progress of them all.

But let it be repeated--the grand thing after all is the preaching of Christ by life and lip--so that everything shall be made subordinate to Him, and only regarded as important as it stands related

to Him.

.....

We have proposed, in this Centennial year, to erect a monument in memory of our fathers; no granite shaft to cover their dead bones, no gilded inscription to register their departed virtues; but to endow living institutions, to perpetuate their principles, and to hand down to other ages the truths they loved, and labored for till they died.

.....

We have entered on this work, whether wisely or not, it is needless now to discuss; or whether the plans pursued have been in all respects the best. We are in a defile, surrounded on all sides. The safest surest way out is--FORWARD!

There is no need to despair, no occasion for discouragement. The enthusiasm of our people has not been fully roused, but they can be reached. The Baptists of Kentucky have great big hearts, and it is some distance to the bottom of them. So it takes some time and effort to get there. But, when their hearts are really reached, their hands are ever ready.

---

<sup>1</sup>Manly's wish was partly fulfilled in 1968, when the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society published William Hickman's autobiography. John Taylor's autobiographical work, History of Ten Churches, was reprinted recently. John Gano's brief autobiography remains a rare book.

\*\*\*\*\*

Just as in 1876, in 1976 the Kentucky Baptist pioneer preachers remain of great interest to students. Terry New, a Kentuckian, a graduate of Georgetown College, and a student at Southern Seminary, has prepared a term paper using the best primary source materials on the early preachers.



What follows is an excerpt from this fine paper, focusing on the characteristics of these men which Terry discovered in his research. Terry's original paper was heavily documented, but in the interests of space, the editor has decided to include it undocumented. A short bibliography will follow the text:

"THE PIONEER PREACHERS OF KENTUCKY"

by

Terrence W. New

Concerning the conditions of Baptists in Virginia, William Hickman, one of the first Virginian preachers in Kentucky stated:

"The Baptists, in those days were much despised, which caused Christ's sheep to huddle closer together and love each other better than when there was no opposition. . . . A little before this date, about eight or nine ministers were imprisoned at different times; . . . the word was preached through the iron gates, and God blessed His Word to the conversion of hundreds."

John Taylor refers to the work in Hampshire County, Virginia, when he says, "We met with no legal prosecution while preaching there; but this did not prevent the rage of mobs, such as open contradiction while preaching. We were only once driven from a place of preaching." Lewis Craig, for example, was arrested for "preaching the gospel contrary to law." On another occasion, Lewis Craig, John Waller, and James Childs were sentenced to twelve months in prison, so Craig preached to large crowds through the iron bars. Many came to Kentucky to avoid persecution.

Lewis Craig and others like his Traveling Church came because the country was scorched and impoverished from the war and that the unlimited and rich west was theirs almost for the asking. John Gano admitted that he left New York to come to Kentucky

not only because of the need for preachers, but also because it provided a means for him to get out of debt by selling his home and lot. So it can be seen that Baptists left the East to obtain religious freedom, and to have a chance to start over again.

The traveling conditions to and in Kentucky were very poor. William Hickman, describing his first trip to Kentucky in 1776, said, "We had to travel in small and miserable tracks, over mud, logs and high waters." The Traveling Church which came to Kentucky with Lewis Craig gave up their wagons and walked. Others came via the Ohio River and had to deal with the hardship of capsized boats. John Gano related that he lost some irreplaceable property when one of his boats capsized. On top of all this, there was the constant threat of Indian attack. William Hickman, writing about one of his preaching tours in Kentucky, stated "While going from meeting to meeting, sometimes twenty or thirty in a gang, we were guarded by the men, it looked more like going to war than to meeting to worship God." Distance also affected the church attendance in Kentucky, for John Taylor related that he attended only monthly because the South Elkhorn Church was eight miles from his home.

These conditions called a unique type of man to minister, the pioneer Baptist preacher. These men's backgrounds varied in relation to social, educational, and ministerial experience.

Their social backgrounds were different. Squire Boone, part of a large family, was born in a log cabin in Berkes County, Pennsylvania in 1744. Lewis Craig, born in Virginia in 1737, had 6 brothers and 4 sisters, of whom brothers Elijah and Joseph became preachers and sister Betsy married Richard Cave, a pioneer Baptist preacher. William Hickman's parents died when he was young. He and little sister were raised by a grandmother who taught them the happiness of heaven and the terror of hell. But at age fourteen, he was apprenticed to an evil family who morally corrupted him. John Gano, on the other hand was raised by a "pious Baptist" mother and a "steady Presbyterian" father. They taught him the doctrines of the Westminster Confession



of Faith and Catechism.

The salvation experiences of these men are similar in that each became convicted of his sin, though the individual circumstances differed. John Gano, expressing how he felt about his vain and rebellious life, declared that he was the "vilest of sinners, more odious than the meanest reptile, and the greatest hypocrite in the world." He had doubts about infant baptism and after discussions with a Presbyterian minister and a Baptist minister, he searched the scriptures and became convinced that believer's immersion was the only valid means. His father allowed him to be baptized. William Hickman, who was raised an Episcopalian, became curious about the "new lights" (Baptists) and went to hear John Waller and James Childs. He came under conviction. His wife became afraid that he might also be "dipped." After attending the baptismal service and crying a lot, he shook off those feelings when he moved to Cumberland County. It was there that his wife was converted. After a long agony, he was converted alone in 1773 and was baptized by Reuben Ford, who had earlier baptized his wife. Lewis Craig, after hearing Samual Harris in Orange County, Virginia, in 1765, became convinced of his sin and believed he was justly condemned. He followed the preachers around until he found "relief."

It is interesting to note how they first started preaching. William Marshall, who married the daughter of Rev. John Pickett, a Baptist preacher, came under the influence of some other Separate Baptists. He was soon converted, and began to preach thereafter. While studying for the ministry, John Gano got his start on a journey to a pioneer Virginia church. After his traveling companion, Mr. Thomas, spoke, the people wanted to hear Mr. Gano. Resisting at first, because he was not licensed, he agreed to.

William Hickman, who was in Kentucky in 1776, had a similar experience. He and an old friend, Mr. Morton, went to hear Thomas Tinsley nearly every Sunday.

Writing of this experience, Hickman said:

"One Sunday morning . . . he laid his Bible on my thigh and said to me, you must preach today; he said if I did not, he would not. It set me in a tremor. I knew he would not draw back. I took the 23rd chapter of Numbers, 10th verse: 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be ashes.' I suppose I spoke fifteen or twenty minutes, a good deal scared, thinking if I left any gaps down, he would put them up; he followed me with a good discourse, but never mentioned any blunder."

On the other hand, John Taylor records that Lewis Craig was so convicted of sin, that he warned others, even before he, himself, had obtained a hope in the Lord. He was indicted for preaching even before he was baptized!

The educational levels of these preachers range from a little education to a good educational background. Warren Cash, for instance, seems not to have been able to read until his wife taught him after his conversion. He became a successful preacher for about thirty years. According to J. H. Spencer, Joseph Redding was an independent man. "He was self-raised, self-educated, and self-reliant." He developed to the point that he was a systematic preacher and theologian. But, John Gano was the only pioneer Baptist preacher who studied for the ministry in a formal manner. He studied literature and the Greek Bible under a Presbyterian minister. Spencer said, "John Gano was the most distinguished of the pioneer Baptist preachers of Kentucky . . . His matured wisdom, long and varied experience, and eminent piety and consecration, made him of incalculable benefit to the cause of the blessed Redeemer, in the new country."

.....

Thus, the courage of the pioneer Baptist preacher to go to where the people were going, to preach a simple message of repentance and salvation, and to endure the hardships and agony of ministry firmly established in Kentucky as a voice for Christ in this young region.



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\*\*\*\*\*

I think there is only one quality worse than hardness of heart, and that is softness of head.

Theodore Roosevelt

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In addition to the fine term paper from Terry New, the Society has recently received copies of two very fine local church histories, which will be briefly summarized below.

"HISTORY OF GHENT BAPTIST CHURCH"

by

Gladys Bond  
Dixie Froman  
and  
John L. McDonald

Revised

This thirteen-page booklet tells in

fine fashion the story of the Ghent Baptist Church, one of the oldest in the state. Originally established in 1800 as "The Church of Port William," the congregation took the name of "McCools Bottom Church" in 1814 and in 1845 it became the "Baptist Church of Christ" at Ghent.

The Ghent congregation is especially fortunate in the records of its heritage which remain. For example, the third building of the church, erected in 1814 and 1815, still stands as a private residence in Ghent; and the minutes of the church must be very complete for the writers to have included so much fascinating information from the nineteenth century.

The present building with its beautifully remodeled interior was begun in 1843, completed in 1844, and included, appropriately enough, a bell from the Ohio River steamboat "Pike."

It was at the Ghent Church that the famous Kentucky evangelist, Thomas J. Fisher, was ordained. Fisher also pastored the church from time to time in his ministry. Other notable Baptists associated with the church have been William Hickman, Joshua Morris, L. D. Alexander, W. H. Williams, and Harper Shannon.

In its long and eventful history, the church has belonged to Long Run, Franklin, Concord, and presently, the White's Run Association.

Under the leadership of pastor Floyd Baker, Ghent Baptist Church hosted the 1976 meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society, and all who attended were charmed by the church and community, located on the beautiful Ohio.

Thanks to some faithful and skilled historians, the church can be proud of an exemplary history.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Many individuals have, like uncut diamonds, shing qualities beneath a rough exterior.*

-Juvenal-

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NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

on

UNION-ROCKCASTLE  
BAPTIST CHURCH

Since its Founding  
February 8, 1879

by

A. D. Ponder

The rich heritage of Baptists in Eastern Kentucky has most often gone unrecorded, as historians have focused attention on activity in Central Kentucky. Thus, this fine history of an historic Eastern Kentucky congregation fills a real need and it is hoped that it will inspire more such work. Donated by Estle Bullock, a deacon of the church, the history is written by A. D. Ponder, whose family has played a large part in its life, past and present.

Organized in 1879 as the result of the labors of Rev. Joel Philpot, the congregation numbered thirty-two at first. In 1894, the "Rockcastle" was dropped from the church's name, and it became simply Union Baptist Church. Soon thereafter plans were laid for the erection of a new building. The author's description of the process is fascinating;

"The prospects of a new and larger church building caused much excitement among the parishoners. Men scoured the woods for trees suitable for hewing forty-two foot logs, from, since it was hoped that a 42' x 32' sanctuary could be built. Each was assigned the task of furnishing and dressing logs as may be available--some for the long sides; some for the short sides. Needless to say that much effort was required to find, fell, hew, and trim enough logs for the "largest church for miles around". . . . William H. (Bill) Sams prepared his log and was 'snaking' it from the Grave Yard Ridge (approximately 3/4 mile away) when his stout team made too sharp a turn, caught the log between two trees and broke it in two. Of course, a new one had to be found, and the job started all over again."

Rich detail such as the above abounds in the book, as Ponder has skillfully blended information from the church's minutes-books with some good oral history research. Especially moving are the descriptions of the "Decoration Day" services associated with the church. It is also interesting that Union Church, in the early days, had "Deaconesses" and practiced a yearly washing of feet. As Ponder puts it:

"It was felt by many even until now that washing one another's feet was the Lord's command just as surely as any other ordinance, and that no such ritual brings a more humble feeling toward brothers and sisters in Christ than the old-time foot-washing. Tears of sheer joy and love were often seen as rough mountain men participated in this simple, yet heartwarming practice."

The author singles out for special recognition Rev. Hughie L. Ponder (1876-1967), longtime minister in the area and a 1914 graduate of Southern Seminary, along with Rev. Dillard Parker (1857-1932), who was ordained by Union Church in 1888. Parker had recognized the call to preach when a "treetop hit the house" where he was fiddling for a dance! This remarkable preacher was largely self-educated, teaching himself even the biblical languages. But Ponder realizes that it takes more than a pastor to make a real church;

"Even those who simply attended church were demonstrating before the world their faith in the Almighty, and in so doing they may have given the example that brought the lost one into the fold. So everyone, whether laic or cleric, leader or follower, should have the gratitude of all others regardless of their station in live....."

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Annual meeting of Historical Commission and Society will be held July 29 at Mayfield, Kentucky.



# SPECIAL BOOK SALE

WHICH OF THESE VALUABLE BOOKS ON KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORY DO YOU WANT??

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## PUBLICATIONS OF THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NO. 2

We're sorry to announce that all of these books are now out of print, and some--like the Centennial volumes by J. H. Spencer--are not available at any price.

BUT there is one truly significant volume on Kentucky Baptist History now available.

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