

THE
KENTUCKY BAPTIST
HERITAGE



ROBURN HALL

First Cumberland College Building
(Now a Men's Dorm)

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Presidents of Cumberland1-2

Introductory Remarks 3
 President James H. Taylor

Memories of Cumberland College . . 4

'Fessor Val': John T. 9
 Vallandingham

A Gentle Giant: P. R. Jones . . .14

Music is the Theme:19
 Dr. Nell Moore

Knowing Your Mother Tongue: . . .24
 Miss Besse Rose

History - The Gist of It:28
 Miss Mary Thomas

Asbel S. Petrey: The Prophet . .31
 of Little Cane Creek

The Founding42

Future Meetings46

Membership Application47

Manuscripts for publication are solicited. Material dealing with Kentucky Baptists in a general or specific way should be sent to the Heritage Editor, Kentucky Baptist Convention, P. O. Box 43433, Middletown, KY 40243. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced. Only those manuscripts submitted with a stamped, self-addressed envelope will be returned.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

A Kentucky Baptist Periodical
 Vol. XV No. 11

Doris B. Yeiser, Editor
 Published by the Kentucky Baptist
 Historical Society and the Kentucky
 Baptist Historical Commission

Published at:

Kentucky Baptist Convention
 P. O. Box 43433
 Middletown, Kentucky 40243

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KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE



William J. Johnson

First Cumberland College President
(1889-1890)

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE

at

Williamsburg

hosted

The Kentucky Baptist

Historical Society

May 20-21, 1988

during the year

of their

BICENTENNIAL

CELEBRATION

The Kentucky Baptist Historical Society met May 20-21, 1988 at Cumberland College, Williamsburg, Kentucky at the President's invitation. President James H. Taylor, Society Vice President John D. Broome, other faculty and staff hosted the meeting. The campus was beautiful with spring flowers in bloom throughout the area. Members and guests of the Society experienced "The Bright Shining City Set on a Hill" while being greeted with genuine hospitality and outstanding fellowship.

Numerous tables were laden with old records, board minutes, pictures and other memorabilia.

The very interesting papers given during the meeting are published in this volume.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

James H. Taylor

Eleventh Cumberland College
President
(1980-)



James M. Boswell

Tenth Cumberland College
President
(1947-1980)

Dr. Boswell died Friday, October 14, 1988. Please see the Western Recorder issue of October 25, 1988 for a brief article.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

by

President James H. Taylor*
Cumberland College

On January 7, 1989, Cumberland College will have been in existence one hundred years. On that day a century ago, the first classes for some 200 students were held in the building now called Roburn Hall. It has been an eventful and glorious ten decades, as thousands of young men and women have left the Cumberland campus to return to salt, leaven and light to the hills and hollows of Appalachia and even to the ends of the earth.

The heart and soul of the Cumberland College story has been its people. It has been the fruition of a dream born in the hearts and minds of a few farsighted men a century ago - they were convinced that mountain young people, no matter how poor, should have the opportunity of higher education afforded to them. Some of the dreamers of this dream down through the years were the subjects of the papers presented at the most recent meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society, held on our campus May 20-21, 1988.

These papers will introduce the reader to some "giants" who taught for many years at Cumberland College. Although their names may not be familiar to those outside of the college's constituency, professors like Dr. John T. Vallandingham (1887-1980), Dr. P. R. Jones (1888-1973), Dr. Nell Moore (1891-1980), Miss Besse Rose (1889-1963), and Miss Mary Thomas (1886-1972) left indelible marks on those who traversed their classrooms. Vallandingham, Jones, Moore and Rose were all on the faculty for fifty or more years and Thomas served for thirty-six years. They are but representative of the great teachers and outstanding teaching that has and is still taking place at Cumberland College.

A. S. Petrey is the subject of another paper. He was a member of the college's first graduating class in 1893. His life and work impacted significantly on Baptist work in Eastern Kentucky for over a half-century. Then a former student gave a paper in which she recalls rather vividly the memories of a longtime association with the college. Each paper reiterates that Cumberland College has been known and will continue to be known for its professors and its products.

We at Cumberland appreciate the support which Kentucky Baptists so graciously give to the college. We invite all Kentucky Baptists to visit our campus and to see how prudently and wisely we are attempting to be good stewards of that which has been entrusted to us. We solicit your continued support and prayers as we try to mold the minds of the nearly two thousand young men and women who make up our student body.

*Dr. Taylor has recently authored a centennial history of Cumberland College entitled "A Bright Shining City Set on a Hill."

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

4

MEMORIES OF CUMBERLAND COLLEGE

by

Marcella Faulkner Mountjoy

My life began with my parents and so does my story of Cumberland College. In 1922, my mother graduated from "Cumberland High School" as it was called at that time. Her class ring, with initials "SAR" inside, is one of my prized possessions. She had one year of college before marrying my father, John W. Faulkner, who also attended the high school for two years after going to Berea. He taught a one-room school on Laurel Fork over Pine Mountain, a remote section of the county, prior to becoming a merchant. My dear step-mother for forty-five years, Debbie Faulkner, also attended this school along with her brother, Hubert, who was at one time a faculty member.

My association with the college began in 1931, the same year that young J. M. Boswell came to teach. We were unaware of each other's presence on campus, I'm sure. The depression caused my father's clothing store to close in Pineville, Kentucky. We moved to Williamsburg, where my maternal grandparents lived and where a few years earlier I had been born. I was enrolled in the Model School, as the elementary part of Cumberland College was called. Classes were held in Dixie Hall, which was a large three-story building that stood in front of the Gatliff Building location today. Our teacher was Miss Gladys Shearer.

If every child could have a "Miss Shearer," there would be fewer unhappy school children. Her smile was like sunshine. She enriched our lives and developed our thirst for learning. School was such a happy time. I was fortunate to spend three years with her. Simultaneously, my musical training began with Miss Virginia Jones. Her studio was in Dixie Hall as was that of Dr. Nell Moore, a music teacher for many years. Dixie Hall's third floor had the reputation for having bats, which needless to say, prevented my friends and me from venturing there very often.

In 1934 the college discontinued elementary grades so I enrolled in the city school which was located on the next hill from Dixie Hall and the old Manual Training Building. However, piano study continued at Dixie Hall with Virginia Jones for the next twelve years. She guided her students through National Piano Guild auditions, recitals and operettas. Job may have been the most patient man, but Miss Virginia could have won the honor for the ladies. In my dreams, long after I had married and had children, I often stood behind the heavy beige curtains on stage, dreading the moment I must play my piece. Just as often, it seemed in my dreams, that I could not remember the first note. Miss Virginia came here from Slaughters, Kentucky. She and Dr. Nell Moore had studied together. Dr. Moore came first to Cumberland and when the need arose for another teacher, Miss Virginia came in 1922. She left in 1942 to care for a handicapped sister.

Let me digress to say that my husband and I traveled to Slaughters in March of this year for a visit. She is now 89 years of age, still drives, is active in her church and in good health except for some arthritis. It was good to see her again. She was so pleased to receive a copy of Dr. Taylor's history of the college, thoughtfully sent to her by Dean Emma McPherson.

In 1937, I once again enrolled at the college, this time as a freshman in the Academy. It was no longer called Cumberland High School. Among the students were local people, boarding students and even three young men from Cuba. The Cubans were Manuel and Joe Romero and Ben Torres. They returned for homecoming last fall. As I recall, we did not have much choice in our curriculum. We took the classes that were assigned which included two years of Latin followed by two years of French or German. Miss Besse Rose taught senior English. Under her tutelage we wrote themes, memorized poetry, studied the classics and everything else that she considered necessary for our college preparation. We were prepared, really prepared! Miss Mary Thomas, a diminutive lady from Virginia, was the history teacher. She taught about kings and battles but mostly I remember her leading groups of college girls down Main Street hill to town. She presided over Roburn Hall and, at that time, girls were chaperoned when they left campus. Not once, but many times I remember seeing little Miss Thomas marching down the hill, followed by her girls walking two-by-two.

There were always many special performances in the Grey Brick Auditorium. A young girl from Knoxville, Tennessee, was especially talented in public speaking. She attracted large audiences, usually on Sunday afternoons, when she performed. We called her Patsy Neal, but she is better known today as Patricia Neal, the actress. Her aunt, Mrs. Will Mahan, lived in Williamsburg and Patsy often visited during summer. Mrs. Mahan is now in the local nursing home and Pat still comes to visit. Mrs. Mahan told me that she came to Cumberland from Virginia because her uncle, J. T. Fitzgerald, was a faculty member. She met her husband, a son of T. B. Mahan, one of the college founders, and stayed in Williamsburg.

There were always big halloween parties in the gymnasium. Good friends of mine, Marguerite and Blaine Early, whose mother sewed beautifully, won many prizes for their unique costumes. A moment I remember was when my best friend, Norma Jeanne Perkins, and I won a prize. We wore long flannel nightgowns, hers blue, mine pink, with matching ruffled nightcaps. We carried lighted candles. All the costumed contestants marched around the gym floor while a team of unknown judges made their decisions. Afterward, refreshments were served in the lower gym.

Basketball was the main sport. We attended all the home games and the high school girls had crushes on the college ball players. Four of the stars were from LaFollette, Tennessee. I still remember their names; Ed Murray, Charlie Higginbotham, Jones Tallent and Lyn

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

6

Steiner. Dr. Boswell was the young coach and math teacher. When the third year began for our class at the Academy, the first two years were discontinued. As we began our senior year, the junior class was discontinued. Had our class been such a problem? Surely not! I think, perhaps, that it was a financial decision.

During our senior year, my girl friends took home economics while I tried physics. They enjoyed leaving the Grey Brick, walking across the viaduct to Johnson Hall where Miss Stella Gooch awaited them. Miss Gooch was the dietician. They told of preparing pink tapioca, oatmeal and other delights.

Johnson Hall was a combined dormitory and dining hall until the T. J. Roberts Cafeteria was built in 1958. I am so pleased that Mr. Roberts' name remains a visible part of the campus. He was a fine gentleman, a trustee and treasurer of the college for many years. His wife, Dorothy, was a daughter of Professor Gorman Jones.

During summers, much tennis was played on the court where the Mary McGaw Music Building stands today. Dr. Boswell was one of the star players. Nearby was a croquet court that the "old men" used. I thought that they were old but they surely enjoyed the game, playing almost daily. Professors Vallandingham and P. R. Jones, along with my neighbor, Professor A. R. Evans, were among those I remember. Perhaps President Creech was there as well, but he was more often at his farm trying new agricultural practices, such as terracing the hills.

Memories of Cumberland College are intertwined with memories of First Baptist Church. For the church was an important part of my life and the lives of my close friends. I became a member in 1937. The pastor, Dr. Thomas Eugene West, now of Asheville, North Carolina, was very influential in my teen years. He helped me cope with my mother's death during the senior year. When the senior class of the Academy graduated in May, 1941, the Academy was closed.

Classes for us began in the fall of 1941 at the junior college level. Pearl Harbor was bombed that December. This led to a declining enrolment during the years of World War II.

Dr. West taught courses in religion and directed the college choir. Elmer West was an outstanding bass soloist. He came to Cumberland from Mays Lick, Kentucky and recently retired from the Foreign Mission Board. Jean Ritchie of Viper, Kentucky was also in the choir. She has become a renowned folk singer and will be at homecoming this fall of 1988. She and I had chemistry together under Professor P.R. Jones. I think that Professor P. R. deliberately had his classes prepared hydrogen sulfide, the gas with the odor of rotten eggs, in spring when there were recitals and plays in the auditorium. The odors permeated the first floor from the basement labs and often the second floor as well. Professor P. R.'s voice was a little like that

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

7

of Charlton Heston, the actor, particularly when Heston was playing Moses. His voice was booming whether giving directions, reciting scripture or reprimanding a wayward student. Yet when he prayed, his voice was subdued and his prayers were beautiful.

Two of his second-year chemistry students, Sterling Brown and Gorman Roberts, tried to help our freshman class. Gorman Roberts has since served as a college trustee as did his father, T. J. Roberts.

There was much to learn and I must admit that I didn't give as much effort as I could have given. An "F" on a test one day from Professor P. R. was enough to change my attitude and my study habits.

Many young men had left college for service during this time. Two faculty members, Drs. Boswell and Vallandingham, also went to war. The college recorded its lowest enrolment, 143, for this year of 1943. In May I was graduated with an Associate of Arts Degree and a diploma in music. Miss Virginia Jones assisted Norma Jeanne Perkins and me in a graduation recital. This was both a happy and sad time, for our class knew that, in the fall, most of us would seek different colleges for additional study.

I have mentioned Norma Jeanne Perkins who later married Dr. William Hart Hagan of Louisville. She was a granddaughter of Dr. Ancil Gatliff, a college founder, and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Norman B. Perkins. Mr. Perkins was from Ohio and his brother, Floren, was on the faculty in 1907. The Perkins home on Walnut Street was next to the home of Professor Gorman Jones. It was bought by the late Congressman E.E. Siler after the death of Mrs. Perkins. Mr. Perkins served on the board of trustees from 1917 to 1955. The library on Walnut Street was built and named in honor of Norma Jeanne after she and her husband were lost in a Pacific plane crash in 1957. They were enroute to Hawaii for a medical meeting. They left a young son.

Following graduation from Vanderbilt University in 1945, I returned to Williamsburg because of illness in my family. Dr. Boswell was acting president during President Creech's illness. He asked me to teach piano. He expressed confidence in my ability and I accepted with some trepidation. By this time, several young men were returning to college on the G. I. bill. The college required study hall for all students in the library on Main Street. This building had been the original gymnasium and the white lines still showed on the lower floor. You can probably imagine how these veterans felt about mandatory study hall. Odd as it may seem, a few of them enrolled for piano lessons.

Once again there were some elementary classes and these were taught in a first floor room of Roburn Hall. Miss Beatrice Sims of Harrodsburg was the teacher. She was marvelous with the children and I went twice a week to give them some fun with music.

J. B. Searce was the basketball coach. Dr. Boswell had become president. Coach Searce had been a friend of the Mountjoy family while living in Bagdad, Kentucky. He suggested that two of the Mountjoy sons come to Cumberland for their post-war education and to play basketball. They enrolled on the G. I. bill. Dr. Boswell probably observed the older Mountjoy boy, a Navy veteran, walking back and forth between the Grey Brick and the Music Building, as the Old Dixie Hall was now called. J. B. Mountjoy and I were married in 1948. I continued teaching until December, 1949. In the following years, our three children were born.

This isn't the end of the story. At some time in the decade that followed, I returned to teach three college classes. About 1960, I began teaching piano again. The Old Library on Main Street, the original gymnasium, had become the Music Building. It burned during the night in early 1967. The Music Department was moved to the J.W. Perkins Building on Main Street, which is presently the Alumni Office. Later, I decided to accept a position at the Williamsburg city school. I lacked hours in education, however, and once again, I enrolled at Cumberland to take thirty hours of requirements. These were taken on Saturdays and during summer terms to complete the B. S. requirements.

Our three children have attended Cumberland although none are graduates. My husband, now retired, was Superintendent of the Williamsburg city school when Dr. Boswell and Dr. Taylor recommended the purchase of the facility. The city school was in the process of getting a new building. The purchase of the old school by the college enabled the city school to finance a larger, better equipped structure. My husband has frequently expressed gratitude for the excellent relationship between the two institutions. He and I found each other through this college. We appreciate the educational foundation we received that allowed us to become teachers. We hope that we have touched the lives of our students in some small way as we were influenced by the great teachers of this institution.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

9

JOHN THOMPSON VALLANDINGHAM
"Fessor Val"

by
Joseph E. Early
(one of his many students)

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalms 1:3

For sixty-one years John Thompson Vallandingham stood beside a river of Cumberland College students and the fruit of his life nourished them.

He was born on December 27, 1887, on a farm in Owen County, Kentucky. He was the youngest of three sons born to Kate Laura Thompson Vallandingham and Lewis Alexander Vallandingham. John, along with his older brothers Claude and Carl, was typical of the many farm boys found in Kentucky at the turn of the century. He later attended nearby Georgetown College and graduated with a major in mathematics in 1911. The next year, 1912-1913, he served as a teacher and principal at Brookville High School in Owen County.¹ He decided that he would try college teaching and came to Cumberland College in the fall of 1913. He planned to stay for one semester. That semester stretched into sixty-one years. While teaching at Cumberland he continued his study of mathematics during the summer at Ypsilanti State College in Michigan, the University of Chicago, and the University of Kentucky. He was awarded honorary doctorates by the institution where he began, Georgetown College, in 1959, and where he ended his distinguished career, Cumberland College, in 1969.

"Fessor" and later "Dr. Val," as his students called him was a multi-talented man; at one time or another in his tenure at Cumberland² he taught arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, solid geometry, calculus and Latin. He served as "keeper and college collector of student accounts," dean of men, girl's basketball coach, tutor for West Point appointees, chairman and later chairman emeritus of the mathematics department.

When Dr. Vallandingham came to Cumberland College in the fall of 1913 he joined an already distinguished faculty whose students were achieving successes far beyond what might have been expected from so young an institution. One of the brightest stars in that constellation was Professor Gorman Jones. Professor and Mrs. Jones and their children lived on the edge of the college campus. They had four daughters, among whom was a talented and vivacious young lady named Virginia. Virginia attended Cumberland and later graduated from the University of Kentucky. When she returned home she caught the eye of the young mathematics professor and they were married in 1928. They had one daughter, Virginia, who married W. B. Early II, the son of a prominent Williamsburg attorney; their son Dr. W. B. Earley III is currently the chair of Biology Department at Cumberland. In the one hundred year history of the college, no other family has been, and continues to be, so tightly woven into the fabric of the institution.

J. T. Vallandingham taught at Cumberland from the fall of 1913 through May of 1974. His sixty-one years of service was broken only by World War I and II when he volunteered for duty.

He served as a lieutenant in the artillery of the famous Rainbow Division in Europe during World War I. In World War II he served as a captain and later as a major in the Transportation Corps. Even there he continued his role as a teacher when he was assigned to teach courses in map reading.

Mathematics was his great academic love. Nothing stimulated him quite like working a difficult mathematics problem. He loved the discipline, orderliness and preciseness of mathematics. This, it seems, provides us with one of the insights necessary to gain some understanding of his life.

It is not difficult to enumerate the facts of this man's life. Yet, as important as they are they do not tell us who John Thompson Vallandingham really was. They only relate what he was. Who was this man whose life is so tightly intertwined in the life of Cumberland College? The people who know best the answer to this question are his students.

Let's allow, then, his students to tell us about John Thompson Vallandingham. They will tell us through their letters written to him on the occasion of his retirement in 1974. These letters provide one with a glimpse into this man's great heart and where else should one look at "who" a man is except at his heart?

A 1920 alumnus wrote to Dr. Val, "Gandhi, India's great leader, once said, 'My life is my message.' Many of your friends have been expressing the same kind of thought about yourself."³ A 1922 student of his recalls, "Memory lives as one goes back some fifty-two years, but I see you then as I see you now - a great teacher. You were admired by your students for your devotion, your sincerity, your kindness and dedication to help others prepare themselves for life. Such inspiration is provided only by a true and genuine teacher."⁴ From 1922, "Your influence in shaping my life's goals and ambitions can never be measured."⁵ From the class of 1924, we have, "Your Christian attitude and your thoughtfulness always showed not only in the classroom, but in your daily life."⁶

A student from 1925 remembers, "Your many years have been characterized by unselfish dedication, unswerving purpose and Christian commitment, whether serving as excellent educator, wise counselor and friend, Dean of men, able administrator or as Dr. Val, a title borne with humility and dignity."⁷ From 1927, "Your sincerity, kindness, thoughtfulness of others, wonderful sense of humor and generosity have been so appreciated."⁸ Another student from 1927 recounts, "I see the following attributes in your life; humility, sureness of a Supreme Being, great faith in the Bible, compassion for your fellow man and a true example of everyday Christian living. In the practice

of medicine, I hope that my patients see in my life some of the virtues that I see in your life."⁹

From an alumnus of 1929 who became a teacher, "During almost forty years in the classroom myself, it has been my greatest ambition to develop skills in teaching, which in some small degree, could be likened unto the art you so profoundly portrayed."¹⁰ From a 1927 alumnus and neighbor, "In all these years I have never known you to be anything but an unselfish, dedicated Christian gentleman, and the greatest influence for all that is good in my adult life."¹¹ From 1932, "We came with different aptitudes and abilities, sharing equally your kindness, compassion and patience."¹² An alumnus of 1931 wrote, "Our high regard for your wisdom and competency as a teacher is exceeded only by our respect for you as an individual."¹³

From a member of the class of 1933, we read, "Not only was my instructor (Dr. Val.) a fine gentleman who knew his subject matter well, related to his students in a friendly manner and considered each one of us as an individual, but he was and is also a dedicated Christian man."¹⁴ From another member of the class of 1934, "In addition to your ability to teach math, there are other qualities that impressed me greatly - patience, kindness, interest in the success of your students, and your Christian example."¹⁵ Again, from 1934, "As my teacher, you helped to clarify new worlds of knowledge and make them seem conquerable, and you did this with such rememberable, quiet good humor."¹⁶

A 1936 alumnus writes, "Most of all I remember your excellent presentation of the materials, your good natured patience and kindness with those of us who needed a little extra, and the dry humor with which you maintained outstanding rapport with your students."¹⁷ From a member of the class of 1938, "In your quiet, unassuming way you taught us not only math but the Christian principles by which you lived." From 1940, "I liken you more as a father who took his son through the fascinating explorations of not only mathematics but a way of life itself."¹⁸ From another member of the class of 1940, "I owe a debt of gratitude to you for convincing me that God cares for me and is concerned with my welfare."¹⁹

A 1943 alumnus writes, "Somebody has said that the measure of a man's Christianity is determined by his treatment of those who could neither help nor hurt him. Your Christianity measures up. You treat everybody well."²⁰ From a member of the class of 1946, "One attribute for which I shall ever be grateful was the opportunity of having a friend and professor who is a Christian gentleman of model character. I cherish the memories of the chapel meditations and prayers which you offered; you lived your expressed thoughts in a modest, unassuming manner."²¹ From 1947, "You always seemed to understand that, that extra bit of patience and understanding was just what we needed to help us along."²²

From a 1951 alumnus who became a mathematics professor, "In your classes, I learned patience, pride in a job well done, and self-confidence."²³ A member of the class of 1955 wrote, "You never knew,

I suppose, how you personally inspired me to look for the finer things in life. Your life and spirit were so well-ordered and so self-disciplined that you spoke volumes on the way to live without saying a word."²⁴ From 1958, a student remembers "the extra time spent after class, the extra time spent on classwork at your home, the extra time spent with surveying assignments, and most importantly, that extra part of yourself that you gave unselfishly to each student with the ultimate purpose of motivating him to succeed."²⁵

From an alumnus of the class of 1960, "I received my degree from the University of Kentucky, but I received my education at Cumberland College where Dr. Val taught me how to think."²⁶ From a mathematics professor who was a student in the class of 1960, "Our conversations always turn at last to our "Dr. Val" and his ability to take ole mountain boys like us who didn't know much of anything and inspire us to learn more than we ever dreamed possible."²⁷ Another member of the class of 1960 wrote, "I have often tried to understand what there is about you that transformed me from an undisciplined 18 year-old boy into a young man, ready, willing and able to work 4, 6, 8, 10 hours on my calculus homework, in part, so that I would never disappoint you."²⁸

A high school mathematics teacher who was a member of the class of 1961 writes about "Dr. Val," "I am confident that every student that sat in your classroom was in some way positively affected by you."²⁹ From another high school mathematics teacher who was a member of the class of 1962, "I am even more grateful for your influences on my life as a kind and gentle Christian man. Thank you for a life lived totally in service for others."³⁰ And finally from the class of 1962, "We remember liking and respecting you so much that we didn't want to go to class without all of the assigned work in good order. It was easy to see that our classmates felt the same way."³¹

This brief review of only a few of what could have been hundreds of similar sentiments gives us a glimpse of an attribute which while not mentioned by any of his students speaks volumes to us through the gentle and quiet echo of each comment. That attribute is consistency. Over six decades we see him toil, never losing faith in his calling and never tiring of his purpose. Where is the generation gap we so often hear about? No matter which decade of his teaching career we examine, we hear exactly the same sentiment directed toward him. These were mostly eighteen through twenty-one year olds writing about a man who in his later years was forty or fifty years older than his students. It is apparent that he knew what they needed and gave it unselfishly. He gave it in not what he said so much as how he lived his life in their presence.

To get a clearer picture of this man's heart one needs to relate a few of what his students call "Dr. Val Stories." Anytime his former students get together it is inevitable that these legends and dozens of others will be recounted. From one of his students in the early thirties, "He taught a class in Latin on Saturday morning which interfered with my social life. After a period of time, we had a discussion

concerning my cutting his Saturday morning class and in his usual mild-mannered, soft-spoken way he informed me that if I cut anymore he would do some cutting of his own and I would receive a 'D' in the course. Well, I did and he did."³²

A member of the class of 1927 remembers, "When Dr. Val was dean of men, 'hot plates' were strictly No! No! We tried to be very quiet and we thought you did not know. Imagine my consternation late one night when you tapped gently on my door and asked, 'Walter, do you just happen, by any chance, to have an egg?' 'Yes, sir,' I said. 'Well, would you lend me one?' A student was critically ill and Dr. Richardson had suggested feeding him an egg. So, I was caught with the evidence. A week or so later you replaced the borrowed egg but you never did mention our violation of the no-cooking rule. That's just one of many episodes that caused me to respect and appreciate you as a man and as a teacher."³³

An alumnus of 1943 remembers a side of Dr. Val which many of his students came to know only by visiting his home for help. She closed her letter with this statement. "One last thank you on behalf of all the boxers, collies and questionable canine breeds that you have welcomed, nurtured and nursed. How did so many of them know that your house was refuge, even the mothers-to-be?"³⁴

The "who" as well as the "what" of this life lived in Christian service is a little clearer now because we have been privileged to view him through the eyes of so many others. One of his students sent Dr. Val the following quote from Thomas Carlyle as he tried to express what Dr. Val had meant to him. "He is great, and there is no other greatness, than to make one nook of God's creation more fruitful, better, more worthy of God; to make some human heart a little wiser, manlier, happier - more blessed, less accursed."³⁵

One can not help but think that just maybe Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, was also thinking of the thousands of Dr. Val's students including myself when he wrote, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," II Timothy 2:2.

NOTES

¹James H. Taylor, A Bright Shining City Set on a Hill: A Centennial History, (Williamsburg, Kentucky: Cumberland College, 1988, 141).

²Ibid., 116

³⁻³⁴Letters to Vallandigham, Vol. I & Vol. II, 1974.

THE GENTLE GIANT - P. R. JONES

by
Ann M. Hoffelder

In the mind's eye, Professor P. R. was at least 7 feet tall with the strength and size of a grizzly bear. In reality he was probably an inch or two under 6 feet and the girth of his strong, mighty shoulders and chest was equaled, maybe surpassed by the diameter of his waist - but the mind's eye remembers impressions. Impressions may actually construct a better picture of the impact of many than accurate but more bare facts could ever do.

Of such a mix of fact and fantasy are legends made.

P. R. Jones has grown to become a legend.

It was 1909 in Ohio, the same year that William Howard Taft of Cincinnati became the 27th President of the United States, that another Ohio man left his home in Granville, a community just east of Columbus, to board the southbound train to Kentucky. He was 21 years old, had his brand new college degree in chemistry, and was off to the place of his "teaching job."

Two years later he returned to Granville to marry a young lady who was to be his "gentler" side for more than 60 years. Again the familiar Ohio countryside was left behind; this time by the two, as together he and Nellie came by train.

Thus began the sojourn of a "Gentle Bear" and his mate in the town of Williamsburg, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to light a pathway to learning for the youth of the hills and hollows as they came some to pursue a dream, others not even knowing what dream they could dare to dream.

It is fitting that we pay tribute to P. R. Jones in this year which marks his 100th birthday in addition to the centennial celebration of the college on which he so indelibly left his mark.

Parry Raymond Jones was born in Granville, Ohio, January 5, 1888. He received his bachelor's degree in chemistry from Denison University in 1909 and in September of that year, began his teaching career at what was to be Cumberland College. The institution at that time also housed grade school and high school students.

Professor Jones obtained his master's degree in chemistry from the Ohio State University in 1922. Throughout his B. S. and M. S. work he maintained high grades and was a diligent student. The subjects he taught over the years were chemistry, mathematics, physics and biology. To update his training, he took further graduate courses in the biological sciences at the University of Kentucky in 1933-35. A conscientious professional, he was a member of the American Chemical Society and the Kentucky Academy of Science. He was continually reading and taking courses to keep his scientific background up to date.

In those days, as in many cases today, you not only taught your courses, but you also did what else needed to be done around the college.

Professor P. R. was interested in athletics and soon was coaching football and basketball. It would not be unexpected that such an interest would initiate a warm friendship between P. R. and a new young fellow who joined the Cumberland College faculty in 1931. This fellow was himself a four-sport athlete who had run track, had played football, basketball and even some baseball. On top of that, the fellow was in the sciences. P. R., known far and wide for his football officiating, now had himself a kindred spirit to help him referee the football games and also to argue approaches to physics, to agree and disagree as strong-minded persons are prone to do. They traveled the region together. Coach P. R. turned all the basketball refereeing over to this young man who also became the basketball coach as well as the physics and mathematics teacher. Here set forth another bright star to chart his pathway across the Cumberland "heavens", later making his own strength and brilliant impact felt as its president, J. M. Boswell.

During its beginning years as an institution, the Cumberland College that now spreads across many acres and has nine major buildings used for classrooms, met many of its classes in this Grey Brick Building. It was here that another friendship sprouted, grew strong and lasting. This bond developed between a young English/French professor and the now Academic Dean P. R. Jones (P. R. was still the chemistry department and teacher of botany, as well as dean of the institution). Former Professor Wyatt Wood tells of how he and P.R. met on Professor Wood's first day of teaching at Cumberland. It seems that while the English professor was giving his opening day lecture, a gentleman "sort of peered in the door" of his classroom, not once, but two or three times. Not knowing who that inquiring person was, Professor Wood asked a student who informed him in rather "wide-eyed fashion" that "that was Professor P. R." Upon finding Professor P.R., he said that he indeed hoped that his lecturing had not disturbed the good professor's own class. In typical manner, Professor P. R. responded that "if you are going to talk that loudly you should shut your door." Not the cowering type, Professor Wood responded that if his lectures disturbed Professor P. R., he could very well shut his own door and with that walked out. Little did he know this was just the type of response needed in order to survive a compatible relationship with the invincible P. R. Jones. That very day, Professor Wood was met in the hall and informed that Nellie was cooking a good meal and that he was to come home with P. R. for lunch. Although he tried to refuse the confusing hospitality, Wyatt Wood found himself being taken by the arm and escorted out of the door to keep this luncheon engagement where he seemed to encounter as many questions as grains of salt sprinkled on the delicious meal. Where Nellie was gentle, P. R. was gruff. Did Professor Wood like to hunt; fish; where was he from; what did he do? On and on . . .

As the years passed, the tall, slender, impeccable, smooth English professor and the not quite as tall, a good bit heavier, gruff chemistry professor spent hours together fishing, bird hunting, pulling Jake (P. R.'s bird dog) out of Miss Una's pool before he was caught cooling himself thus getting dog and owner into trouble, or just being friends. P. R. and Nellie were especially close friends with Ancil and Sarah Richardson, uncle and aunt to the young lady, Phyllis Richardson, who was later to be the wife of Wyatt Wood. In fact, P. R. was a deciding factor in her attending his alma mater, Denison College in Ohio, after her years at Cumberland College. When Phyllis went off to Denison, P. R. insisted that she meet his folks - cousins, who lived on a farm just outside of Granville. P. R. directed these good kin to take care of this young girl and see that she had plenty to eat and enough milk to drink. This the cousins took to heart and in addition to the occasional Sunday dinners on the farm, there was milk delivered to her two to three times each week right in her sorority house.

P. R. Jones, the man, with a heart as "big as all outdoors" would go to great lengths to deny his caring and generosity and be sure you did not think him a "softy." He was a stern and caring teacher, feared by some, intimidating to some, respected by all. He insisted that his students be prepared to meet whatever requirement their professional aspirations demanded. Knowing the weak background of many of the young people entering his chemistry classes, he instituted here a methodology for teaching chemistry in which students were sent to the board to work problems and show that they had command of the subject matter. With traditional lectures from the professor plus board work, his students were prepared. This five-days-per-week class schedule for chemistry he established has persisted at Cumberland College until just this past year. (We have just completed comparing the results of the Jones' way and this first year of our more "modern adaptation." Results indicate quite strongly he was right; certainly the Jones' emphasis on the everyday meeting and the blackboard drill, although old-fashioned, produced better results than our shortened time this past year, especially for the hesitant student who evidently needs that extra effort and one-on-one drill approach.)

Professor P. R. was very fond of his students and followed their progress after they left Cumberland College. He admired "spunk" and determination. Often he "took a student under his wing" and helped that individual achieve his/her aspirations. His methodology seemed to be a mix of instilling confidence, giving encouragement, administering a "kick in the britches" or a pat on the back, as was needed for the person and situation. Many medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, medical technologists, chemists in government and industry, high school and college science teachers, home economists, even those in other disciplines found enrichment and spawned a variety of stories of their encounters with the legendary P. R. "He took me under his wing"; "he admonished me not to be so contrary"; "he said I would never become a doctor (but I knew he knew I would)"; "he really made chemistry an interesting class, could hold our attention for the hour."

"Survival" in one or more of his chemistry courses became touted as a mark of distinction. In reality, it was his gruff affection, his insistence that you do your best, that you really could reach your potential and BE that doctor, or lawyer, or Indian chief that you wanted to be that directed "his chemistry department" and to this day continues to shape the department's philosophy.

It is not surprising that he was a man of great faith. He was a deacon (one time giving Wyatt Wood a firm kick on the ankle when he felt Wyatt had not put enough money in the collection plate). He taught Sunday School, the men's Bible class when Dr. Boswell first came to Williamsburg. Nellie worked with the young women and was the adult leader for the YWA for many years before turning this over to young Mary Boswell when she became part of the Cumberland family. JoAnne Sexton, M. D., remembers Professor P. R.'s chapel talks and the quiet, unassuming and matter of fact way he gave testimony to his faith. In her Dedicatory Address for the P. R. Jones Chemistry Wing of the Science Building, she described him as "a man of high ideals and ethical standards. He (was) never a man to harp on little things and non-essentials, nor . . . try to impose his ideals on others. He (was) contemptuous of the pious, holier-than-thou demeanor."

P. R. Jones emerges through many recollections as a man who lived his faith, not as a copy of anyone else but in his own strong way.

When I met Professor P. R., he was confined to a wheelchair following a fall that resulted in a broken hip. It was 1963, we were just finishing our master's work at the University of North Carolina, expecting our first child and job hunting. While we were considering several college positions, my husband Bob made a trip to Kentucky to interview for an opening in Sociology at Cumberland. When he returned, the look in his eye as he talked about his interview, about the goals of Cumberland College and the human potential he saw among the students in this little southeastern Kentucky school, my husband's preference was evident and contagious. In those days, it may have been more aptly described as the "Boswell fever"; now it is the "Taylor dream." Nevertheless, it was there. Bob had met this "really fine" chemistry professor who needed someone to teach his chemistry labs, and thus was my job description.

Initially I had my doubts about college teaching. When P. R. first growled at me, my doubts multiplied. That was to change as I, too, became one of those persons he took under his wing, encouraged, believed in and shaped. I started my teaching in the basement of this Grey Brick Building. In the winter the labs were so cold I wore two pairs of socks, shoes and boots. He taught me how to "make do" with little equipment, how a strong knowledge of the scientific principle involved could equip students even though we could not always provide them with the modern instrumentation to do their experiments. It was his strong faith in me that encouraged me to finish my graduate studies and to return to "his department."

Awarded the honorary doctorate in 1968 for his then fifty years of service to Cumberland College, Professor P. R. was a man who saw changes of the century. From the rolling farmlands of Ohio he came to a little school that represented a dream. Even though the needs of the nation during World War I took him to a Chemical plant in Minnesota, he and Nellie returned to Kentucky, to Cumberland, to the dream and the task to be done. For more than half a century, sixty years, including six years part-time, he taught the youth who passed through his doors. His escapades were numerous; the chemical facts that had to be memorized as passwords required for admission to class, the "gun-toting" escorts provided by his students when he officiated at football games in Harlan or Pikeville or at a number of the other more volatile regions. These are all parts of the stories that are woven into the fabric of the legend.

From the Litany of Dedication of the P. R. Jones Chemistry Wing on February 3, 1968, we find these words from Proverbs, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding . . . A wise man will hear, and will increase learning and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."

"Parry Raymond Jones, the man, the impact of his sojourn in this land, is remembered as a vital part of our heritage and our commission."

Informal impressions and stories collected and presented by:

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Dr. Hoffelder began her college teaching career under Professor P. R. Jones in 1963 and credits many of her positive impressions of Cumberland to his tutelage.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

19

MUSIC IS THE THEME: DR. NELL MOORE

by
Dr. Joanne Sexton

The average person has a score or more of teachers during the course of his school career. These range from good to mediocre to bad. Next to parents, they have a profound influence on one's life and attitudes.

Really outstanding teachers are few and far between. It is noteworthy to me that the majority of excellent teachers that I have had have been teachers at Cumberland College or Cumberland College graduates. My first grade teacher at Packard Grade School was Dora Young Anderson, a Cumberland graduate. She stands near the top of the list.

I did some reflecting on what makes a good teacher. It seems to me that 1) the teacher must inspire the student to be interested in the subject, 2) he or she must convince the pupil that he has the ability to master the course material, 3) the teacher must beg, cajole or browbeat the student into doing the necessary work to acquire skills in the field of study.

Dr. Nell Moore possessed the qualifications of a real teacher to an astounding extent. Miss Nell, as we all called her, was a born teacher. I was 14 years old and a sophomore in high school when I began to take piano lessons. I still recall my first lesson vividly.

As a rule, Miss Nell didn't have to worry about the first task of a teacher - her pupils were interested in music or they would not have paid the fees and enrolled in piano in the first place. Music lessons were not included in the college tuition. Many piano pupils were not Cumberland College students.

I had been fascinated with the piano from an early age, and was eager to learn its mysteries. I was uncertain as to whether I would be able to learn to play. In the first lesson Miss Nell taught me the notes on the piano. Then she showed me a very simple piece with only 2-3 notes in it. I was taught how to read these few notes of music. Behold, at the end of the first day's lesson, I was playing my own little piece! There was the joy of learning such as I had not felt since the first days of school at Packard when I had learned to read, "Once upon a time there were three bears." Miss Nell sent me home with two more simple exercises to practice for the next lesson.

Miss Nell never did lead me to think that I would become a concert pianist. She did convince me that with practice I would be able to play some pieces competently. She firmly believed that music was a vitally important aspect of life, and that no one could lead a well-rounded life without it. She felt it was her calling to bring the love of music and the knowledge of it into the lives of her pupils. She approached the task with missionary zeal.

Due to the fact that Miss Nell rented a room at our house for the eight years that we lived in Williamsburg, I had an opportunity to get to know her quite well and heard her express her philosophy of teaching in the many conversations with my parents.

Miss Nell was witty and entertaining as a dinner guest, and was much in demand for Sunday dinners and holiday gatherings in the homes of Williamsburg. She felt that a teacher has to sell himself or herself to some extent or he or she could not command the pupil's interest in the subject. She had no patience with the teacher who wore the same tired frocks day after day. It was unfair to children, she declared. Even a missionary returned from the foreign field should take time to go to the beauty parlor and to buy a lipstick before appearing before the WMU, it was pointed out.

I recall one lady teacher of my youth who wore a rusty green-colored dress at least three days a week. I like green, but this was a terrible color. About the best one could say about the garment was that it protected the lady from the elements. Likewise, a man teacher at University of Kentucky wore the same necktie all one semester. It wasn't a pretty tie to begin with and by the time gravy and blobs of other edibles were added to it, it looked dreadful.

Miss Nell was always well-groomed, with her prematurely white hair neatly arranged. Her clothes were well coordinated and tasteful, topped with a few nice pieces of jewelry. She approached the pupil or the class with animation and enthusiasm.

Miss Nell's method of teaching music was most successful. Her love for the subject was infectious. Students in great numbers became music lovers. Many became excellent performers. Her greatest struggle was in getting pupils to practice as she felt they should. She was a stern taskmaster. She knew that one cannot excel in any endeavor without long hours of study. Much music talent is no doubt wasted in the state and nation because parents and teachers do not demand that students do their best.

There was plenty of good music to be heard in Williamsburg in the 1940's. There was another talented piano teacher at the college, Miss Virginia Jones. The music at First Baptist Church was excellent, due in large part to the work of the organist, Dorothy Ellison Butcher Black. Dot had been a pupil of Miss Nell's. She then went on to study organ and to become a very accomplished musician with outstanding musical taste. Members of the congregation appreciated good music.

Baptists have more pretty hymns than any denomination, I am convinced. The hymns are an important part of my life so that I cannot imagine having to get along without them. On the other hand, many of the choral selections that one hears in the churches on Sunday mornings are not to my liking at all - "tweedle dee dee" and "tra la la" stuff with little to remember after the last note is sung. My lack of regard for so much of the contemporary music didn't come from Miss Nell. In fact, she told us to keep an open mind about it.

One would only know 100 years from now which compositions had stood the test of time. "Well, in the meantime, I don't want to have to listen to it," I used to protest.

Our church in those days had delightful music. The choir sang selections from the Old Masters, hymns, spirituals and beautiful anthems. I still remember Mrs. Pearl Perkins' nice alto coming from the choir. Several times on Sunday morning Marcella Faulkner Mountjoy sang "Precious Lord, Take My Hand." My grandmother was one of many of us who loved that performance. There were a number of talented vocalists.

One Sunday morning Gorman Siler sang a solo, "The Unclouded Day." The author must have been thinking of the verses in Revelation, "And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away." The words of the hymn vary from one hymnal to another. The last verse, as I recall Gorman singing it, went, "Oh, they tell me a king in his glory there, that his smile drives their sorrows all away." He sang it beautifully, like he really meant it. He sort of smiled as he sang. A few months later he was killed in World War II.

Miss Nell held recitals at least twice a year. She felt that these public performances gave the pupils an incentive to perfect their pieces. The recitals were held in Old Grey. We practiced, rehearsed, memorized and worked diligently on our pieces. The townspeople came out in large numbers to hear us perform. I never was good at memorizing. Music was no exception. I was always nervous about having to play without my music in front of me. I am thankful to this day that I never got out on the stage and forgot my piece.

During the recitals the performers sat in a classroom off the stage. Our anxiety was heightened by Miss Nell's demeanor. She would walk the floor in the little vestibule between the waiting room and the stage as each pupil played. She would wring her hands, gasp, sigh and occasionally even weep over the notes wafting in from the auditorium.

One student, Mary as I will call her, had known her selected piece. When she got out on stage, stage fright overtook her so that she could play only a few notes. She retreated to the waiting room in defeat. At that point, Miss Nell went out on stage in great dignity to inform the audience that Mary had indeed been beautifully prepared, but that she was not a public performer. "I never pray in public, but you should not conclude that I cannot pray," Miss Nell declared. She did much to later boost the student's flagging ego and to introduce her very gradually to public performance.

Another classmate I will designate as Susie. She really was quite talented, however, she was not inclined to practice. Miss Nell agonized over it. She would come home and expound to my mother that nothing she did or said seemed to be motivating Susie to practice.

She called the pupil's mother, but fumed that Mrs. X sounded more concerned about the dress that Susie was going to wear in the recital than whether or not she knew her piece. Mrs. X protested to Mother, "Nell expects too much of the young people."

Susie was to play a selection by Borowski, a polonaise, I believe. It started out with a flourish, "Broom-do-do-boom, oh broop-da-de-doom," then some other measures for several pages. It was rather melodious and entertaining. On recital night Susie walked out on the stage, sat down at the piano and energetically rendered, "Broom-da-de-boom." She faltered ever so slightly, then went on to "Oh, broom-da-de-doom." After that she was stuck. The next notes refused to flow from her finger tips. She placed her hands in her lap for a few seconds, then began again. On the second try Susie played with great fervor, "Broomp-da-de-boom, ah broom-da-de-doom." Again, the next chords refused to come. The musician sat with her head down for a few seconds, looking quite dejected. She then placed her hands on the keyboard and began again. By then most of us were sweating in sympathy with her plight. Again, she could not get past the chords of introduction. She left the stage with an air of utter defeat.

The next student came on stage and somehow managed to play his piece. In the meantime, Miss Nell sternly handed Susie her music and told her to review it. She returned to the stage, this time carrying her music. She sat down at the piano and played the selection quite acceptably. The audience applauded wildly. Susie should have had an Oscar for being able to perform after so dismal a failure, but Miss Nell was not entirely mollified. The student should have learned her piece in the first place, she declared.

In addition to piano, Miss Nell taught harmony, music history and theory. As with piano, she made the student love the subject so that it became part of his life. I can still recall the birth dates of some of the great composers. It is a particular pleasure that I can still remember some of the harmony that Miss Nell taught me. If I hear a hymn tune that I am unable to locate in a hymnal, I just pick out the melody on the piano. Then I get the little harmony text book that we used at Cumberland College and work out the four-part harmony. One Baptist hymn book in current use has a few badly harmonized selections, most notably, "What Wondrous Love is This?" I like that old hymn and believe I was able to improve on the harmony quite a bit.

Miss Nell was right; the things she taught me about music have enriched my life. Although I'm not an accomplished performer, I can enjoy playing familiar pieces at the piano. I agree with my teacher's bias that few subjects taught in college are more important than music. I know there are literally hundreds of former students of Miss Nell who feel the same way about what music has contributed to their enjoyment of life. This teacher's sincere dedication to the task of teaching her chosen field has been an example and a source of inspiration to me many times through the years.

It is a joy to remember this dear friend, her 50 years of service to Cumberland College and to the pupils to whom she contributed so much over five decades. I hope her tradition lives on, and that the music department will become an ever stronger part of the curriculum. If the students of today are encouraged to select a fine piece of music, then to polish it to a flawless performance, they will be carrying out the tradition set by Dr. Nell Moore. They will find that music is an important and vibrant part of their lives 40 years later, just as many of us have done.

I am grateful to Miss Nell and to Cumberland College for the music education that I acquired there.

KNOWING YOUR MOTHER TONGUE: MISS BESSE ROSE

by
Dr. Joanne Sexton

My family moved to Williamsburg from Packard, Kentucky, in 1941. I enrolled in Williamsburg High School and began to attend First Baptist Church. Aunt Josephine Peavley was superintendent of the junior department of the Sunday School. For a number of years she lived just two doors from the church. She and I would usually run down to her house for a few minutes between Sunday School and church, often joined by one of the teachers in the junior department, Miss Besse Rose.

Aunt Jo and Miss Besse were close friends. It was during these brief Sunday morning visits that I got to know Miss Besse as a warm, witty and sympathetic person. Sometimes she would relate to Aunt Jo the events of the classroom. Miss Besse was chairman of the English Department at Cumberland College at that time. Sometimes we would all laugh at the hilarious occurrences of the school and the town, as Whitley Countians are among the world's most vivacious and entertaining people. We enjoyed hearing about them then as now.

As the high school years drew to a close, it became evident that I would attend Cumberland College. I had looked at catalogs from prestigious schools elsewhere. However, family finances being what they were, living at home and attending Cumberland was about my only chance for a college education.

Along with several high school classmates, I enrolled as a freshman at Cumberland in the fall of 1944. As one reflects back, it is easy to imagine that Cumberland College was almost a girls' school at that time, the young men all having departed for World War II. The few men in the class were celebrities.

Enrollment at the college was very low. The buildings had fallen into a state of disrepair. The trustees and college president had become so conservative about spending money that some of us feared that they were letting the college die. In fact, some of us dolefully predicted that the college would cease to function within another 10 years. Dixie Hall was the music building. Miss Nell had admonished us not to go on the third floor, as the floor was in danger of caving in. The practice rooms on second floor were so cold in winter that we sometimes resorted to practicing with gloves on. The space heaters smelled of leaking gas which it is hoped did not cause brain damage in any of us.

Yes, I felt convinced that the college was in a moribund state until right after the war when James M. Boswell arrived to take over the reins of the presidency. As I look around the college today, much of what I see is a tribute to Dr. Boswell and his vision and enterprise. He brought the school from the brink of death to the thriving institution of learning that it is now, and I will always

be grateful to him for that wonderful piece of work. Dr. James Taylor, the current president, has built upon the foundation prepared for him, and is doing noteworthy and commendable things for our school as it begins its second century.

What kept Cumberland College alive during the difficult years of the early '40's was the dedication of its teachers. One of the most notable of these was Besse Mahan Rose.

Miss Besse taught at Cumberland for 50 years. Her academic achievements are outlined in the outstanding book recently published about the college, A Bright Shining City Set on a Hill. When I first knew her, she was in her middle 50's with a long teaching career already behind her.

The teacher had a no-nonsense demeanor. She dressed conservatively, usually a skirt and blouse with sensible shoes. She wore her hair, which was nearly white, pulled back in a bun on her neck. She looked nice, varying her outfit from day to day, but not with undue preoccupation as to style. On Sundays she wore a frilly blouse and suit.

Miss Besse did much to help the student to appreciate good literature. She never pretended that learning the rules of English grammar was a joyous exercise. However, it was one's duty as a citizen to become fluent in his mother tongue. Spoken and written word should be correct. There was no excuse for sloppy English. Hit and run sentences, disagreement of subject and verb, and double negatives were almost as taboo as breaking the Ten Commandments. Miss Besse was an English teacher of superb ability.

The teacher had no patience with incorrect English, whether it be in a minister, a politician or a scientist. She attended church regularly, and was usually very supportive of the preacher and his efforts. She listened to the sermons with a discerning ear, and was quick to commend the speaker for an inspiring message. She held no truck with poor grammar from the pulpit. It was the duty of the pastor to become educated as to correct verb tenses.

One pastor was said to be especially prone to let his verbs slip. Miss Besse kept a small notebook in her purse. Each Sunday she drew it out and recorded the minister's mistakes in grammar. Periodically she tore out the pages and presented them to him for his study and improvement, I am told. I didn't learn how he reacted to this effort at continuing education.

Like many of us from eastern Kentucky, Miss Besse probably had a respiratory allergy. At intervals she would clear her throat in a characteristic manner. If the Sunday sermon continued long past the noon hour, the throat clearing became more frequent and vigorous. Similar reactions might occur if the preacher propounded a questionable doctrine.

Miss Besse was not given to dramatic outbursts. One day a student wrote a sentence on the blackboard, writing "to" when "too" was indicated. In an uncharacteristic show of emotion, Miss Besse clutched her midriff and exclaimed, "Oh, that gives me a pain!" The student was amused by the dramatics, but she probably never again forgot the difference between "to" and "too."

Students in English composition were required to write numerous themes during the year. Miss Besse felt that you could best learn to write by doing it. The papers were graded with meticulous care. She obviously spent many hours poring over the hand-written compositions. Praise was given for a thought well expressed or a paragraph well organized. It was expected that errors in grammar and spelling would be eliminated forever. Miss Besse's lively interest in the student's progress and in the story being told made the task of theme writing enjoyable for the earnest student.

During this era Reader's Digest had begun a series entitled, "My Most Unforgettable Character," or something of that sort. We were asked to write a theme on that subject. I recall that I wrote about Dr. Paschal Petrey of Packard. Miss Besse made us feel like budding authors.

Although Miss Besse was a low-key person, she had her share of vivacity and wit. On one memorable occasion she read aloud to the class the account of Dr. Ephraim McDowell and the history-making operation that he performed on Jane Todd Crawford on Christmas Day, 1839. Miss Besse read quietly and without apparent dramatization. The students were spellbound and completely silent. Forty years later the performance still stands out in memory as one of the most noteworthy classroom events of a lifetime. The depth of Miss Besse's feeling and the warmth of her personality were very evident that day.

As chairman of the English department, it was one of Miss Besse's duties to direct plays for the drama section of the department. Being in one of the plays was a time consuming venture. Play practice took place every evening for weeks. Few took notice of the fact that the teacher also had to give up her evenings for weeks on end in order to make the plays a success. Successful they were. Townspeople came out in droves to enjoy Miss Besse's plays.

One especially popular performance during the 1940's was a play entitled "Charley's Aunt." Miss Besse was gifted in selecting the right pupil for the part, and in guiding him toward the proper interpretation of the role. A tall, masculine-looking young man from Patterson Creek was selected to play the part of the "aunt" and was suitably attired in a dress. The result was so funny that the actors sometimes interrupted practice sessions with uproarious laughter. Miss Besse laughed as heartily as any of us. Time out was called so that everyone could regain his composure.

Cumberland College students came from Williamsburg, a cultured and affluent little town. They also came from disadvantaged homes in remote and impoverished parts of eastern Kentucky and Tennessee. Some had not been exposed to great literature nor to correct English in the home. Miss Besse was patient with these, and was willing to give the students extra time after class in helping them to improve diction or sentence structure. She taught several generations of Kentucky teachers. Businessmen, doctors, lawyers, politicians and community leaders in large numbers have had reason to remember Miss Besse with gratitude.

Miss Besse's tireless efforts can serve as a role model for teachers of today. Her work came from sincere concern for the pupil and an interest in his success in life. She was overjoyed when a former pupil did well and achieved an illustrious career. Like the other dedicated teachers that Cumberland College has had over the years, Miss Besse felt that teaching was her mission, and that one cannot get along in life without knowledge of literature and of the English language.

I reflect with joy and gratitude on the things Miss Besse taught me and what her example and friendship have meant. Also, I think with warmest appreciation of Cumberland College and of these wonderful teachers who labored so long and tirelessly during the years of their tenure. Their unselfish examples make us all want to strive to do better in our chosen fields and to keep the spirit of excellence alive at Cumberland College.

HISTORY - THE GIST OF IT: MISS MARY THOMAS

by

Miss Emma McPherson

Mary Thomas is the Cumberland College professor about whom we know the least, for she was a very private person who had friends but none who were intimate. Even though the other four professors were affectionately called by special names--"Fessor Val or Dr. Val, Miss Besse, Professor P. R., and Miss Nell--Mary Thomas was always Miss Thomas. None of the college records indicate that Miss Thomas had a middle name or even an initial for one.

Mary Thomas was small and trim of figure, a petite woman with an indomitable spirit. Even though she wore glasses, she was an attractive woman, always modestly dressed, usually in a suit or a blouse and skirt. She would wear a string or two of pearls or a necklace to accent her blouse. Miss Thomas' one vanity was her small feet. She was quite pleased whenever anyone noticed and commented on how tiny her feet were.

Mary Thomas was born on September 15, 1886, in Pulaski, Virginia. Her parents were Frank and Hannah Reece Thomas. Her home place was a house that sat upon a hill overlooking Pulaski, a town very similar to Williamsburg in that Pulaski is located among the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It also has a railroad that runs through the middle of the town. Pulaski is not very far from Radford, Virginia, home of Radford College, founded as a Teachers College in 1910.

But Miss Thomas did not attend Radford; she went away to school. She received her BA degree from Indiana University in 1927. Her MA, also from I.U., was granted in 1928. During the summers of 1935 and 1936, Miss Thomas did graduate work at the University of Indiana and the University of Wisconsin, respectively. While at Indiana University, she was a member of the Eta Sigma Phi honorary society.

Before she joined the faculty at Cumberland College, Miss Thomas was a teacher in Wilton, Connecticut, under the supervision of the Department of Rural Education at Columbia University. She also taught for a short time in the Pulaski Public School system.

In 1929 Miss Thomas was employed by President Creech not only to teach history but also to be dean of Roburn Hall, a position she held until 1947. According to Janie Hall's "History of Cumberland College," "The deans of the dormitories were to abide strictly by the President's rules and be responsible directly to him." Not only did Miss Thomas abide by the President's rules, she made certain that all of her girls did too.

From 1947 until her retirement in 1965, Miss Thomas continued to teach history and served for a number of years as head of the Department of History.

"You must get the gist of it," Miss Thomas would exclaim to her students as she climbed up on her desk or crawled under it to get their attention and to resurrect history before their eyes. Whenever the Athenians fought the Spartans, Miss Thomas ran from one side of the room to the other as she played the part of both groups, recalls one of her students, Dr. Joe Early, Academic Dean here at Cumberland.

Doris Spafford, who was from Detroit, Michigan, remembers the day Miss Thomas was discussing the war known to Doris as the Civil War. Miss Thomas kept referring to it as the War Between Two Nations. Doris, outspoken as she is, attempted to correct the teacher, only to be informed that it was indisputably a War Between Two Nations.

In expressing his appreciation to Dr. Taylor for sending him a copy of the book A Bright Shining City Set on a Hill, alumnus Amon Blevins wrote: "Some of the professors that you mentioned brought back fond memories. I can still see and hear Miss Thomas, whom I dearly loved, before her classes of American history, European history, and Latin. In her American history the idol of her life was, of course, Robert E. Lee of Virginia. She made the Hapsburgs relevant. Latin is Latin, but she made it interesting. She mentioned several times that she would like to have a Latin banquet with the togas and the works. We never did get around to that," Amon wrote, "but since she did mention picnics with bacon frying, we took her down on the Falls Road, fried bacon with all of the trimmings, walked the trails, etc., and had a wonderful time. In fact, almost as much fun as we had in attending her International Relations Club conference at Georgetown when her car (the old '41 Buick) overheated." Amon concluded, "I can still see and hear her stomping the floor with her tiny feet admonishing the boys to 'buy a piece of land, something which you can call yours, something which you can put your feet into.'"

The students dedicated the 1950 Cumberland College yearbook, The Lamp, with these words: "One of the best-known and most beloved professors on the Cumberland College campus is Miss Thomas, who for the past twenty years has been professor of history. With her cheerful smile, her glowing enthusiasm, and her unique sense of humor, she has won her way into the hearts of all.

"With a genuine love for history, Miss Thomas has worked untiringly to instill a wider interest in history among her students.

"Especially have her efforts as faculty adviser of the International Relations Club proved effective. She has bade it one of the most outstanding organizations on the campus through her inspiration and guidance."

Even before it became fashionable or good for one's health, Miss Thomas was a walker, not a slow walker but almost as fast a walker as our own Janie Hall today. Early in the morning Miss Thomas and I would walk from Johnson Hall where we both lived to Mount Morgan.

and back. As Amon wrote, the students enjoyed hiking with her and frequently invited her to go with them on their picnics. One Saturday morning the Big-Sisters sponsored a cook-out breakfast for the freshmen at the Falls. After the breakfast was over, Miss Thomas, the students, and I hiked the trail located on the other side of the river from the Falls. When we reached the end of the trail, huge rocks jutted out into the river. The students immediately scrambled out onto the rocks, but I stayed back, thinking that I would remain with Miss Thomas. But when I looked for her, Miss Thomas was perched on top of the rock farthest out into the river.

Miss Thomas kept her old '41 Buick, but she didn't like to drive. Neither did she like to listen to the radio. Whenever she would ride home with me during our vacations, I would insist that I would have to turn the radio on or she would have to talk to keep me awake. Talk she would from the time that we left Williamsburg until we arrived at the railroad depot in Pulaski where her nephew Bud would be waiting for her. It was quite obvious that there was a very strong bond between nephew and aunt, pronounced aunt in Virginia.

In an interview with Dr. J. M. Boswell, President Emeritus at Cumberland College, Dr. Chester Young learned that Miss Mary Thomas attended church faithfully and that she was a reasonably active church member of the First Baptist Church of Williamsburg. Miss Thomas gave the program at a WMU meeting which I attended. I was amazed at the scholarly theological paper that she presented, a paper worthy of being published in our best religious publications, quite superior to the programs usually heard at such meetings.

But Miss Thomas had a vice of which she was ashamed. She enjoyed reading mystery books. Mary Susan Boswell, professor of French and German, a colleague of Miss Thomas and also an avid reader of mysteries, told me that Miss Thomas insisted that Mrs. Boswell brown bag the paperbacks that she shared with her.

After teaching for thirty-six years at Cumberland, Miss Thomas retired in 1965. She returned to Pulaski but not for long. She was soon traveling around the world, sending postcards to friends from various countries, especially from the Holy Land.

Mary Thomas died in Pulaski, Virginia, on May 18, 1972; her funeral was held in the First Baptist Church there and she was buried in the Oakwood Cemetery, surrounded by the hills that she loved so much.

In closing, I know that Miss Thomas would have me say to you, from one historian to another, you must get the gist of all this.

"ASBEL SHAKESPEARE PETREY: THE PROPHET OF LITTLE CANE CREEK"

by

Dr. John D. Broome
Professor of History

The founders of Cumberland College had a special purpose in mind when the first classes met in early 1889 - to provide a quality education in a Christian context for mountain youth at an affordable cost. An important part of any Christian educational venture is to make students aware of the demands which the Great Commission places on all Christians. From day one, the college has been a mission station, preparing students to serve the cause of Christ at home and abroad. Two early graduates, Benjamin Roach and Rose Marlowe, were missionaries for many years in China. Ethel Harmon, who graduated in 1932, served with distinction in Nigeria for over thirty years (she retired in 1971 and lives in nearby Corbin). Since Cumberland resumed senior college status in 1959, at least eight couples who are graduates have been appointed for foreign missionary service by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Four recent graduates are now serving abroad in the Journeyman program, joining many others who have thus served. Hundreds of graduates have and are ministering in church vocations in these United States. The point is, Cumberland students have gone, they have taught, and they have baptized, because the mission thrust of the Christian faith has always been a vital part of the Cumberland education.

This paper will survey briefly the life and work of one of the first Cumberland graduates. Asbel Shakespeare Petrey,¹ better known as A. S. Petrey, served the cause of Christ with great distinction in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. On many occasions in his later life, he credited his experience at the little college by the Cumberland River as being the crucible in which his missions vocation was forged.²

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

A. S. Petrey was born December 5, 1866, to Adam and Senetha Monroe Petrey, who lived near the Boston community in southern Whitley County, Kentucky. He was the oldest of eight children born to Senetha. When she died after a long illness, his father remarried and three more children were born into the Petrey household. Life on a small farm was not easy and Petrey later recalled that the children learned "how to share what we had. We learned the lessons of organization and cooperation."³ Such lessons were later to serve him well in the ministry.

At that time, any kind of education was a scarce commodity in the mountains of southeastern Kentucky. Fortunately, the Boston community leaders built a schoolhouse to shelter the educational efforts of Rev. Enos Allen, a Baptist preacher who came to the area from Virginia. Even before the building was completed, the children from the Boston area had classes on the grounds. Apparently, young Petrey was a good student, but the financial situation of his family was such that it appeared that an education such as he desired might be

out of the question. "For lack of money I had to experience the chagrin of being passed in grade by those who were my classmates and with whom I had held my own in every contest."⁴

Adam Petrey, however poor, must have sensed his eldest son's craving for an education. Many years later, that son reminisced: "I do remember, though, the time when father thought I had spent enough time with McGuffey's Second Reader and, taking a part of my education in his own hands, went to town and bought me a McGuffey's Fifth Reader. On the way home he stopped by the school and gave it to me. After classes were dismissed for the day I went out and sat on the ground with my back against a tree and started to read. I was soon in another world. I read until darkness blotted out the type."⁵

On another occasion, a relative loaned a copy of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress to the aspiring young scholar. It was the first book he had ever read apart from his schoolbooks and the Bible. Apparently, the book had a great impact! "That one volume did more to shape my life than any I ever read outside of Holy Writ. I devoured it. Day after day I read it, over and over. Even after these many years I can still quote long passages from it. This book merely whetted my appetite for good literature."⁶

Petrey was over twenty years old when he heard that a college had been established in nearby Pleasant View, Kentucky. Operated by William Nesbitt, originally from Pennsylvania, Cora College had a shortlived but productive existence. Petrey matriculated there for two years and worked at whatever job he could find to pay his way. Included were his first stints as an instructor in one of the area's many oneroom schools. Upon hearing of the founding of Cumberland College (then called Williamsburg Institute), he rode horseback to Williamsburg and joined the student body. He was twenty-three years of age, somewhat old for a college freshman; but he and three others, Andrew Meadows, Andrew Parker and E. L. Stephens, made up the college's first graduating class in 1893. Later in life he spoke of the values of an educated ministry, "I believe in an educated ministry. For the young preacher to neglect his education reveals a lack of appreciation for the greatest calling on earth. Now and then a young preacher may be so financially hampered that his preparation must remain incomplete, but the opportunities offered now by our colleges and seminaries are such as to make this tragedy rare. While Baptists do not believe that formal education is essential to the preaching of the gospel, yet they do believe that the one who is well-educated can preach it better and more effectively."⁷

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The Adam Petrey family attended the Clear Fork Baptist Church on Little Cane Creek, a short distance from Boston. Attendance by the whole family was a constant and the oldest son later stated that

his life was much affected by those early worship experiences. "My entire life would have been different if it had not been for the little church in the trees on the bank of Little Cane Creek . . . [The pastor] knew little about books, but a great deal about God . . . He had an urgent message and he delivered it as though his own life and the lives of his hearers depended upon it, as indeed, they did."⁸

Preachers were often guests in the Petrey home and their influence and that of godly parents made indelible impressions on A. S. and the other children.

Despite all the good influence, young Petrey "was not living for God and was terribly unhappy."⁹ He did not become a Christian until he was twenty-one years old. He was teaching school on Little Cane Creek when a "protracted meeting" was held there. Petrey later recalled, "The first week went by without a single move on the part of the unsaved, but the Holy Spirit was at work among us. My own heart was a spiritual battleground. I had never attended a meeting which made me so miserable. It seemed that every sermon was directed toward me. Conviction of sin swept over me like a storm. I did much praying that week in the wooded groves near the church and about my home. On Saturday night before the evening service, while I was on my knees imploring the mercy of God upon me, the load was lifted from my heart. I was saved. I made my public profession of faith that evening. My father shouted with joy. The Holy Spirit that night convicted my grandfather, my brothers, my cousins and several others about my age. There were later saved. I lost my personal burden that night only to receive a different one. I knew that others were lost. I wanted to share my experience with them. That very night I wrote to my uncle who was lost and urged him to accept the Saviour."¹⁰ The seeds for service had been planted in fertile soil.

At Cumberland College, germination and sprouting soon took place. Not long after his enrolment, Petrey was assigned a paper on John Bunyan by his English instructor, President W. J. Johnson, also the pastor of Williamsburg First Baptist Church. After reading the essay, Johnson told his student, "Asbel, John Bunyan was a preacher of the gospel. You seemed to know the very impulses of his heart. What is more, you were sympathetic with them. I do not desire to run before the Lord, but I have a definite impression that He wants you to preach the glorious message of the Christian faith."¹¹ Petrey's reaction? "I felt as though he had stabbed me with a dagger. In that instant I knew that he knew what I felt in my own heart."¹²

After many days of indecision about the matter, an event occurred which was to crystalize Petrey's call into the ministry. President Johnson was often out of town raising money for the fledgling institution, leaving the pulpit vacant at Williamsburg First Baptist Church. On one of those occasions, John Wesley Siler, a banker who was a deacon and also a college trustee, suggested at prayer meeting that Petrey should mount the pulpit the following Sunday. The young student assented with much trepidation. "I was afraid to refuse and yet hesitated to accept such a grave responsibility. I falteringly agreed.

I had my lessons to prepare, for I was a student then, and of course I had no sermons ready. I practiced in the woods that week with the trees as my audience. At least none of them walked out on me even if I did fail to have any conversions."¹³

After preaching, Petrey believed that he had miserably failed, probably measuring his first two sermons ever by the accomplished eloquence of Pastor Johnson. The young preacher later recalled, "I had made a beginning, and as far as my own heart was concerned, I had committed my way unto Him and there would be no turning back."¹⁴ He was ordained to the gospel ministry in early June of 1891 at the Clear Fork Church, thus beginning a ministry which was to last into the mid-twentieth century.

Soon thereafter he was called to his first pastorate. He served his home church for over a year while a student at the college. His total remuneration was a pair of red woolen socks given to him by his grandmother. Reminiscing later about that year, he said, "No student preacher can adequately meet the needs of a church. His time is taken up with his studies, and his inexperience will not permit him to cope with such ingrained problems as I faced - such as a membership who had not been taught the scriptural plan of stewardship and who, somehow, believed that the pastor ought to consider the privilege of preaching to them as pay enough. However, much can be said for the churches which will permit the student pastor to serve them. They are contributing materially to his education and eventual success."¹⁵

In addition to his studies and pastoral charge, the young preacher began to conduct revival meetings in the area. One of the more successful of these campaigns occurred in 1892 in a Knox County community near Corbin. After some eighty confessions of faith, a church was organized. Calvary Baptist Church thus became the first of many to spring from the efforts of "the prophet of Little Cane Creek."

GRADUATION, MARRIAGE AND A PROFESSORSHIP

After graduation in 1893, Petrey became an instructor at the college. His primary responsibility was in the preparation of teachers of the public schools. Apparently, he approached his teaching as he did everything else, with vigor. Then one day he realized that he had been so engrossed in obtaining an education and then in educating others that he had neglected a very important aspect of life.

"It was at this time that God led me to the greatest discovery of my life, aside from Christ. I was twenty-eight years of age, an old bachelor in the mountains. I had been too busy to bother much with girls. I suddenly awoke to find that every man my age was married. That was all out of order. I should have a wife, too. I should be building a home. But I was hard to please. My diploma was hanging on the wall for everybody to see. I had a few dollars in my pocket. I was well established. I did not have to take just any woman - and

then I saw her! I knew in a split second I would give my diploma, my job, and all the money I could ever get if she would just look my way."¹⁶ Suffice it to say that Sarah Effie Harman became his wife on May 20, 1894. The union produced nine children - four girls, then a son, then four more girls.

Petrey enjoyed his work at the college, as indicated by the following recollection many years after his Cumberland sojourn. "I had a good position with Cumberland College. I was in full time Christian work. I owned my own home, so near the campus that I did not have to step on the bare ground going to and from my work. I was working directly with seventy-five or eighty teachers, as well as those preparing to teach, from at least ten counties in Kentucky. I had no managerial responsibility. The enticement of a life work as a college professor was strong."¹⁷

He was preaching regularly. He was successful in the solicitation of funds and students for the college. But something was amiss and he knew it!

At a meeting of the Mount Zion Association, J. N. Prestridge, the college president after Johnson and also Petrey's pastor at Williamsburg First Baptist Church, spoke on foreign missions. He concluded the address, "Oh, brethren, pray God that He will lay His hand on Asbel Petrey and upon some of the other young men here to do this great work of carrying the gospel to the needy foreign fields."¹⁸

What was Petrey's response? "He pierced my heart with his bullet-like words. It was no near miss, but a bull's eye. In a flash I saw my responsibility to a lost world. It was the first time I had felt the weight of lost souls across the seas, those whom I had never seen. In my heart I cried, "Here am I; Lord, send me." Gone was the fascination of a large church. I have never had it since. I only wanted to win souls, anywhere. God made it clear to me that He did not want me to go to the foreign mission fields. He only wanted me to be willing to go there or anywhere else."¹⁹ "Anywhere else" turned out to be about a hundred miles away!

In the summer of 1897, some Williamsburg friends (likely Dr. Ancil Gatliff and John Wesley Siler) financed a preaching tour for Petrey which took him to Knox, Bell, Harlan, Leslie and Perry Counties. On this trip deep into the mountains he was also recruiting students for the college. Good roads in the mountains were almost non-existent, so it was not an easy trip. Neither was it a safe trip. At Hyden he witnessed a shootout in which one man was killed and another wounded. The Perry County village of Hazard was scheduled to be his last stop. He held a meeting in the courthouse, resulting in seventeen conversions. Several community leaders invited him to settle in Hazard and start a Baptist work, "the missionary kind." There were no such Baptists in the area, just Old Regular Baptists and some scattered United Baptists.

"The earnestness of these two men touched me. At a suggestion from me we all got down on our knees and prayed about the matter. I simply could not give them an immediate answer but I told them that I would keep in touch with them."²⁰

To get back to Williamsburg from Hazard, Petrey had to travel by wagon to Jackson, where the nearest railroad was located. On the trip to the Breathitt County town, a fellow passenger, a Presbyterian, no less, again pointed out to Petrey the lack of "missionary" work in the area. "This was a new feeling to me, to see Baptists left behind in any phase of kingdom work. I had grown up in a community where everybody who belonged to any faith was a Baptist. I was sixteen years old before I saw a member of any other denomination. He was a Methodist, and was such a curiosity that even today I can call his name, tell where he came from and how he was dressed. He was a good man, but a strange one to me because he was not a Baptist."²¹

Apparently Petrey spent a lot of time on the train trip home mulling over the invitation and the challenge it presented. He shared his impressions with his wife once he arrived in Williamsburg. Theirs was not an easy decision, but it was made quickly!

THE HAZARD YEARS

On the day following his arrival back in Williamsburg, A. S. Petrey resigned his position at the college and began making preparations to move. He went back to Hazard to look for a place to live and also to find some means of transporting his family from the railhead at Jackson to Hazard. It was February before he could make the move, but move he did in the dead of winter. The trip from Jackson to Hazard took three days, with his wife, two small children, and the family's belongings packed into an open one-horse spring wagon. Snow covered the ground and the road, such as it was, was next to impassable but the Petreys arrived in Hazard on February 10, 1898. Except for a brief sojourn or two elsewhere in the area, the rest of his life was spent in Hazard.

Hazard was little more than a village on the North Fork of the Kentucky River at that time. Its streets were not much more than mudholes, a problem compounded by the many hogs that ran loose. Violence often flared in the streets because feuds were common in the area. But whatever the inconveniences, Petrey settled in and started a Sunday school in the courthouse. Within six months, the First Missionary Baptist Church of Hazard was constituted.

The new church grew rapidly and needed a building of its own. Pastor and people set about to build one. Petrey later recalled, "I went up Messer Branch one day to see a timber operator whose men were making their axes ring and their saws whine against the trunks of the mighty poplars. I saw him standing apart, watching one of these leafy giants as it toppled and crashed to the earth. I knew a little about logging methods and I noted that this particular timber

man took only logs which scaled twenty-two inches in diameter. Thus there was left on every log a good-sized tip which was wasted. I offered the owner two dollars per thousand feet for these tip logs and stated what I wanted with them. He was willing to help us, and my proposition was smilingly accepted, with the provision, however, that we would cut the logs and get them to mill at Hazard. I went back and sharpened up my axe. I never worked so hard in my life. Two other men and I prepared the logs and hauled them down Messer Branch to Hazard."²²

A year later, the proud congregation worshipped in their own sanctuary. "The building was forty by sixty feet, with four gables, a high tower, and Gothic windows of cathedral glass. The walls were wainscoted with cherry, hand rubbed. The house was ceiled with black pine, varnished to make the beautiful grain stand out. The weatherboarding was painted a light orange. The auditorium was diamond-shaped with the entrance at one corner and the pulpit opposite, grouping the audience near the speaker."²³

What a truly remarkable accomplishment for this new brand of Baptists!

In 1910, this building burned while Petrey was in Williamsburg visiting friends. His old friends and colleagues hurriedly collected a love offering and a distraught pastor went home. In but a short while, the congregation rebounded and erected a much larger brick building to house the growing flock, again doing much of the work themselves. The task was difficult, as many materials needed to build a more elegant edifice had to be brought upriver from Jackson on flatboats.

"We pushed our work without interruption until we had the roof on, and then we met another problem. It was cold weather and a sudden freeze turned the river to solid ice from bank to bank. The flatboat which was bringing our doors and windows was frozen in midstream. Without these we could not close the openings and protect the walls of the building. For two long weeks the boat remained frozen in the ice. It was only seven miles from Hazard, and we finally got tired of waiting and sent wagons to the boat after our supplies. The road was rough and frozen, but we managed to get all the windows to Hazard without breaking more than one pane."²⁴

The building, which could handle a thousand worshippers, was paid for shortly after the congregation entered it in 1912.

A. S. Petrey served the church for eighteen years. Not only did he evangelize Hazard, but the entire area was also impacted by his ministry. He preached revivals, supplied mission points, and did whatever was necessary to win the lost to Christ. His church mothered at least seven churches and there were few, if any, congregations in the Three Forks Association that were not helped financially by the congregation pastored by "the prophet of Little Cane Creek."

Hazard also shared its pastor with other congregations. Petrey helped to found Mount Olivet Church near Cornettsville in 1914 and served as its part time pastor for twenty-one years. A revival meeting in nearby Dwarf produced the following reaction. "We began this meeting in the schoolhouse which was situated close beside the county road. School was in session and we could not get the use of the house except for the evening service. Morning services were held in an orchard belonging to Richard Gayheart (well-named) who arranged the seats for me each day. On Friday night I announced that we would have services the next day at two in the afternoon since it was Saturday. When we arrived at the schoolhouse we found that two brethren of the Old Regular Baptist Church had heard of our announcement and were already conducting services which they had started at one o'clock. They used both their time and mine and warned the people against the "strange preacher." As is usually the case, they only made friends for me by their unfairness. The next night our house was packed. The last day of the meeting one of the town's most influential citizens, his daughter and three fine young people, were saved as the invitation began. There sat in the service the clerk of the Old Regular Baptist Church which was causing me so much opposition. During the next verse of the invitation hymn this man's grown daughter stepped forward to accept Christ. She was followed closely by another daughter who did not come all the way but rushed back to get her father's permission to join a missionary Baptist church. The old fellow burst into tears and with his arm around his beloved child, walked forward and said, "Preacher, here's another one." There was a stunned silence and then a chorus of loud "amens." We had nine conversions before the service ended. On my next trip I organized them into a church."²⁵

For sixteen years, he preached one Sunday a month at Dwarf, missing but one service in all that time. He usually made the eight mile trip on horseback, but sometimes he had to walk.

The First Baptist Church of Whitesburg, today one of the premier mountain churches, also experienced the Petrey touch. Petrey later recalled one such occasion. "I had been pastor at Hazard about fourteen years when Rev. J. B. McKeehan of Williamsburg, then employed by the state mission board, began a protracted meeting at Whitesburg, the county seat of Letcher County. The meeting was not doing so well and he invited me to assist him. We adopted this plan of procedure; he was to preach the sermon and invite those interested to come to the front seat for instruction. I then took charge and taught them the way of salvation. Many of them had been wrongly taught. Our meeting was crowned by having forty-six souls accept the Master. The Holy Spirit worked mightily in human hearts. We saw bitter enemies embrace each other in common love of God. The baptism of these, almost a half a hundred converts in the North Fork River before hundreds of witnesses, is one of the most glorious memories of my ministry. These precious souls became the charter members of the First Baptist Church of Whitesburg, organized that holy day in 1914."²⁶

Petrey served the new church quarter-time for some time until a fulltime pastor could be secured. "I went horseback, a distance

of forty miles, and never missed an appointment in spite of storms which, at times, made the roads almost impassable."²⁷

The work at Whitesburg presented a new challenge to Petrey and he eventually accepted the call of the church to become its pastor. Later, he returned to Hazard as pastor of the Second Baptist Church at Walkertown, which had a total membership of but thirty-five, only four of whom were men. The church soon grew to be self-supporting and required all of Petrey's pastoral time, so he gave up the Mount Olivet Church. A suitable building was constructed and Petrey's last pastorate proved to be a very satisfying one, as he later related. "The church was deeply spiritual. Visiting preachers always remarked about the ease with which they could preach to the congregation. We had a revival each year. One of these . . . [saw] more than one hundred professions and I baptized eighty-six of these at one time. I served this church for eighteen years. I saw the babies become adults and take their places in the church life. The church so grew around my heart that I felt as though each member of it were a member of my personal family."²⁸

Apparently the membership held Petrey in similar esteem for the church changed its name to that of Petrey Memorial Baptist Church, even while he was still serving as its pastor. He was their shepherd well into his seventies.

Another noble chapter in the life of "the prophet of Little Cane Creek" revolved around his work in education. As Petrey preached here and there in the area, he must have seen himself mirrored in the eyes of many a child. He knew that these children had scarcely a chance to obtain any education. Thus, he conceived the idea in 1902 and birthed into existence Hazard Baptist Institute a year later. For many years, the school was virtually the only quality educational institution in Perry County and several surrounding counties. It was an immediate success and seldom had less than two hundred students for years afterwards. Eventually, dormitories provided housing for students who lived too far away to commute. "All teaching was Christ-centered. Students from the Institute organized and fostered seventeen Sunday schools in Perry County alone. Youthful preacher volunteers came under the instruction of A. S. Petrey himself. They came to know him and to imbibe some of his religious fervor. They learned that a man can have a bright intellect and still retain a simple faith in God. They benefited from the varied experiences of the valiant soldier of Christ. They allowed themselves to be clay in the hands of a skillful potter."²⁹

Surely Petrey put into use quite effectively the experience he had received earlier at Cumberland College.

Two insurmountable problems eventually proved to be the demise of the school. First, the Commonwealth of Kentucky established high schools in the county seat towns which could be attended tuition-free. Then, the Great Depression eroded the financial support of Hazard Baptist Institute, which by the 1930's had become a junior college to compensate for the loss of most of its student body to the public

schools. State accreditation was not forthcoming, nor could Petrey persuade the Baptists statewide to embrace the school with their support. Thus, the trustees were forced to sell the buildings to the city school board and Hazard Baptist Institute died in 1936. However, the educational good that the school did in its three decades or so immeasurably blessed the folk of the entire area.

A. S. Petrey was not a well man in his latter years and his health finally broke in 1943, forcing him to curtail severely the strenuous pace he had followed for over half a century. He died in his ninety-fourth year on August 28, 1952, and was buried in the Englewood Cemetery in Hazard. Three of his daughters yet live in 1988, the oldest is 93. His only son's widow lives in Hazard. A grandson is a Hazard banker. Many of the family will attend Cumberland's centennial homecoming this fall when Asbel Shakespeare Petrey's memory will be honored as a part of the celebration. And appropriately enough, at the most recent honor's convocation in this the college's one hundredth year, the young man selected as the year's most outstanding religion major was a senior ministerial student whose home church is Petrey Memorial Baptist Church in Hazard, Kentucky. Who knows - this young man just might be the next A. S. Petrey!

NOTES

¹Available Cumberland College records do not indicate Petrey's given middle name as "Shakespeare." This information was obtained from a grandson, Mr. Harmon Petrey of Hazard, Kentucky.

²The most accessible account of A. S. Petrey's life and work is a short study course book published by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1949. Written by Harold E. Dye, the work is a compilation of reminiscences. Dye interviewed Petrey at length and recorded his words with a "newfangled" tape recorder. Despite some chronological gaps in the account, Dye captured the essence of Petrey. Likely, his characterization of Petrey as "the prophet of Little Cane Creek" was for literary purposes - he needed a catchy title for the book. Other than some interviews with family members, this paper is drawn almost entirely from Dye's work.

³Harold E. Dye, The Prophet of Little Cane Creek (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1959) p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 46

⁵Ibid., p. 27.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁶Ibid.

²¹Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁷Ibid., p. 42.

²²Ibid., pp. 64-65.

⁸Ibid., pp. 28-29.

²³Ibid., p. 65.

⁹Ibid., p. 34.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 70-71.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 34-35.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 97-98.

¹¹Ibid., p. 36.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 99-100.

¹²Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 100.

¹³Ibid., p. 37.

²⁸Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 38.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 79-80.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 46-47.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 45-46. After leaving Williamsburg in 1897, Prestridge was instrumental in the founding of the Baptist World Alliance in 1905.

NOTICE - CORRECTION:

The name of Duane Bolin, writer of the article "THE FOUNDING", was inadvertently omitted from the article published in the November, 1988, Volume XV, Number 1, THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE. The editor has apologized to the writer whose address is 102 Benjamin Terrace, Providence, Kentucky 42450.

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Jeremiah 17:8

THE FOUNDING

". . . a tree planted by the waters . . ."

On October 28, 1837, a tiny gathering of dedicated, missionary-minded Baptists constituted the Sharon Baptist Church some three years and four months before the town of Providence was incorporated. The small, but determined congregation, which included one ordained minister, and one "man of color," immediately "opened their doors," and received eight candidates for baptism into the young, but vibrant fellowship, marking a spirit of openness and an emphasis on missions that was to remain constant throughout the church's years of growth and maturity. Thus began the remarkable story of what eventually became the First Baptist Church of Providence, Kentucky.¹

The number of members in that first congregation is unclear. Minutes from the 1841 Annual Report of the Little Bethel Association recorded nine original members. An earlier report from the association's missionary, however, reported "twelve persons who requested to be constituted a church upon the principles of the united baptist."² Regardless of the original number, the founding members' emphasis on missions was undeniable. Indeed, the very reason for the church's founding rested on the Scriptural injunction to spread the Gospel.

The Sharon Church was not the first Baptist presence in Providence, a still un-incorporated town that was described in 1838 as "a small village in the northwestern part of Hopkins County."³ As early as 1810, a Primitive Baptist Church, under the direction of Elder John Dorris, had been established. Originally meeting under a brush arbor structure on the southeast side of Main Street, the church eventually erected a log building on the same site.⁴

This congregation soon joined the Highland Baptist Association, which was founded in 1820 to accommodate "through the guardian care of the parent of mercies," the churches located north of the Trade-water River. The minutes of the first meeting of the association included the names of delegates Eleazer Givens, John Wilson and John Montgomery of the Providence church. During his pastorate from 1810 to 1834, John Dorris played an influential role in the affairs of the association, often serving as moderator.⁵

By the mid-1830's the Highland Association became more closely identified with a broader movement in Kentucky and throughout the south which was vehemently opposed to missions and benevolent societies. In Kentucky the anti-mission movement gained momentum from the teachings of Alexander Campbell, Daniel Parker and John Taylor. Although Campbell claimed that he favored missions, he opposed the Baptist missions plan, eventually forming his own through the Disciples of Christ Church in 1832. Parker, described as "an implacable foe of Baptist missions," and especially Taylor, who was "probably the most influential Baptist in Kentucky during much of his lifetime," and who printed a scathing attack on Baptist missions, also contributed to a growing resentment to mission efforts in the state.⁶

Although Dorris had opposed the "errors of Alexander Campbell," the Highland Association drifted closer and closer to an anti-missions stance, eventually becoming the representative of the larger movement in the Tradewater area. Referred to as the Highlanders, the association took such "high grounds" against missions and benevolent societies that their numbers, never large, dwindled drastically in the 1830's.⁷ In 1830, Elder William C. Buck, a member of the association since its founding, organized and became the president of a Bible Society. John Spenser, the chronicler of Kentucky Baptists, believed that more "than any other preacher in the state, did this champion of Christian benevolence stir up and foster the spirit of missions."⁸ By 1835, the Highlanders, resentful of Buck's stand, offered such resistance to the society that Buck's church, Little Bethel, withdrew from the association, taking the Bethel, Highland and Grave Creek churches with them. These four churches, convinced that the Lord's Great Commission command provided a sound, Biblical basis for missions, as well as for benevolent and Bible societies, formed the Little Bethel Association the following year in 1836.⁹

As evidence of the infant organization's desire to spread the Gospel, one of the first actions taken by the Little Bethel Association involved the appointment of an associational missionary on October 8, 1837. The missionary, T. L. Garrett, immediately set out on a remarkable tour of the Hopkins County area. Between October 1837 and October 1838, Garrett's travels covered some 1,600 miles. During that twelve-month period, the conscientious missionary, whose life was described as one "devoted to the work of the ministry," preached 88 sermons, "witnessed the hopeful conversion of 132 persons," baptized 71 new converts, and collected "for the support of the gospel \$215.94 1/4." In addition, Garrett's "protracted" revival meetings resulted in the founding of two new congregations.¹⁰

One of those new congregations was the Sharon Baptist Church of Providence. Before coming to Providence, Garrett, with "Brethren McMann of Livingston, Morrison and Jones," preached for seven days and nights at the Little Bethel Church, witnessing the professions of faith of fifty-one individuals with thirty coming for baptism. As Garrett described the Spirit-filled occasion, "the Great head of

the Church was pleased to show His stately steppings in His earthly sanctuary."¹¹ At Providence, the ministers, now joined by Elder Joel Grace of Caldwell, found the believers struggling over the issue of missions. Undoubtedly, the missionary preaching of Timothy Sisk, a man not easily swayed by the growing anti-mission resolve of the Highlanders, had made an impression on the Providence Baptists. According to one report, one of Sisk's tours through the Tradewater area had resulted in a split in the Primitive Baptists' ranks, some members having become convinced that missions should be emphasized.¹²

By the time of Garrett's protracted meeting in Providence in October of 1837, twelve of the village's Baptist believers, discouraged by the Highlanders vociferous opposition to missions, had already withdrawn from the Providence Primitive Baptist Church or from other churches in the Highland Association. One report recorded that these twelve were joined by "eight persons [who] professed to find the Lord precious to their souls," increasing the total Sharon Church membership to twenty.¹³ Although Timothy Sisk died before the Sharon Church was actually constituted, his opposition to the Highlanders, based on a firm belief in missions, served as an example for others to follow in the western Kentucky area. Such missions-minded laborers as Sisk, Buck and Garrett were used by the Lord to plant the tree of Sharon Baptist Church by the muddy waters of the Tradewater River.

NOTES

¹See the Minutes of the Little Bethel Association, 1841, located at the Little Bethel Baptist Association offices, Madisonville, Kentucky. Quotations from these minutes are found in Shirley B. Mather, The Sesquicentennial History of the Little Bethel Baptist Association (Madisonville, Kentucky, 1986), p. 39. See also Benjamin Connaway, "First Baptist Church" Centennial Supplement of the Providence Enterprise, 18 July 1940.

²See Minutes of the Little Bethel Association, 1841. This report records nine original members. T. L. Garrett, the Little Bethel Association's first missionary, asserted in his Report of Missionary, 1837-1838, however, that the number of original members was twelve. See Report of Missionary, October, 1838, Little Bethel Baptist Association offices, Madisonville, Kentucky.

³Mather, The Sesquicentennial History of the Little Bethel Baptist Association, p. 10.

⁴Elder Aaron Reeder, "Providence Primitive Baptist Church," Centennial Supplement of the Providence Enterprise, 18 July 1940.

⁵Mather, The Sesquicentennial History of the Little Bethel Baptist Association, p. 25; Providence Enterprise, 18 July 1940.

⁶For a discussion of Parker, Taylor and Campbell see Walter Brownlow Posey, The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1776-1845 (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1957).

⁷J. H. Spenser, A History of Kentucky Baptists, volume II, (printed for the author, 1886), p. 329; Mather, The Sesquicentennial History of the Little Bethel Baptist Association, p. 31.

⁸Spenser is quoted in Mather, The Sesquicentennial History of the Little Bethel Baptist Association, p. 222.

⁹Spenser, A History of Kentucky Baptists, p. 329.

¹⁰Report of Missionary, 1837-1838, as quoted in Mather, The Sesquicentennial History of the Little Bethel Baptist Association, pp. 9-10.

¹¹Ibid., p. 10.

¹²Providence Enterprise, 18 July 1940.

¹³Mather, The Sesquicentennial History of the Little Bethel Baptist Association, p. 11.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission will have its organizational meeting on Tuesday afternoon, December 13, 1988, 3:00 P. M. at the Kentucky Baptist Building in Room 126. The work should be completed by 5:00 P. M. If not completed by the dinner hour, arrangements for a meal will be considered. The Commission's annual meeting will be held on July 22, 1989, at Harrodsburg Baptist Church, Harrodsburg, Kentucky.

The Kentucky Baptist Historical Society will hold its annual meeting on Friday, July 21, 1989, with the Harrodsburg Baptist Church. The church will be celebrating its sesquicentennial, having been organized in 1839. This will be a good opportunity to visit some of the many historical places in the area. An historical tour is being considered in connection with the meeting.

ARTICLES NEEDED FOR THE HERITAGE

The Society officers and the editor are anxious to talk with those persons interested in submitting articles for publication. This is the second year we have published only one copy of THE KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE. Please write the Editor at P. O. Box 43433, Middletown, Kentucky 40243 if you or a friend is interested in submitting articles for publication.

FUNDS FOR PUBLISHING THE HERITAGE

Another reason we have published only one copy of the HERITAGE is lack of funds. We do not charge a subscription fee other than your membership fee and that is not sufficient to cover the full cost. Monetary contributions are acceptable.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HERITAGE

47

A MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

OR

RENEWAL OF APPLICATION

TO THE

KENTUCKY BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NAME _____ DATE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ 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 _____

MEMBERSHIP FEES were increased at the March 20, 1987 meeting as follows:

<u>Regular Membership</u>	<u>Associate Membership</u>
Individual \$10.00 per year	\$10.00 per year
Family 12.50 per year	
Life 50.00	

(NOTE: Renewal notices for Individual, Family and Associates will be mailed on or near the anniversary date of joining the Society.)

MAIL TO: Kentucky Baptist Historical Society
Kentucky Baptist Convention
P. O. Box 43433
Middletown, KY 40243