

THE  
KENTUCKY BAPTIST  
HERITAGE



*First Baptist Church, Williamsburg*

A PUBLICATION OF  
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KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

T A B L E

O F

C O N T E N T S

Green Clay Smith ..... 1

"Each Nobler Than The Last". 4

R. C. Medaris: The Gospel  
Trailblazer ..... 8

General Association  
Moderators from  
Williamsburg ..... 10

Cumberland College -  
Pictures - History ..... 19

An Evaluation of The Contri-  
bution of J. L. Creech to  
Cumberland College ..... 22

Baptist Resources ..... 31

Membership Application ..... 32

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## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

GREEN CLAY SMITH  
by James A. Crisp, Jr.  
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The First Baptist Church of Williamsburg, Kentucky, is indeed fortunate to have such a distinguished founder. Green Clay Smith was a many faceted personality. Like Sir Thomas More, he was a man for all seasons. He had several distinct careers. He was a soldier, lawyer, state legislator, military officer, congressman, territorial governor, Baptist minister, and uncompromising Prohibitionist.<sup>1</sup> His accomplishments equal to that of a dozen men.

He was born in the vicinity of Richmond, Kentucky, and was named for his grandfather, Green Clay, who was a planter and a slave owner, and whose plantation was called Whitehall. He was the distant cousin of Henry Clay, whose father was a Baptist minister, and the nephew of Cassius Marcellus Clay, a prominent politician who served in Congress. Sources give several dates for his birth. July 4, 1826<sup>2</sup> and July 2, 1832<sup>3</sup> are the most widely used. He began his education at Danville (probably Centre College), but when the Mexican War came in 1846, his patriotic nature caused him to run away and join the army at age sixteen.<sup>4</sup> His uncle, Cassius Clay, also volunteered for this war.<sup>5</sup> According to one source, Green Clay Smith rose to a second lieutenant of infantry.<sup>6</sup> After the Mexican War, he returned to his studies at Transylvania University where he graduated at eighteen. Three years later, he took a law degree from Lexington Law School and entered into practice with his father.

The young lawyer and his father evidently did not agree on slavery. In 1858, the younger Smith moved to Covington and developed a successful practice. He was elected to the Kentucky State Legislature in 1860. As the Civil War came, Kentucky was torn between the North

and the South. The state made an attempt to stay neutral - an impossible task. Smith took the side of the Union.

When the Civil War began, he volunteered as a private for a three month enlistment. When the enlistment expired, he was offered a position as a major in Colonel Jackson's Regiment. He rose to the rank of Colonel, 4th Kentucky (Union) Cavalry on March 15, 1862.<sup>7</sup> After a fight with the dashing Confederate Cavalry Commander John Hunt Morgan at Lebanon, Tennessee, Smith was promoted to Brigadier General on June 11, 1862. In this battle, he was wounded in the leg with a minie ball. The wound occasionally bothered him for the rest of his life.<sup>8</sup> In later clashes against Morgan he was not so successful, which caused Smith's commander to ask General Don Carlos Buell, "Don't you want General G. Clay Smith?"<sup>10</sup> Smith fought the famous Confederate Commander Nathan Bedford Forrest at Franklin, Tennessee, and was honored by General Rosecrans, who had succeeded General Buell after the Battle of Perryville. He was later brevetted a Major General "for meritorious service during the war."<sup>11</sup> A brevet is a commission often granted as an honor, promoting an officer in rank without additional pay or authority. Green Clay Smith used the title of general for the rest of his life, even after he became a Baptist minister. His last military service was to command the military district of Northern Kentucky. He resigned this position on December 4, 1863, after he was elected to Congress.

In running for Congress, General Smith was known as an "Unconditional Unionist Democrat" in contrast to the "Peace Democrats."<sup>12</sup> He would have been a Republican, but Lincoln received only 1,364 votes in Kentucky in 1860, and did not carry a single county.<sup>13</sup> The Louisville Journal called the Union Democrats "a Republican craft sailing under Union colors."<sup>14</sup> Still, the paper had high regard for General Smith and expressed its best wishes for his personal success.

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

In his congressional race, he was supported by two influential Cincinnati papers. Smith won the election in 1862 over two opponents, with 6,916 votes to their combined total of 4,316 votes.<sup>15</sup> In 1863, he voted with the Republicans to organize the United States House of Representatives.<sup>16</sup> For this he received some criticism. In 1864, he was a delegate from his district to the National Union Convention which was held in Baltimore.<sup>17</sup> At this convention, Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson were nominated for President and Vice-President of the United States. There is a story in Williamsburg that has come down through oral tradition that Smith was a candidate for the Vice-Presidency at this convention and came very close to winning.<sup>18</sup> This could be true. His uncle, Cassius Clay, had been a vice-presidential candidate at the Republican Convention in 1860.<sup>19</sup>

He was reelected to Congress and voted for the Thirteenth Amendment which freed the slaves. This amendment passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 119 to 56, with eight abstentions, barely passing with the required two-thirds plus three.<sup>20</sup> Thus, his vote helped pass the Thirteenth Amendment.<sup>21</sup>

In the Spring of 1866, Smith resigned from Congress and was appointed the Territorial Governor of Montana by President Andrew Johnson. He proved to be a successful governor.<sup>22</sup>

Over the years, Green Clay Smith had become increasingly motivated toward religion. In 1872, he resigned as territorial governor and was ordained into the Baptist ministry. His first charges were small churches in Madison County. His pastorates during the next several years were Winchester, eighteen months, Frankfort, five years, Mount Sterling, two years, and Somerset (in 1882).<sup>23</sup> He preached the convention sermon at Paducah in 1873 and was Moderator of

the General Association of Kentucky Baptists for nine years, from 1879 to 1887. His tenure as moderator is the longest unbroken period in Kentucky Baptist history.<sup>24</sup>

In 1883, he became pastor of Twenty-Second and Walnut Street Baptist Church.<sup>25</sup> Under his leadership, the small mission grew rapidly into a thriving church.

The temperance movement and the anti-slavery movement, two of the great social reform movements in American society, had developed simultaneously. Like Abraham Lincoln and Rutherford B. Hayes, Green Clay Smith was an uncompromising leader against beverage alcohol. "For over twenty years he had been prominently connected with the temperance cause and was a member of every one of their societies, from the Sons of Temperance to Good Templars."<sup>26</sup> He was the nominee of the National Prohibition Party, in 1876, and attracted 9,522 votes.<sup>27</sup> He was sometimes ridiculed for his stand, but this did not deter him.

As a minister, Smith was of an evangelical bent.<sup>28</sup> His preaching made him a popular and successful evangelist in Kentucky, especially in its southern mountains.<sup>29</sup> In September, 1883, he preached for eighteen days in Williamsburg, and was instrumental in the founding of Williamsburg Baptist Church. He returned on several occasions afterwards. On October 3, 1886, the recently completed sanctuary of the Williamsburg Baptist Church was dedicated. "The beloved Green Clay Smith, ever welcome, preached the dedicatory sermon."<sup>30</sup>

At a meeting of the Mount Zion Association of the United Baptist Churches which was held at Williamsburg Baptist Church (now First Baptist) in September, 1886, a committee called attention to the great need for the founding of a Baptist college for educating their children.<sup>31</sup> No doubt, Smith's aid was requested.

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

In September, 1887, at the Associational meeting at Bethlehem Baptist Church, R. C. Medaris, the pastor of the Williamsburg Church, was appointed the financial agent for Williamsburg Institute. He was given the power to call an extra associational meeting which he did on December 31, 1887. At this meeting, Green Clay Smith was guest speaker. His earnestness and zeal aroused the people to give or subscribe the amount of \$4,000.00.<sup>32</sup> So, he helped found Cumberland College as well as First Baptist Church.

The Western Recorder in an article about him on April 30, 1885, describes General Smith. This article was copied from The Courier Journal. "General Smith is a man of wit and eloquence, an entertaining conversationalist and a fascinating stump speaker."<sup>33</sup> He was of medium height and build with strongly marked facial features. His face was deeply lined and his eyes dark and keen. He wore his hair and beard long. His dress was that of an ordinary man with no suggestion that he was a minister. He wore a diamond stick pin of remarkable purity and constantly smoked a pipe.<sup>34</sup> This<sup>35</sup> is a description of him circa 1885.

From 1890 until his death on June 29, 1895, he was pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church, Washington, D.C. He was buried<sup>36</sup> in Arlington National Cemetery.

The First Baptist Church of Williamsburg set aside Sunday, August 18, 1895, as a day of mourning for the death of their founder.<sup>37</sup> If ever a man deserved to be remembered, Green Clay Smith was such a man!

1

Western Recorder, Thursday, April 30, 1885.

2

Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue,

Louisiana State University Press, 1964, p. 457.

3

Western Recorder, op. cit.

4.

Ibid.

5.

Article, "Cassius Marcellus Clay," Dictionary of American Biography.

6.

Warner, op. cit., p. 457.

7.

Ibid.

8.

M. M. Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, David M. McKay Company, 1959, p. 771

9.

Western Recorder, op. cit.

10.

Warner, op. cit., p. 457.

11.

Ibid.

12.

James Larry Hood, "Kentucky's Unconditional Unionist Congressmen," Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, Volume 76, July, 1978, pp. 197-215.

13.

Ibid., p. 210.

14.

Ibid., p. 202, Quoted from The Louisville Daily Journal, May 21, 1863.

15.

Ibid., p. 203.

16.

Ibid., p. 205.

17.

Ibid., p. 209.

18.

Whitley Republican, July 4, 1976.

19.

"Clay," op. cit., Dictionary of American Biography.

20.

Hood, op. cit., pp. 211-212.

21.

James G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, Second Edition Revised, D. C. Heath and Company, 1969, p. 397.

22.

James Thane, Jr., "An Ohio Abolitionist in the Far West," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, 1976, pp. 151-162.

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

23. Western Recorder, op. cit., Frank M. Masters, A History of Baptists in Kentucky, Kentucky Baptist Historical Society, 1953, p. 93, et passim.
24. 1980 Annual of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, pp. 542-543.
25. Chester Raymond Young, To Win the Prize: A History of The First Baptist Church of Williamsburg, Kentucky, 1883-1983, 1983, p. 3; Western Recorder, op. cit.
26. Western Recorder, op. cit.
27. Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, Daniel Aaron, The American Republic, Volume Two, Prentice-Hall, 1959, p. 696.
28. Warner, op. cit., p. 457.
29. Young, op. cit., p. 4, Western Recorder, op. cit.
30. Young, op. cit., p. 34.
31. Ida Janie Hall, A History of Cumberland College, non-published, M. A. Thesis, p. 7.
32. Ibid., p. 8.
33. Western Recorder, op. cit.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Warner, op. cit., p. 458.
37. Whitley Republican, op. cit.

of Cumberland College, Williamsburg, Kentucky, spoke on 26 February 1926 during the five-day dedication of the new meetinghouse for the First Baptist Church of that county-seat town, he described the succession of three buildings which had stood on the church lot as being "each nobler than the last."

The teacher's terminology aptly fits the three meetinghouses which the Church erected in the brief span of forty-one years on Fifth Street in Williamsburg, situated on the Cumberland River in Whitley County, in the southeastern section of the state. The church was organized on September 19, 1883, under the leadership of Elder Green Clay Smith, moderator of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky, and Elder Levi Jackson Steely, a native of the county who served as the first pastor for four months, before his untimely death early in the following year.

But before the three structures of brick and stone ever existed, borrowed buildings were pressed into the service of the King. The first was the three-room schoolhouse adjacent to John Wesley Siler's home, on Sycamore Street. Two other buildings were used from time to time--the house of the Williamsburg Christian Church and the county courthouse.

The first meetinghouse of the Church was completed in September, 1886, during the pastorate of Robert Cummings Medaris at a cost of over three thousand dollars. Work on the structure had been in progress for fourteen months. The new one-room building was the first brick church the town had ever had.

On Sunday, October 3, Elder Smith returned to help the Church dedicate its new building. A collection of \$510 wiped out the debt on the structure. The dedication came at the close of a four-week revival meeting.

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"EACH NOBLER THAN THE LAST":  
THE THREE MEETINGHOUSES OF THE FIRST  
BAPTIST CHURCH AT WILLIAMSBURG,  
KENTUCKY

by Chester Raymond Young

When Professor Albert Robinson Evans,

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

Early in 1890 Medaris's successor, William James Johnson, pronounced the brick church house inadequate. But it was not until 1906 that the Church decided to demolish the building in order to make way for a larger structure. Two factors account for this decision. In the past twenty years the membership had grown from 56 to 357. The Church wanted to minister to the students of Williamsburg Institute (the predecessor of Cumberland College), which had been in existence since January, 1889.

The death of Deacon James Perry Mahan, on March 6, 1906, and his death-bed bequest provided the impetus for the new church house. When he lay sick abed, this forty-seven-year-old man called in his friends John Wesley Siler and Dr. Ancil Gatliff for a visit. He informed them that he had designated in his will the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars for a new meetinghouse. He said, "Siler, I want you to match this amount, and, Doctor, I want you to double it."

Siler replied, "Jim, if you think I should give so much, then I'll do it." The doctor also agreed.

On April 1, the Church appointed a Building Committee composed of Gatliff, Siler, and Thomas Breckenridge Mahan. It was probably soon after that Sunday that the congregation began to meet in Institute (now Roburn) Hall and the church house was torn down. The next year, during which the Institute purchased the property of Highland Normal College, worship services were moved to the second-floor chapel located in the Gray Brick Building, on that campus.

Construction on the new church house moved on quickly during 1906-1907 at a cost of about twenty-five thousand dollars. Pastor Henry H. Hibbs, Sr., declared that such an expensive structure would not have been needed "were it not for the demands of the students

of the Institute upon us."

The dedication took place on Sunday, April 5, 1908, when Pastor Z. T. Cody, of Greenville, South Carolina, preached the sermon. Formerly the pastor at Georgetown, Kentucky, he was well-known in Williamsburg for the teaching and preaching he had done from year to year at the Bible institutes the Church had conducted. On the day of dedication, the debt on the building stood at about eight thousand dollars. When Pastor Hibbs took a collection to be applied toward the debt, he asked the members to contribute half that sum, but they gave fifty-five hundred dollars.

This new red-brick building had an auditorium that was expandable on the left side by raising a door which could be pushed into the ceiling and out of sight. The space thus exposed served the Sunday School at other times. When the door was pulled down, the auditorium was made considerably smaller. There was a choir loft and later a pipe organ to the right of the pulpit, a baptistry to the left.

From 1919 through 1923 there was much talk about erecting an educational building or adding to the church house. This movement included "a mass meeting" of the members, subsequent committee meetings, conferences with architects, and estimation of costs. It all came to naught when the Church postponed the matter on November 18, 1923 because of depressed business conditions.

It was just as well that the project was aborted, because tragedy struck on the night of January 5 following and the meetinghouse was completely destroyed by fire. The wife of the janitor, seeing the blaze around midnight, sounded the alarm. The fire had gained considerable headway before the fire department arrived. The weather was extremely severe, with the temperature hovering around zero degrees. The water supply had been turned off because the machinery at the pumping station was broken.

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

The only water available came from nearby wells. A bucket brigade, accordingly, was formed to save the adjacent buildings. It was so cold that water froze in the buckets if left standing even for a short time.

After this terrible occurrence, the Church was once more allowed to use the Gray Brick Building for worship and Sunday School until the present meetinghouse was completed.

Eight days after the fire, the Church met to discuss its loss. It unanimously voted to proceed post-haste to erect a new building. The pastor and the chairman of the deacons and of the trustees were authorized to nominate members for the committees necessary to carry out such a huge project. A week later the Church created the two panels suggested by those three leaders. A Committee on Plans--composed of James Blane Gatliff, Sr., chairman, A. R. Evans; Adam Troy Siler; C. W. Elsey, and I. N. Steely--was set up to make preliminary recommendations about the proposed structure. A Building Finance Committee was headed by T. B. Mahan, who was empowered to choose its members.

By June, Mahan's committee had estimated that "the kind of building that would meet the needs of the people of our locality" would cost about \$100,000 in addition to the \$34,200 received as insurance on the burned house. Upon hearing the committee's report, the Church pledged itself to raise from \$105,000 to \$110,000 to be paid in five years, with the initial payment on individual subscriptions to be due on January 1, 1925.

At that business meeting in June, 1924, the congregation employed Dougherty & Gardner, an architectural firm of Nashville, Tennessee, to plan the new building and to supervise its construction. This company had de-

signed or would design meetinghouses for the First Baptist Churches of Asheville, North Carolina; El Dorado, Arkansas; and Knoxville, Tennessee, using plans similar to the ones selected for the house at Williamsburg.

Two months later the planning stage ended and the Church elected a Building Committee with James B. Gatliff, Sr., as its Chairman. Other members were A. T. Siler, I. N. Steely, J. M. Ellison, and Forman Jones. Replacing the earlier Committee on Plans, this group would superintend the erection of the new building.

The lowest bidder on the contract put out by the architects was Worsham Brothers of Knoxville, who bid \$162,000. By eliminating the right wing of the building, the amount could be reduced to about \$142,000. Until the canvassing for the subscriptions was completed, the letting of the contract had to be delayed.

During five days beginning on November 20, twenty-six men appointed by Chairman Mahan received pledges totaling \$104,305. An estimate of what might reasonably be expected from members who had not been solicited brought the amount to \$112,780.

On November 24 the Church authorized the Building Committee to close the contract. Within a day or so Gatliff signed the Worsham contract for \$141,796.

The way construction had progressed by May 10, 1925 can be gauged by the fact that the cornerstone was laid on the Sunday afternoon. It is located on the south side of the building near its front. Inscribed on it is the biblical verse I Peter 2:6--

"BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHIEF  
CORNER STONE ELECT PRECIOUS"

At the laying of the cornerstone, A. T. Siler, a member of the Building Committee, spoke of the credit due James B. Gatliff, Sr., for "his unstinted efforts in helping the work along." As the chairman of the Building Committee, he would indeed become the "Builder" of this church house. One of the two sons of Dr. A. Gatliff, he had been associated with his father in the coal

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

industry.

Gatliff's work on this project was a matter that required his attention day in, day out. A builder himself, he was determined to see that every piece of material going into the building was of excellent quality. By terms of the contract the Church paid for the materials; therefore, the contractor was disinterested in regard to their cost. In view of this fact, it was easy for Gatliff to arrange for the purchase of items at wholesale through the Gatliff Coal Company. The wholesale prices of some materials in those days were as low as 50 percent of the retail prices.

Gatliff oversaw "every detail connected with the building of this beautiful house," which "will remain a monument to his efficiency and faithfulness as long as [it] stands," wrote Pastor Robert G. Bowers.

Construction went forward apace, but the piper had to be paid. Raising the money to meet the bills "was not always as easy as it might appear on the surface," said A. T. Siler some years later. In June, 1925, the sum of fifty thousand dollars was required, and "quite a bit of trouble" was experienced in borrowing that amount. Mrs. Florida Ellen Moss Gatliff, widow of the doctor, called Siler to her home and told him that she would sign a note for a loan if one could be secured. Siler journeyed to Cincinnati, where he borrowed the necessary amount from the Fifty-third National Bank for six months at 6 percent interest. That loan was renewed once and then repaid by money secured from Cumberland College.

As the building went up, so did the amount of the contract. It reached approximately \$165,000 to cover the cost of additional rooms for the Sunday School. The purchase of equipment caused the cost to rise to \$203,000. To that amount must be

added the value of nine special gifts, which brought the total cost to about \$218,000.

The financial campaign that was begun in 1924 under Mahan's leadership continued for about three years. By July, 1925, the sum of \$110,126 had been contributed by 148 members. Their gifts ranged from \$5 to \$12,500. The average donation was \$744.09; the median, \$250. Within two years the building debt would be owed to Cumberland College and would amount to some \$40,000. Church leaders--two women and twenty-three men--would sign a six-month note to secure this sum at 6 percent interest.

By February, 1926, the work was done, and there the building stood in all its beauty. Its exterior is made of stone and brick and concrete.

The auditorium, whose architecture is nonliturgical, forms the principal unit of the structure. It is built in the shape of an unobtrusive octagon. A dome crowns its center and a balcony on three sides forms the second floor. The whole of the lower level of its interior is paneled in fine rubbed wood from the red gum, a tree indigenous to the swamplands of the South. The pews also were crafted from red gum. The Lord's table, the pulpit, the choir loft, and the baptistry sit one after another at the front.

A basement extends the full length of the building.

The educational and administrative spaces are situated behind the auditorium on three levels and also in the basement.

The dedication of the new meeting-house was a five-day event, during February 24-28. The principal day was the last one, on Sunday, when about a thousand people came in the morning, including many visitors from Williamsburg, Jellico, and Corbin.

The dedicatory sermon was preached

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

by pastor Fred F. Brown, of the First Baptist Church of Knoxville. Then T. B. Mahan, chairman of the Board of Deacons, read the "Act of Dedication," which was unanimously adopted by the Church. The members dedicated the new house "to the worship and service of God now and forever more." They desired that "nothing shall ever be had in any of the apartments of this building that will detract from the sacredness of its mission, and that the main auditorium be set apart and kept sacred to the worship of God and the proclamation of His Saving Word and that all services held therein shall always be free."

The building had been dedicated but not paid for. In the midst of the Great Depression, as 1932 dawned, the debt stood at \$41,850, almost all of which was held by Cumberland College. Only \$250 of it was retired that year. A successful drive, headed by Norman Bishop Perkins, was conducted to liquidate this indebtedness. The campaign began in April, 1934, and by June of the following year, the obligation had been reduced to \$15,000. Coming from 166 donors, the pledges in this drive totaled \$25,509.50. They varied from \$1 to \$3,000. The median gift was \$25; the average, \$153.67.

But still the debt lingered. It amounted to \$12,500 in April, 1936, but near the end of the following year it was only \$5,000. In December, 1937, forty-eight members wiped the indebtedness out by presenting gifts ranging from \$5 to \$1,000. The median gift was \$50.

At evening worship on January 16, 1938, the Church conducted a service of thanksgiving to mark the clearance of this twelve-year obligation. Two canceled notes were ceremonially burned. The Church had paid for a grand building by two financial campaigns; the original one in 1924-1926; the one begun in 1934 now ended. On that occasion A. T. Siler declared that the Church was "entire free of debt, ex-

cept the debt which it owes to society."

It was beyond the ordinary that the "small community" of Williamsburg, Kentucky, should have erected a church house of such magnificence and utility. Professor A. R. Evans characterized this accomplishment as measuring up to the ideal of Aristotle, who wrote, "Excellent performance is the proper function of man."

1.

The research for this essay was done as a part of the author's book "To Win the Prize": The story of the First Baptist Church at Williamsburg, Kentucky, 1883-1983 (Williamsburg, Ky.: Centennial Committee, First Baptist Church, 1983).

(Chester Raymond Young, History Professor, is Chairman of the Department of History and Political Science, Cumberland College, Williamsburg, Kentucky.)

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R. C. MEDARIS: THE GOSPEL TRAILBLAZER

by John D. Broome  
Associate Professor of History  
Cumberland College

Eighteen men of God have served as shepherds of the flock of the First Baptist Church of Williamsburg, Kentucky. Except for Pastors Levi J. Steely (1883-1884) and Robert G. Bowers (1925-1926) who both died while serving the Church, all have impacted significantly upon Baptist life after leaving the little town by the Cumberland. While most have concluded their careers as pastors, others went on to serve in various other denominational capacities. For example, Herbert C. Gabhart (1943-1951) became a college president; David W. Perkins (1976-1981) a seminary professor; Robert L. Palmer (1960-1969) a college professor; and John N. Prestridge (1893-1897) an editor. However, of all the seventeen former pastors of the church, Robert Cummings Medaris (1885-1888) perhaps had

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

the most diverse post-Williamsburg ministry. In nine states from the hills of eastern Kentucky to the plains of New Mexico, he labored for the Master in a myriad of ways for over fifty years. His is a story that merits telling!<sup>1</sup>

## I. Early Years

Medaris was born on November 23, 1858, in a log cabin on the banks of the Clinch River near Clinton, Tennessee. With the start of the Civil War, his father became a plantation manager for a neighboring landholder who had been commissioned an officer in the Army of the Confederacy. The anguish and misery of the war did not leave the Medaris family unscathed - soldiers pillaged the plantation in search of provisions on several occasions. After the conflict ended, the Medaris family continued to reside in the Clinton area and the elder Medaris supported his family as a livestock dealer, a railroad worker, and a farmer. Recalling his parents many years later, the future Williamsburg pastor wrote:

They taught their children lessons of industry, economy, truthfulness, honesty, sobriety, and morality. They taught their children to honor God, to respect His Word, His house, His people, and especially His ministers. Furthermore, they taught us to treat people right and to shun bad company. My parents were not Christians in their earlier married life, but they were later converted.<sup>2</sup>

Young Medaris grew up working on his father's farm.

As a youngster, he attended a neighborhood one-room school and later attended the sessions of the Clinton Academy. One of his teachers there was Rev. Joseph W. Goddard, a graduate of Carson-Newman College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Goddard "was a good man and a faith-

ful preacher of the Gospel..... [He] read the Scriptures and prayed in chapel services every morning."<sup>3</sup> On one occasion, students were dismissed at 11:00 a.m. each day so that they could attend the revival services at the nearby Clinton Baptist Church. For several days the teenager Medaris skipped out and played ball, but later, "feeling constrained by a strange power within," started attending the meetings. In a subsequent service, the seventeen year-old lad became convicted of his sins and was converted. His reaction was later recorded as follows:

In that moment the Holy Spirit came like a mighty rushing wind and filled my soul with the love of God, and leaping to my feet, I shouted God's praises..... . When I came to myself, I had one arm about a frail Baptist preacher and was slapping him so hard on the back with the other hand that he was begging for mercy.<sup>4</sup>

Before the services ended, Medaris had also received "a clear distinct call of the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ." But he responded negatively and soon fled the country, going on what he later described as "a Jonah trip to Texas."<sup>5</sup> He left home without the approval of his parents. In fact, his father was away on a trip to South Carolina.

Things did not work out too well on the Texas frontier for Medaris and eventually he returned home to his forgiving parents. He also announced to the Clinton Baptist Church that he sensed God's call to preach. The congregation licensed him and he was soon "exercising his gifts" in a little quarter-time church at Frost Bottom, near Clinton. He organized a Sunday School and a prayer meeting, in addition to collecting funds to re-shingle the meetinghouse. He later wrote of the later experience:

When my work [of shingling] was finished, I had twenty cents left. They voted to give me this for my work, and I gave it in a collection for Foreign Missions, and that was the first money that church ever gave to Foreign Missions.<sup>6</sup>

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

Thus, in the first congregation he served, Medaris had four emphases which were to be the main ingredients wherever he served - a strong pulpit ministry, an educating Sunday School, a praying prayer meeting, and a constant missionary vision.

Area missionary work soon followed at the behest of the Clinton Baptist Association, at first at his own expense and afoot, later for one dollar a day and astride a horse provided by his father. He married a neighboring young lady, Virginia Goans, who bore him four children before her untimely death in 1891; a second wife, Florence Barton of Jonesboro, Arkansas, mothered ten more Medaris children. Increasing family responsibilities surely entered into his decision to accept the principalship of Newcomb High School, near Jellico across the mountains from Clinton, in 1884.

True to his calling, the youthful educator soon was preaching all over the area. He organized churches at Newcomb and Jellico. After only a few months, he made a fateful decision of which he later wrote:

When my school was out and the churches and mission points in that section were calling for all my time, after much prayer I decided to give up all secular work and devote my full time to the Lord's work.... I did not have any money. Moreover, I was beginning my work among a people that did not believe in paying the preacher. There were some United Baptist Churches and ministers in that section, and they were good people, but they were not missionary.<sup>7</sup>

He was ordained on March 24, 1884, assuming the pastorates at Newcomb and Jellico for no stated salary. In addition, he continued to hold services at a number of nearby hamlets, including a little community named Lot, just across the Tennessee line

in Kentucky. After a successful revival meeting at Lot, Medaris also became pastor of that church. This venture into Kentucky proved to be a fateful episode, because it was at Lot that Medaris met the John W. Silers from the neighboring Kentucky town of Williamsburg. He later wrote that the Silers "urged me to come there."<sup>8</sup>

## II. Pastor at Williamsburg

Not one to turn down an opportunity to preach, Medaris soon visited the seat of Whitley County and preached to the struggling congregation of Pastor W. H. Brummett. Less than two years old, the Williamsburg Church was meeting once a month in the local schoolhouse. A Sunday School sprang up from the initial visits of Medaris to Williamsburg, which was little more than a village with some two hundred inhabitants. A month after his visit, a protracted meeting of three weeks held by Medaris resulted in twenty-five new members being added to the Church. Pastor Brummett resigned soon thereafter and the Church extended a call to Medaris to become its pastor halftime for \$200 a year. He accepted the invitation in mid-June of 1885 and afterwards divided his time between the several congregations for the next year. When issued a second annual call by Williamsburg in May, 1886, Medaris rejected the offer. However, he did propose to serve the Church fulltime for double the salary Williamsburg had been paying him. Cognizant that their only other option meant the loss of their energetic pastor, the Williamsburg Church accepted the challenge and Medaris again accepted the pastorate. He reminisced later:

I believe that this call was of the Lord, and although I regretted to give up my [other] work .... yet I resigned and moved to Williamsburg, where I labored as pastor many months. I organized a good Sunday School, a weekly prayer meeting, and a Ladies' Aid Society. We secured a good lot on which we built a nice brick house of worship... I was pastor about two and one-half years and several hundred were added to the church. There were so many calls from other

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

fields that I resigned to take up Sunday School and mission work under the Sunday School and Colportage Board of the Kentucky General Association of Baptists.<sup>9</sup>

In a few words, Medaris chronicled the Williamsburg episode in his life - he came, he worked, he went - but his stay in Williamsburg was of considerable impact.

When Medaris first spoke to the Williamsburg Church, its membership was 19; when he left, 153. Many of the additions occurred during the four revivals he conducted in the Church. After the first one, a member wrote to the Western Recorder as follows:

Three weeks ago Bro. Medaris came again and encouraged the brethren to trust in God. God did come by His Spirit into our midst and such a work of the Spirit is seldom seen in these days as God's people at this place have been enjoying for the past two weeks. Sinners have been convicted and converted and the church has been aroused to a lively interest in the cause of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

After another meeting in which fifty-nine were added, Medaris wrote:

Never has there been such awakening in our town .... the interest continued to the last. The church celebrated the Lord's Supper on the last night, and God's Spirit came upon the entire congregation. We expect to begin again soon. The additions were mostly heads of families, and one man was 76 years of age. Many of them were the best people of the town.<sup>11</sup>

The crowds which attended his preaching made a larger building than the schoolhouse necessary. Started in 1885, the Church's first building was not finished until September, 1886. The only brick church building in town, it cost over \$3000 and was de-

icated debt-free on Sunday, October 3, 1886, when a crowd of over 300 contributed \$510.

The Williamsburg Church under Medaris was not only one of the few churches in southeastern Kentucky to hold services every Sunday, but it also had Sunday night services. Larger crowds sometimes attended at night and Medaris loved to preach to large audiences, so "the meeting on Sunday night was firmly established"<sup>12</sup> during his tenure as pastor. The Wednesday night prayer meeting also became a fixture under Medaris and was well-attended. Under his leadership, the Sunday School flourished and was the only "evergreen" school in the area - it met year round. Not one to overlook the importance of women in the work of the Lord, Medaris organized the Ladies' Aid Society; he commented that "[the women] are going out and hunting up the poor children of the town, clothing them and bringing them into the Sabbath-school. Is not this Christianity? God bless them."<sup>13</sup>

With Medaris as pastor, the Williamsburg Church reached out in other ways. The Church was represented by him and others when the Mt. Zion Association was organized October 30/31, 1885. Williamsburg hosted the second meeting of the infant body a year later. At that 1886 meeting, "the idea of founding a Baptist college in Whitley County was first embraced."<sup>14</sup> A year later, Medaris chaired a Committee on Education which suggested that the association pursue the idea further by appointing a financial agent to raise money for a college. Recognizing the Williamsburg pastor's ability at fundraising, the association selected Medaris for the task. Three months later at a special associational meeting held in the Williamsburg Church, the body agreed to found a school to be named the Williamsburg Institute. With some aid from others, Medaris raised over four thousand dollars at the meeting. Trustees were appointed, legislature approval later was secured, and in early 1889 the school opened. A last-minute hitch almost prevented the school from opening on schedule - the building was not ready.

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

Medaris summoned some of his flock and later wrote of their efforts to finish the job:

Every man there volunteered his help. On Saturday before the school was to open the next Monday, we worked 'til midnight, and then we arose at midnight Sunday night and went to the school building and began getting everything ready for the opening. About seven o'clock the good ladies brought us our breakfast and we ate heartily of it. When the 200 happy boys and girls were coming in at the front door, we were sweeping the rubbish out at the back door. We were dirty and tired, but we stayed on the grounds until about noon. We were at the first chapel service and we were all filled with joy and gratitude to God. We had won the victory.<sup>15</sup>

Many other such victories were won in Williamsburg by Medaris. In his history of the Williamsburg Church, Professor Chester Raymond Young estimated the importance of the Medaris pastorate as follows:

Rarely does a man like the successor of Brummett come down the road. A backward look gives one confidence to say that God sent Robert Cummings Medaris (1858-1942) to Williamsburg at a critical time when his kind of leadership was sorely needed. It may be that he was the most unusual and far-sighted pastor the Church has had. During his relatively short tenure he enlisted and influenced men whose faith and beneficence would eventually make possible to a great degree, the present status of the congregation.<sup>16</sup>

The ever-restless Medaris left the Williamsburg Church in 1888 and moved on to other fields "white unto harvest."

### III. Post-Williamsburg Ministry

When Medaris decided not to accept

another annual call of the Williamsburg Church after almost three years of ministry in the little county seat town, he embarked on a pilgrimage of fifty-four years in which he could legitimately be called a "religious jack-of-all-trades." He remained in Kentucky and worked for the General Association in southeastern Kentucky until 1891. As was the case everywhere he went, he organized Sunday Schools and encouraged a missionary spirit in the churches, positions not at all popular among some Baptists. Sparks flew during a visit to the annual gathering to the Laurel River Association on one occasion. He wrote of his experience:

Motion was made to receive me, but objections were filed. One church had sent enough messengers to hold the balance of the voting power of the association, and they strongly opposed receiving me as a corresponding messenger on the following grounds: (1) Because I believed in Sunday Schools; (2) That I believed in paying preachers a fixed salary; (3) That I believed in hiring men to go out and preach; (4) That I believed in educating preachers to preach the Gospel, and that I had built a college for the main purpose of educating men to preach and turning out man-made preachers. The vote was taken and I was denied a seat as a corresponding messenger. Then they voted to not correspond with an association that favored what they said I favored. All the leading preachers did not favor the action of the association, and soon the body adjourned and these ministers got on their horses and rode away. The committee on preaching asked me to preach at a residence that night and to preach the next Sunday at the 11 o'clock hour. I agreed to do this. When the 11 o'clock hour had arrived, people by the hundreds had flocked in and we had to hold services in a nearby grove. Some of the ministers came back and came to me and said, 'Now is your chance; give those anti-missionary people a skinning.' I

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

said, 'I cannot do that for more than one reason: First, it would not show a true Christian spirit; Second, the excitement is already running high, people are mad, men are here with their guns, and for me to add fuel to the already burning flame would be bad; Third, above all I must preach the Gospel of Christ to those unsaved people.' And that is what I did. There were fully two thousand people there; God's Spirit came upon us and many hard-hearted sinners came weeping and asking that they might be prayed for. It was a great hour, and I shall always believe that people were saved in that great hour of God's visitation.<sup>17</sup>

He later experienced similar opposition from the "Landmarkers" while serving as evangelist for the Sunday School Board of the Arkansas Baptist Convention. At another juncture in his life, Medaris worked for the Alabama Convention Home Mission Board as an enlistment man in the 75-Million Campaign.

Medaris always had a keen interest in the printed page. While in Williamsburg he owned and edited the Mountain Baptist, using its pages to promote Baptist work in the mountains. At times, he was the field agent or correspondent or both for Baptist papers such as the Western Recorder, the Arkansas Baptist, and the Alabama Baptist. He sold religious literature wherever he went, including thousands of subscriptions to the above-mentioned newspapers.

In Arkansas he was responsible for securing property and many donations for the Baptist Children's Home. His interest in education also went wherever he went and he raised funds for the Baptist colleges in Arkansas (interestingly enough, his formal education ended when he left Clinton Academy, although he did briefly attend the Southern

Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville). Appalled at the sad financial situation of many retired ministers, "he prevailed on the members of the [Arkansas] State Convention to appoint a committee on old minister's relief and acted as chairman and treasurer of the committee."<sup>18</sup> He believed in working together in a cooperative attempt to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. The Landmark Controversy, according to Medaris, was "a sad day" and "greatly hindered" the work of Baptists in Arkansas.<sup>19</sup>

Medaris also served as an associational missionary in Arkansas, Missouri and Texas. In the latter instance, he showed his true frontier spirit.

I bought me a gospel tent, a good covered wagon and hitched my two Mexican ponies, 'Ned' and 'Fred,' to the wagon and started out to 'blaze the gospel trail' in New Mexico. I preached the Gospel not only to the Anglo-Saxon race, but also to the Mexicans and Indians... We traveled many miles in our wagon and went to several places and held tent meetings. We would sleep in the wagon at night - when we could sleep for the howling wolves about us. We made one missionary trip far up into the Sacramento Mountains in the Apache Indian Reservation, and attended one association 100 miles from home. I held meetings at Magordo, Malago, and Blue Springs, and many other places. At the last two places named I organized churches.<sup>20</sup>

How could the ministry of such a man not be blessed!?

His work as pastor and evangelist can hardly be separated. Medaris was the regular or missionary pastor of some thirty-seven churches after he left Williamsburg. Kentucky churches which he served include London First, Pittsburg (now New Salem in Laurel County), Pineville First, Middlesboro First, Barbourville First, Burgin, and Gatliff. Of the above, he organized all of them except the last three mentioned. He also

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

organized the church at Mt. Vernon. Ever the evangelist, Medaris held revivals in all the above-mentioned churches, as well as at other churches such as Manchester and Harlan. In his account of the Harlan visit, he wrote:

I rode a mule from Pineville. The soldiers came on behind me. They were going to Harlan to keep peace while the circuit court was in session. I found a small Baptist Church there composed of a very few members. They had a small building in which they worshipped. I held a gracious revival and baptized several believers into the fellowship of the church.<sup>21</sup>

Medaris left his mark in the mountains long after he left Kentucky. His reputation was so commanding that John Fox, Jr., portrayed him in three of his novels as Sherd Rains, the "circuit rider." Fox had first encountered Medaris at Jellico and later on in the Kentucky mountains.<sup>22</sup>

After leaving Kentucky, Medaris pastored in Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, and Alabama. In addition to the over two hundred revivals he preached in those states, he held meetings in Louisiana and Indiana. Many of these revivals were protracted affairs, lasting three or four weeks. Never a man to walk away from an issue, he was actively involved in civic affairs. In fact, he was almost shot over a wet-dry fight in Pecos, Texas. He recounted the experience later:

One of the men who was on the side of the saloon men threatened to kill me, but he was prevented by an Unseen Power from even taking hold of his Winchester when I passed his place of business. He afterwards apologized to me and we were good friends as long as I stayed there.<sup>23</sup>

Sherd Rains never backed off from an issue either!.

## IV. Final Years

His health almost broken and 73 years of age, Medaris moved from Arkansas to Memphis in 1931. While he was not able to pastor a church regularly, he was not about to retire from his work. He organized the Free Bible, Book and Tract Society. Eight years later he spelled out the activities of his "retirement." In addition to a multiplicity of other endeavors which he listed, he had preached 304 sermons, given 275 addresses, visited 325 churches, furnished 14,305 families and 1830 businesses with religious literature, donated 45,000 Gospels, and distributed 250,000 tracts.<sup>24</sup> He summarized his last ministry - and really his whole life - as follows:

Many are the open doors that God presents to me, and I am entering every one I possibly can. I speak of two open doors that the Lord has set before me in the last 15 months: When the awful storm destroyed a part of Tupelo, Miss., in April, 1936, I went down there and placed Bibles, Testaments, Gospels and Gospel Tracts and papers in 100 families that were living in box cars. When the recent flood came in the Mississippi Valley, I furnished hundreds of flood refugees living in 21 Flood Refugee Camps with 228 Bibles, 150 Testaments, 1000 Gospels, about 20,000 Gospel Tracts, and 2,000 Gospel papers. I am thanking God every day for these opportunities of service, and for the wonderful things that are in store for those who know and love Jesus Christ. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of anyone the wonderful things that God has in store for us in the future. We are now enjoying His great blessings and favors and we know that He will continue to be with us unto the end.

There is promised to us in His word a victorious death, a glorious resurrection and a home in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, that is one day

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

coming down from God out of heaven to abide upon the new earth. That will be when God makes all things new. Then his people shall dwell together in unity, fellowship and great joy forever and ever. Amen and Amen. Before that time just referred to, Jesus is coming with millions of his saints who have died in the faith, and then shall those (the righteous) who sleep in their graves come forth and their souls and bodies shall be reunited, and the living shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye; and we shall be caught up into the air to ever be with the Lord. Then will the marriage of Christ, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Bride, take place. It will be a glorious meeting and a glorious marriage.<sup>25</sup>

That meeting for Medaris took place on June 5, 1942 - the Gospel Trailblazer breathed his last in Memphis that day. But his epitaph is still being written through the legacy he left in the lives of thousands. Robert Cummings Medaris - the Gospel Trailblazer!

1

When Medaris was in his late seventies, he provided the materials for Rev. J. B. Casey to publish a history of his life and work. The resulting work was entitled Blazing the Gospel Trail. As "editor," Casey typed the material, cut the stencils, mimeographed the copy, and stapled the pages together. Published at Lancaster, Kentucky, in 1937, the work is the priceless recollections of a man who spent over fifty years in the ministry. As the historian might expect, the book does contain some errors - memory fades over such a long period of time - but it does preserve for posterity the story of a remarkable man. Forty-five years after the initial

publication, Dr. J. M. Boswell, president emeritus of Cumberland College, re-issued the work under the same title. Inquiries pertaining to the book should be addressed to Dr. Boswell at the college - the purchase price is six dollars.

2

Robert Cummin[g]s Medaris, Blazing the Gospel Trail, 2nd ed. (Williamsburg, Kentucky: Cumberland College Press, 1982), p. 12.

3

Medaris, Blazing the Gospel Trail, p. 19.

4

Medaris, Blazing the Gospel Trail, p. 20.

5

Medaris, Blazing the Gospel Trail, p. 22.

6

Medaris, Blazing the Gospel Trail, p. 28.

7

Medaris, Blazing the Gospel Trail, p. 30.

8

Medaris, Blazing the Gospel Trail, p. 32.

9

Medaris, Blazing the Gospel Trail, p. 33.

10

Letter, J. R. S[ampson], Williamsburg, Kentucky, 1 June [1885], in Western Recorder, June 11, 1885.

11

Letter, R. C. Medaris, [Williamsburg, Kentucky], in Western Recorder, October 28, 1886.

12

Chester Raymond Young, "To Win the Prize": The Story of the First Baptist Church at Williamsburg, Kentucky, 1883-1983, (Williamsburg, Kentucky: Centennial Committee, Williamsburg Baptist Church, 1983), p. 57. Published as a part of the centennial celebration of the Williamsburg First Baptist Church, this volume is available from the church for \$10.95 plus \$1.50 for postage - a total of \$12.45.

13

Letter, R. C. Medaris, [Williamsburg, Kentucky], in Western Recorder, July 29, 1886.

14

Young, "To Win the Prize": The Story of the First Baptist Church at Williamsburg, Kentucky, 1883-1983, p. 177.

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

GENERAL ASSOCIATION MODERATORS  
FROM WILLIAMSBURG

by Eugene E. Siler, Sr.  
U. S. Congressman (retired)  
Williamsburg

The First Baptist Church of Williamsburg is celebrating its centennial in 1983. The church has been involved in Kentucky Baptist affairs since its founding on September 19, 1883. In fact, Rev. Green Clay Smith, the founder of the Williamsburg congregation, was moderator at the time. General Smith presided over the annual meeting for nine years (1879-1887). And although he was never pastor of the church by the Cumberland, Smith was the first moderator of the state body to have close ties with Williamsburg. Over the succeeding years, three others - all laymen - from the Williamsburg Church have wielded the gavel as moderators of the General Association. No other church, large or small, in the state has had three laymen to fill this significant role. Furthermore, among the three was the only father-son combination ever to moderate the General Association. Who were these men from the mountains?

## Ancil Gatliff (1850-1918)

Born on January 3, 1850, Ancil Gatliff was reared on Watts Creek, near Williamsburg. Educated in the county schools, he became a school teacher as a young man, receiving \$25 per month for teaching at Liberty School House. He had to cross the Cumberland River and walk several miles to the school. In later years, he loved to tell of his many experiences as a young teacher.

After several years in the one-room school, he decided to pursue a medical career. He traveled across country to Livingston, where the railroad then ended, and boarded a train to Louisville, where he received his medical training at the Louisville Medical College. Dr. Gatliff then returned home and set up practice in Williamsburg, the county seat of Whitley County, then just a village of a few hundred

souls. In the following years, his skills and service as a physician became known over a wide area, especially in treating pneumonia. Eventually, Dr. Gatliff gave up his general practice of medicine because of the press of his other business interests and only treated his family and a few friends in his latter years.

Dr. Gatliff was married in 1876 to Miss Florida Moss of Bell County, Kentucky. To this union was born five children, three daughters and two sons. The good doctor was a doting father and his home was the very center of his life. The last surviving child, Mrs. T. E. "Miss Una" Mahan, died on August 2, 1983. She, like her father, was a great benefactor of the Church, Cumberland College, and many other causes.

When the good doctor was forty years old, he made his public profession of faith, and was baptized in the Cumberland River. For the rest of his life, he was there when the doors of the Church opened. He was elected to the deaconship on three different occasions, but chose not to accept the honor. Some of his favorite moments were spent as a faithful member of the Men's Bible Class. Dr. Gatliff was a lover of hymns and sang them with great fervor at public worship and at home. His stewardship of money became almost legendary in his time - he truly believed that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

As a businessman, he was president of several coal companies and of the Bank of Williamsburg. His business acumen served him well as he sought to serve others in a multitude of ways. Christian higher education, especially Cumberland College, was the recipient of much of his generosity. The giver of the largest gift when the first solicitation was made to start a Baptist college in Williamsburg, he continued to give for the rest of his life. Over \$100,000 he gave, in addition to serving as the chairman of the board of trustees until his death. He was founder, first president, and largest contributor of the Kentucky Baptist Education Society, giving 4,000 acres of coal and timber land (worth over \$100,000) to that body in 1906. One of the last

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

checks Dr. Gatliff wrote was one to Southern Seminary, with a note enclosed to Dr. E. Y. Mullins that the money be used as needed. But closer to his heart was his ever-ready willingness to help his less fortunate neighbors - no one went cold or hungry if Dr. Gatliff knew.

When the General Association met in nearby Jellico, Tennessee, in 1915, Dr. Gatliff was persuaded by his friends to allow his name to be nominated for the moderatorship. After his election, he is reported to have said, "Brethren, I am not worthy of the honor you have conferred upon me... If I have ever done anything worthwhile, it is because of the goodness of God... I am simply a sinner, saved by grace... by the grace of God, I am what I am." At the Jellico meeting, a "Budget Plan" was adopted. Some say that this plan was the forerunner to the Cooperative Program. A year later, Dr. Gatliff was reelected at the Walnut Street Church in Louisville. Dr. Mullins mentioned later that Dr. Gatliff was "eminently fair" when presiding and that he was "one of the most useful men who has ever lived in this state." Folks in Williamsburg had known that for years.

Dr. Ancil Gatliff died as a result of how he lived. He contracted pneumonia while handing out coal to the poor in the rain. He died on October 14, 1918. On the hour the steeple clock on the Dr. Ancil Gatliff Administration Building at Cumberland College still peals out the lasting contributions of this great and noble man.

Adam Troy Siler (1870-1953)

My father, Adam Troy Siler, was born on February 13, 1870, to Terrill and Mary Blakely Siler. He grew up on Tackett Creek where the hills were so steep, he later was fond of saying, that "you could look up the chimney and see the cattle grazing on the hillsides." He grew up working on the farm, but that did not keep him from obtaining a good education, albeit in a one-room school. He became a teacher for \$20 a month, alternating teaching with attending

National Normal University in Lebanon, Ohio, where he obtained his B.S. in 1892.

When only twenty-three, the young teacher was named as Whitley County school superintendent and held the position for nine years (1893-1901). In 1897, he married Minnie Chandler and to this union was born two daughters and one son.

The field of law interested my father and he read law in the office of James N. Sharp in Williamsburg for a number of years. In those days, this was a common method of entering the law profession. After passing the bar exam, my father became a member of the firm Tye, Siler, and Gillis, which became one of the better known firms in southeastern Kentucky. The firm represented the Louisville and Nashville Railroad for many years. In addition to practicing law, my father was a pioneer coal operator in our area, served thirty-five years as the president of the Bank of Williamsburg, as well as serving as chief executive of several wholesale grocery and dry goods firms. He was also quite involved in Republican politics, holding the Fifth District chairmanship for eight years.

Although he was on speaking terms with governors, judges, and senators, he never forgot the folks on the creeks and up the hollows. In his latter years, he seldom drove; he would often get Dr. Boswell and others to drive him around in the country, especially in the area of Tackett Creek. He knew everybody and everybody knew him. My father's spiritual roots were also on Tackett Creek, because he was converted and joined the nearby Boston Church in 1892. When he moved to the county seat, he brought his membership into the Williamsburg First Baptist Church.

As a churchman, there were very few positions that he did not fill at one time or another. He was a church trustee for forty-five years. He was on the building committee for our present church building, was perhaps the congregation's first user, was clerk from 1896-1900, and served as president of the Brotherhood. His crowning joy, however, was his Sunday School class of college girls. Many of these young folks he helped with financial

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

aid, but he helped everybody with his optimistic spirit - he could inspire confidence as few men can. Countless young ladies and others heard him repeat again and again his class motto, "Be Somebody." Cumberland College still awards a medal in his honor to a young lady in each graduating class who shows exceptional promise of "Being Somebody." My father was a trustee of Cumberland College for fifty-two years.

Many folks have told me how impressed they were just to be around my father. Once at a Kentucky Baptist Convention, a preacher approached him and said, "Mr. Siler, you wear a red rose in your lapel and never smell it, you carry a cigar and never smoke it, you have a cane but never use it to assist you in walking. Why do you do these things?" His answer, "I do these things because they make me feel like somebody." He did have a keen sense of humor which served to get him over rough spots in life.

Of all the honors which came to my father, none meant as much to him as his election as moderator of the General Association in 1944-1945. He must have attended over thirty different yearly meetings of Kentucky Baptists as a delegate from the Williamsburg Church. As moderator, he was fair and effective. It always bothered him when, in his last few years, his health prevented him from attending the annual gathering of Kentucky Baptists. My father died on November 16, 1953. He passed away in Williamsburg while I was presiding as moderator in Owensboro. He was a good man and left his mark in the lives of many.

Eugene E. Siler, Sr. (1900- )

Few people have ever been blessed like yours truly. I have told you about my father and what a good man he was. I met the Lord early in my life and have tried to serve Him the best I know how ever since. I have

been married to the former Lowell Jones, a daughter of Professor Gordon Jones, for fifty-eight years. The Lord blessed us with two daughters and one son, who in turn have given us several wonderful grandchildren.

I have followed my father into the practice of law and was associated with his firm. I was a judge on the Kentucky Court of Appeals during 1948-1949 and later served the Fifth District as Congressman for five terms (1956-1966).

But my greatest joy has been in serving my church as a deacon and in whatever other capacities I can. As I mentioned, my father died when I was presiding as moderator of the annual meeting in 1953. I remember that before we adjourned that session, we sang "Amazing Grace," just like my grandma had sung it on Tackett Creek many years ago. The brethren honored me by allowing me to preside again in 1954. And for a number of years afterwards, I was asked to serve as parliamentarian of the annual gathering. In it all, from Tackett Creek to being the servant of Kentucky Baptists to the hall of Congress, the Good Lord has blessed us and we thank Him, because "when we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun."

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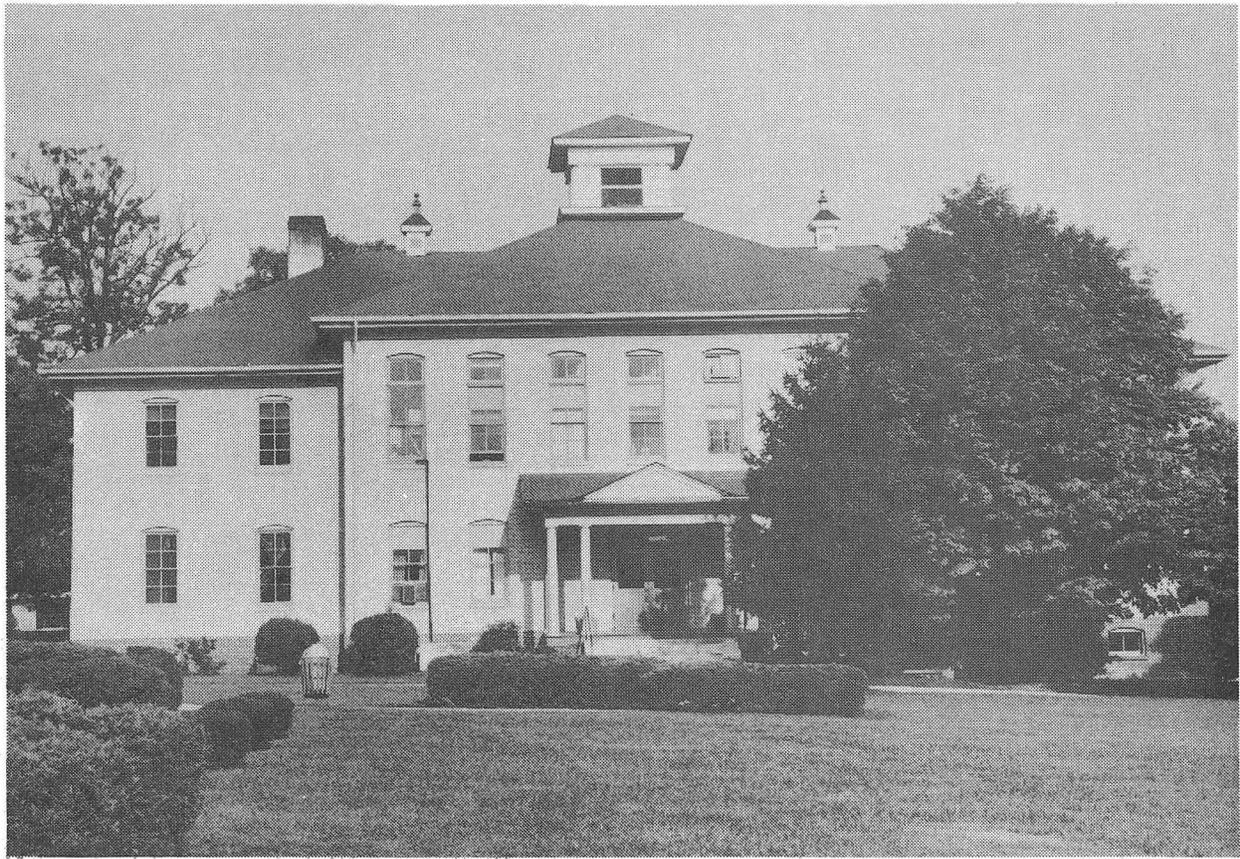
C U M B E R L A N D C O L L E G E

PICTURES!

HISTORICAL FACTS!

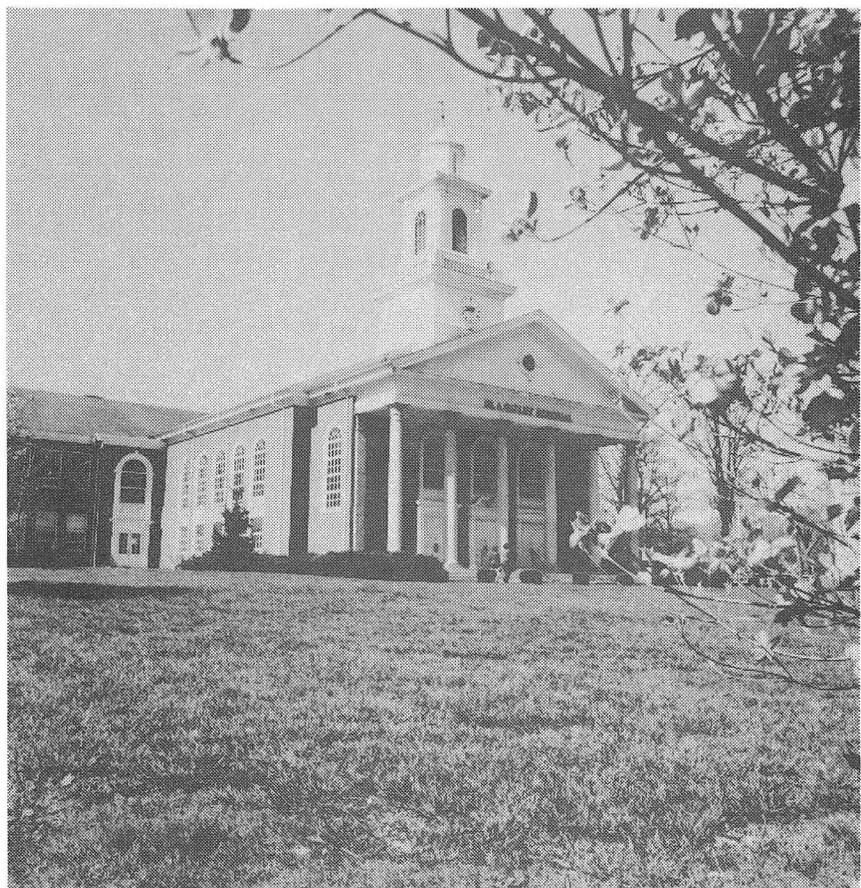
FORMER COLLEGE PRESIDENT,

J. L. CREECH



***Gray Brick Classroom Building, built in the 1890's by the  
Congregationalists — purchased by the Baptists in 1907.***

***Gatliff  
Administration  
Building***





***Roburn Hall, the original Institute Hall  
of Williamsburg Institute (1888)***

***Johnson Hall, Women's dorm, built in 1893***



## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

## SOME FACTS ABOUT CUMBERLAND COLLEGE

## History

- 1887 The Mt. Zion Association meeting at Bethlehem Baptist church decided to found a college in Williamsburg.
- 1888 A charter was drawn up and approved by the state legislature. The trustees organized with Dr. Ancil Gatliff as president, J.P. Mahan as vice-president, J. W. Siler as treasurer, and E.S. Moss as secretary. The first building, now Roburn Hall, was erected.
- 1889 The school opened on January 7 as Williamsburg Institute with two teachers and one hundred and twenty-nine students. Twenty-one of these were in the college department. Rev. William James Johnson was the president and pastor of First Baptist Church.
- 1913 The name of the school was changed to Cumberland College.
- 1916 Cumberland was made a junior college, dropping from a four-year term.
- 1931 Cumberland was admitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools as fully accredited.
- 1934 The elementary grades were discontinued.
- 1941 The high school work was eliminated.
- 1959 Cumberland entered its third year of work, having been given permission by the General Association in 1957 to resume four-year status.
- 1961 Forty-nine students graduated under the four-year program.
- 1964 Cumberland was accredited as a senior college.
- 1974 Accreditation was reaffirmed by the Commission of Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools at its December meeting.
- 1982 The Kentucky State Board of

Education at its March meeting approved Cumberland's graduate program in Elementary Education. Courses were first offered during the summer session of 1982.

- 1983 The Kentucky State Board of Education at its March meeting approved Cumberland's graduate program in Secondary Education. Courses in this area were first offered in the 1983 summer session.

## Buildings

- 1888 Roburn Hall, the original school building was erected. The name Roburn was given to the building in 1928 when it was made into a dormitory for women. It was first called Institute Hall.
- 1893 Johnson Hall was built as a dormitory for girls and named for the first president. It was used as a dormitory for men from about 1895 until 1906 and the women students boarded in Central Hotel or in homes.
- 1906 Felix Hall, now Mahan Hall, was built as a dormitory for men. It was originally named for Dr. W. H. Felix of Lexington, and in 1954 the name was changed in honor of Mr. E. C. Mahan of Knoxville.
- 1907 The Gray Brick was purchased from Highland College which was originally Williamsburg Academy.
- 1920 The viaduct was built.
- 1928 The Gatliff Gymnasium was built. The gym which had been given to the college in 1911 by Dr. Ancil Gatliff was changed into a library the next year. It was later used as a music building, but was destroyed by fire.
- 1929 The Home Economics Building was completed as an annex to Johnson Hall and given to the school by Mrs. Florida Gatliff, the widow of Dr. Ancil Gatliff. It

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

is now used by the English Department.

- 1955 The Ancil Gatliff Memorial Chapel and Administration Building was completed.
- 1958 The T. J. Roberts Cafeteria was completed.
- 1959 Nicholson-Jones Hall, then an apartment building, was purchased as a dormitory for women. It is now a dormitory for men.
- 1960 The Norma Perkins Hagan Memorial Library was completed.
- 1962 The Ruby Gatliff Archer President's Home was given to the college.
- 1963 The Biology Building was built and North hall was constructed as a men's dormitory.
- 1965 West Hall was built to complete the North-West Hall. It was named the Edward O. Robinson Residence Hall in 1983.
- 1966 Ruby Gatliff Archer Hall was built as a women's dormitory.
- 1968 The Chemistry Building was constructed.
- 1972 The Boswell Campus Center was completed.
- 1973 The Brown house was purchased and used for housing for several years. It is now the Alumni Office.
- 1974 The P. R. Jones property came to the college through the will of Professor and Mrs. P. R. Jones. The Development Office is in the P. R. Jones house.
- 1976 The Dr. George M. Asher Memorial Hall was completed as a dormitory for women.
- 1979 The Mary McGaw Music Building was constructed.
- 1983 The Williamsburg City School property was purchased and the buildings are being renovated to

be used this fall for classrooms and offices.

(Continued on Page 30.)

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AN EVALUATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF  
J. L. CREECH TO CUMBERLAND COLLEGE  
WHILE SERVING AS PRESIDENT  
OF THE INSTITUTION  
by J. M. Boswell, President Emeritus

## INTRODUCTION

Williamsburg Institute, to become Cumberland College in 1913, was founded in 1889 to meet a critical educational need. The founders of the institution were missionary minded Baptists, people with great vision, great faith and great compassion. At that time, there were few public schools in the geographical area on any level; grade school, high school, or college. Thus, for the first quarter of a century of its existence, the offerings of the institute were very broad, including the following; grade school work, college preparatory work; work leading to both the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degrees, and normal school work, that is, teacher training. The institute functioned in this manner until 1919, at which time the college department began to operate only on the junior college level.

As the public school program in the area improved, it became apparent that there was little need for the grade school department and the high school department, and so the grade school was discontinued in 1934 and the high school department was dropped in 1941. The college department continued to function as a junior college until 1959, at which time the third year of college work was offered. Beginning with the 1961 class, 23 senior college classes have been graduated as of 1983. However, in some areas, particularly in certain vocational fields, associate degrees are offered.

Graduate degrees are now offered for teachers of elementary education and also for teachers of secondary education.

Dr. Creech, the man about whom this

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

paper is written, was a graduate of Cumberland College. He attended the University of Michigan Law School for one year and two summers. He was admitted to the Kentucky Bar. Dr. Creech earned the Bachelor of Science degree from Columbia University and he earned the Diploma as Teacher of Education from Columbia. He attended the Harvard Graduate School of Education one summer and did graduate work at Columbia University. He served as a teacher in rural schools of Kentucky and also as a teacher in Barbourville Baptist Institute. In 1913, after having been President of Barbourville Baptist Institute for one year, he became a staff member at Cumberland College. He was President of Cumberland College from 1925 to 1945. Georgetown College conferred on him the honorary doctorate in 1938. Dr. Creech never married.

I chose this subject because not much has been said or written about the service J. L. Creech rendered Cumberland College while he was chief executive of the institution, from 1925 to 1945. I feel I came to know this man well by virtue of the several relationships in which he and I were associated. Hence, I believe my evaluation of the administration of Dr. Creech is reasonably valid.

I worked under him for ten years\* prior to my going into active duty in the Navy in the summer of 1942.

After World War II, we were associated in a different relationship. He was incapacitated by a paralytic stroke in the early fall of 1945. He improved, but not to the point of being able to take responsibility for guiding the operation of Cumberland College. Thus, he served no longer in an administrative capacity, but he was given the title President Emeritus. As he had done while he was President, he continued to live in the dormitory for men. For seven years after I relieved Dr. Creech, from October of 1945 through the summer of 1952, my wife and I and our two children lived in that same dormitory.

During these seven years, Dr. Creech and I talked many times about many subjects. We talked about Cumberland College and its future, we talked about local, state and national politics, we talked about his illness, we talked about his farming operations, and we talked about the future of the mountain area in which Cumberland College is located.

We were associated in still another relationship. From September of 1934 until mid-July of 1942, he was my landlord. We lived in a little red brick house owned by Dr. Creech, a house on Elm Street just across the street from the non-residential part of the campus and a stone's throw from the Gray Brick Building, the main classroom and administrative building of Cumberland College until 1955. On many later afternoons, when the weather permitted, Dr. Creech and I would have discussions while sitting on either the steps of the Gray Brick Building or on the steps of the walk leading to the little red brick house in which we lived.

I will review my first contact with Dr. Creech. In the summer of 1931, I was teaching mathematics in the summer school of Campbellsville College and I was looking for a job in a college as a teacher of mathematics. I had taught mathematics at Georgetown College for three years, my first three years out of college, but Georgetown had fallen into difficult financial straits and was not able to pay in full the salaries of teachers. In an effort to keep the institution financially viable, one of the steps taken was the releasing of lower ranking instructors. So, I with several other teachers, was looking for a position.

Having learned about me from the College and Specialist Bureau in Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. Creech communicated with me and told me about an opening in Cumberland College for a teacher of mathematics and physics. He informed me that the person

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 (\* I had been on the Cumberland staff since 1931, but I was on leave for one year 1938-1939 while I was teaching and doing graduate work at the University of Kentucky.)

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

employed would teach classes in high school mathematics and physics and would teach physics and a class or two in mathematics in college.

In selecting a teacher, Dr. Creech followed the practice of getting the credentials of prospective teachers from an agency or placement bureau of a university, or both. Then, he would study this information and narrow the field to one applicant. He did not want the prospective teacher to know that he was inquiring about him or her until he had made up his mind that he would offer the job to the prospective teacher, assuming everything went well after the initial contact.

After our first communication we moved fairly rapidly and, in a few days, had agreed on the terms of a contract. Dr. Creech did not think a personal interview was necessary.

During the early days of my teaching experience at Cumberland College, it seemed that President Creech paid more attention to me than he did to any other instructor on the staff. I will explain.

My teaching classroom in the Gray Brick Building was just across the hall from the administrative offices of the college. I usually taught with my classroom door open and since the interior of the building was of wood construction, and not soundproof, Dr. Creech could easily hear what was said in my classroom. After my first year as an instructor at Cumberland, Dr. Creech would come to my high school classes and sit for awhile and observe. This went on for a period of time. Then, one day, he called me into his office and told me what I might do to make my teaching more effective. He said I talked too much, that I did too much explaining, and that I talked too loudly. He said I did not even walk as I should, that is, that I created too much disturbance as I walked on the wooden floors in the hallway of the Gray Brick. He then told me what I should do to become a better teacher.

I tried to modify my teaching

methods to comply with his suggestions and recommendations. Nevertheless, I was convinced that what I was doing was effective and I was confident that I was a competent teacher. He continued to visit my high school mathematics classes and subsequently would call me into his office for interviews. Apparently I did not change my teaching methods sufficiently to suit him since he pursued his pattern of classroom visitation and interviews.

However, at that particular time, there was in the State of Kentucky a program by which high school students in certain fields could, if selected by the staff of the high school, go to a regional testing center and take a statewide standardized test on any of several academic subjects. These statewide tests were given in such courses as Algebra I, Algebra II, Plane Geometry, Physics, French, Latin, English I, II, III and IV, American History and Ancient History.

Every year, the high school mathematics students I selected to go to the regional center did well, ranking among the best in the state in their particular fields. The results of these tests were sent to the principal of Cumberland College Academy, Miss Besse Rose, and she, in turn, gave the scores and rankings to Dr. Creech. After having counseled with me about my teaching methods over a number of years, one day, he called me in his office and said, "Boswell, since your students have done so well on statewide tests it is evident that you are effective in your teaching. I don't agree with your teaching methods but I can't argue with success, even if your methods are wrong." He said, "I will never bother you again in this respect," and he didn't.

The accomplishments during the 20 years Dr. Creech served as President have been very important in the history of the institution. It is to be noted that the greater part of his administration was during the depression. Colleges, in general, and private colleges in particular, faced difficult times during this period.

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

In my opinion, what took place at Cumberland College during his presidency strengthened the institution and provided a base on which the college could expand in the future.

I shall mention several significant advances the college made under the leadership of Dr. Creech.

COMPETENT STAFF

At the time Dr. Creech became President of Cumberland, there were several very competent teachers on the staff. Among these teaching on the college level were Dr. E. E. Wood, Professor Gorman Jones, Professor P.R. Jones, Professor A.R. Evans, Professor J. T. Vallandingham, and Professor Besse Rose. Around these people, a strong academic program could be and was built. Since during that period the demand for teachers at any level was far less than the supply, administrators adding teachers could be highly selective.

Dr. Creech could take his time in looking over the credentials of any teacher who wanted a position at Cumberland College. Moreover, he could set the salary at a comparatively low figure. I recall that Dr. Creech hired some people with the doctorate for as little as \$100.00 a month. I do not believe he paid any person with the doctorate more than \$150.00 a month.

Since Cumberland was a junior college, it was not necessary that any person with the doctorate be employed to teach. However, in the late thirties and early forties, he did add three persons, each with the doctorate from a highly respected university. He added one person with the doctorate from Ohio State. He employed with the doctorate from Yale. He hired another with the doctorate from the University of North Carolina. After leaving Cumberland, each of these people moved to a responsible position in a senior college or university. One of these men became the head of the Department of Biology in Millsaps College in Mississippi, and later

became head of the Department of biology in Samford University in Alabama. He was promoted to the office of Dean of Samford and then became President of Carson-Newman College in Tennessee. He retired from that position, but is now serving as Academic Vice-President of the Baptist College of Charleston, South Carolina.

At the time Dr. Creech became chief executive of Cumberland College, approximately fifty percent of the college teaching staff had the master's degree. Within six years after he became President, all persons teaching in the college had the master's degree or the equivalent. By the fall of 1931, the qualifications of the faculty met the requirements of the Southern Association, the official accrediting agency for colleges in the Southeastern section of the United States.

ACCREDITATION

Official accreditation, that is, accreditation by an official accrediting agency apparently had not been a matter of great concern to Williamsburg Institute or Cumberland College before 1925.

Prior to the time Cumberland was accredited by a recognized accrediting agency, Cumberland College catalogues contained statements like this, "State Universities are generally the Accrediting Agencies for Junior Colleges located in their states. In Kentucky, an 'A' grade Junior College is defined to be one whose graduates receive credit, hour for hour, to a maximum of sixty-seven semester hours."

These catalogues further stated, "Cumberland College is a Class 'A' institution. Thus, its work is credited, hour for hour, by the State University of Kentucky and by other leading Universities in the country, up to sixty-seven hours."

Dr. Creech, however, looking ahead and seeing that in time state universities might shed themselves of accrediting responsibilities, and, in particular, that

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

the University of Kentucky, by which Cumberland was accredited, might not continue to render this service, decided it would be wise to try to get Cumberland to qualify for membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. This agency is now known as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.\*

To this end, President Creech enlisted the support and cooperation of trustees and staff members and led the college toward full accreditation. As the college moved in this direction, it could be seen that some teachers with the master's degree would have to be added, that the academic background of some of the staff members would have to be upgraded and that it would be necessary to improve certain physical facilities in order to meet the standards of the Southern Association. In particular, he saw it would be necessary to improve the library and laboratory facilities.

Working toward this goal with the help of the trustees and staff, Dr. Creech moved the college upward to the point that it gained admission to the Southern Association in December of 1931. This was a significant step for the institution. There were few, if any, accredited Junior Colleges in Kentucky other than Cumberland. Gaining regional accreditation for Cumberland meant that its students and graduates could readily transfer to other institutions of higher learning without their credits being questioned. Cumberland College has maintained its accreditation every since that time.

At that time, one of the requirements of any Junior College holding membership in the Southern Association was that every three years the college submit to the Southern Association of- fice, statistics showing how the graduates of the Junior College had fared academically on transfer to Senior Colleges and Universities. With up to 90 percent of its graduates transferring

to Senior Colleges and Universities, Cumberland's graduates made a very good showing. This was an achievement in which Dr. Creech took great pride.

BALANCED BUDGET

At the time J. L. Creech became President of Cumberland College, the institution was having a problem operating on a balanced budget. In order to keep income and expenses equal, it was felt necessary by the trustees that Dr. Creech be given considerable authority to make cuts where necessary to bring about and maintain a balanced budget.

Dr. Creech took very seriously his responsibility in keeping the college financially viable.

In the early thirties, Dr. Creech called the members of the staff together and told us it was going to be necessary to cut salaries ten percent in order to be sure the institution operated on a balanced budget. He said this cut in salary, ten percent of each teacher's pay, would be done with the understanding that if at the end of the fiscal year there was enough money available, the cut would be restored, and that if there was not enough money to restore the cut totally, what could be restored would be. The college operated for several years like this. At the end of each fiscal year, during that period, when ten percent of the salary was cut, five percent of the salary was restored. In due time, however, President Creech foresaw that the college could continue to operate on a balanced budget and the ten percent annual cut was no longer made.

From 1931 to the fiscal year of 1944-1945, no salaries were raised. In several instances, staff members who had duties over and above their teaching were given from \$50.00 to \$100.00 per semester extra. For example, I was getting the same salary for teaching when I went into the Navy in the summer of 1942 as I was when I came to Cumberland College as an

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(\*The agency is frequently called simply the Southern Association.)

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

instructor in 1931. I was given \$100.00 extra per semester for coaching basketball.

RURAL BETTERMENT PROGRAM

President Creech had a vision which was only partially realized. He had a dream that Cumberland College would lead the way in helping develop the mountain area in which Cumberland was located into an agricultural region.

Of course, most of the mountains were so steep that farming could not be done on these hillsides without considerable erosion. Dr. Creech thought that by terracing the hillsides, enough flat area could be made available for the growing of crops such as corn and other grain. He believed that terracing would permit the development of grazing areas for cattle and sheep. He said he had a dream of seeing this area become agricultural to the point that there would be "cattle on a thousand hills."

Dr. Creech, with the support of the trustees of the college, set up a plan by which students could grow some crops, like Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, and sell these products to the college for use in the dining hall and thus pay partially or totally the expenses of the student who had grown the crop. Several students took advantage of this program, but the program never developed to the point Dr. Creech thought and hoped it would.

THE WORKING STUDENT PROGRAM

Dr. Creech took great interest in the student workship program. Although Cumberland College has had a work program for students as long as it has existed, Dr. Creech refined that workship program and made it into one which operated efficiently. I recall that after I came to Cumberland College, on Saturday mornings, he would be out supervising some twenty or thirty or thirty-five students working on the campus. He would not tolerate poor workmanship on the part of any student

and he expected every workship student to perform diligently. The pay per hour was small but it was somewhat comparable to the general charge made to the student for room, board, tuition and fees.

KEEPING THE COST LOW

Dr. Creech took very seriously the original aim and purpose of Cumberland College, namely, that the institution should provide an education for mountain people in a religious atmosphere. In order to do this, it was necessary that the cost be kept low, even as it is now. Otherwise, the financially limited students could not afford to attend Cumberland College and obtain the education that would permit them to use their full potential for the glory of God and the benefit of the people.

When I first came to Cumberland College, I remember how astounded I was to find out that the cost for tuition and fees for a semester was only \$40.00, \$35.00 for tuition and \$5.00 for registration fees, and the cost of room and board was only \$16.00 a month. The cost of tuition and fees remained constant from 1931 through 1945. During that period, the cost of room and board fluctuated from a low of \$14.00 a month for nine months to a high of \$17.00 a month.

PHYSICAL ADDITIONS

During the tenure of Dr. Creech, several building changes were made. One of these was the construction of a small home economics building, the money for this was given by Mrs. Florida Moss Gatliff, wife of Dr. Ancil Gatliff, the man who was perhaps more responsible than any other person for the existence of Williamsburg Institute, later to be Cumberland College. During the tenure of Dr. Creech, the home economics teacher supervised the dining program of the college, thus, the new home economics building was constructed as an addition to that portion of Johnson Hall which served as the food preparation and dining area for the students.

Another important addition made to Cumberland College during the presidency of Dr. Creech was the construction of a

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

new gymnasium. Although this gymnasium is referred to frequently as the Gatliff Gymnasium, no official action was taken to give this building that name.

The old gymnasium, erected in 1911 by money given by Dr. Gatliff, located on Main Street, was known as the Gatliff Gymnasium.

At the time the Gatliff Gymnasium was constructed, it was thought to be adequate to meet the future needs of Cumberland College. However, around 1925, it became apparent that a larger gymnasium was needed and it also became apparent that the college library, located in the Gray Brick Building, did not provide adequate space for the library program. Thus, the construction of a new gym on Walnut Street would serve two purposes. The construction of this gym would provide adequately for the teaching of physical education and would free the old gymnasium on Main Street to be remodeled and reworked inside and become the college library. Built in 1927 and 1928, this building was constructed on three levels. On the top level is a regulation size basketball court. On the middle level are dressing rooms, offices and some classrooms. On the lowest level is a small basketball court, used for physical education classes and certain intercollegiate and intramural sports. Also on this lowest level are weight rooms.

Other physical improvements were made during the tenure of Dr. Creech. For instance, the basement of the Gray Brick Building was reworked to provide laboratories and classrooms.

#### EMPHASIS ON MORAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES

Williamsburg Institute, the forerunner of Cumberland College, was created by people with a true missionary spirit, people who wanted the institution to be a strong influence for Christianity as well as a strong

education institution. Since its founding, Williamsburg Institute, now Cumberland College, has emphasized that the institution is religious in name and in practice. A quote from one of the earlier catalogues is as follows, "Not only is the Bible taught as a text-book, but in all of the work of the school it is honored."

Dr. Creech was convinced that Cumberland should provide an atmosphere fostering spiritual growth and emphasizing moral values.

Chapel attendance of students has been a requirement of the institution since its origin. During the administration of Dr. Creech, every male teaching staff member took his turn in leading the chapel exercises. However, the staff member might bring in a competent outside speaker or a competent performer as a substitute for himself, keeping in mind the fundamental aims of Cumberland College.

#### INCREASE IN COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

At the time Dr. Creech became President of Cumberland, the enrollment in the college department was less than 100. In the first six years of his tenure, the number of college students increased to approximately 200.

From 1931 to 1941, the year in which the United States became involved in World War II, the college enrollment averaged more than 220. One factor hindering an increase in enrollment was the economy. Even though the cost at Cumberland was very low, it simply was not possible for many students to get even a small amount of money for college expenses. Then, too, there was only a slight demand for college trained people. Hence, there was little incentive for people to attend college.

#### CONCLUSION

In the beginning of this writing I said I came to know J. L. Creech quite well. While I was working under

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

him, he did not hesitate to criticize me occasionally. However, he always treated me with respect. There were times when we disagreed, but we never quarreled.

We were totally in agreement with respect to the fundamental purpose and philosophy of Cumberland College. This provided a bond between us.

After his stroke and, later, as he was hit by a malignancy, he knew he could call on me at any time and that I would try to assist him in whatever he wanted done. However, several other members of the staff were willing to assist him as need arose.

Following his stroke, in the early fall of 1945, he was somewhat crippled and his physical activities were limited. As time went on, he recovered from the effects of his stroke to some extent and became almost independent of others. He was able to walk well again and his physical condition improved to the point he could drive his car to his farms. Before he was able to drive his car, I used to take him to visit his farms and other places to which he wanted to go. After he was able to drive again, he would invite me to go with him to visit his enterprises.

In the last year or so of his life, he spent a good deal of time in the hospital. However, he would leave the hospital for short periods as his condition permitted. He passed away in August of 1955, some ten years after his stroke.

One staff member whom Dr. Creech extolled above all others was Professor Vallandingham. Dr. Creech counted Professor Vallandingham as a close friend and a confidant.

Dr. Creech in his will, written in longhand, requested that Professor Vallandingham and I be made the co-executors of his estate. I felt honored to be put in the same category as

Professor Vallandingham, lifelong friend of J. L. Creech.

In conclusion, I repeat what I said in the beginning that Dr. Creech did much for Cumberland College and that he deserves highest praise for giving sound leadership to the institution in the depression years. During the administration of Dr. Creech, Cumberland became an institution with a broader and stronger base, academically and financially. On this base, the college could continue to expand its service to its denominational constituency and to the financially deprived youth of the Appalachian section in which the college is located.

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 Psalm 150

Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power.

Praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord!

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Sweet is the scene where genial friendship plays the pleasing game of interchanging praise.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

## KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

Continued from Page 22

## NOTES

## FACTS ABOUT CUMBERLAND COLLEGE

## History

## Presidents

Rev. William James Johnson, 1889-1890

Dr. Edward Ellsworth Wood, 1890-1893,  
1898-1910, 1912-1919

Dr. John N. Prestridge, 1893-1898

Professor Gorman Jones, acting presi-  
dent 1919-1921

Dr. Charles William Elsey, 1921-1925

Dr. James Lloyd Creech, 1925-1946

Dr. James M. Boswell, 1946-1980

Dr. James H. Taylor, 1980-

## Cumberland's First Four Graduates

A. J. Meadors taught elementary grades at the Institute one year and later became the principal of the Lonoke High School in Lonoke, Arkansas.

A. J. Parker became a minister and was at one time the supply pastor for First Baptist Church in Williamsburg.

A. S. Petry became a minister and did educational and missionary work. He served as president of Hazard Baptist Institute and pastor of Hazard Baptist Church.

E. L. Stephens taught several years at the Institute. He preached for a while and then became a lawyer in Williamsburg.

Compiled by: Ida Janie Hall  
Assistant Professor of History  
Cumberland College

The Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission and the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society voted in their respective meetings on July 29, 1983 to change the date of this annual meetings from the July date to the third Friday in March each year. In 1984 these organizations will meet on March 16, with the First Baptist Church of Murray, Kentucky. Please place this date on your calendar.

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As churches throughout the state observe their significant anniversaries, the editor of THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE would appreciate having copies of the programs, information about the observance for mention in future issues of this publication. Please send to Miss Doris Yeiser, Kentucky Baptist Convention, P. O. Box 43433, Middletown, KY 40243.

The South Elkhorn Baptist Church in Elkhorn Association has been observing its 200th anniversary during 1983 as it was organized in 1783.

The only information we have at this time about the organization of churches in 1784 is the Bear Grass Baptist Church in Jefferson County. It later became the Bear Grass Christian Church which is a very active, progressive church located at the corner of Browns Lane and Shelbyville Road in St. Matthews, Kentucky. A few years ago the Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission placed a roadside historical marker at the site of the early church - the Shelbyville Road Plaza in St. Matthews.

Churches organized in 1785 are Boone's Creek in Boone's Creek Association; Great Crossing in Elkhorn; Cox's Creek in Nelson; and Tates Creek in Tates Creek Association. Congratulations to these churches for their continued witness in their communities and into all the world through mission giving.

## 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.

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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

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