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TRUTH

"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE"

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OUR BICENTENNIAL ISSUE

Our Baptist Heritage— The First Baptist Church In America

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While the unbiased student of scripture and history will conclude that true local New Testament churches have existed since the days of Christ on earth, others either take for granted, or are ignorant of Baptist beginnings in America. Secular history - such as may be found in public school and college text books - along with certain religious historians say that the Baptist movement in America was fostered by Roger Williams at Providence, Rhode Island in the year 1639. But history's reliable witnesses, though -

...tory's reliable witnesses, though muffed by prejudice, speak otherwise.

ROGER WILLIAMS
Roger Williams, championed as "the first Asserter of Liberty of Conscience" and credited as founder

of the so-called "First Church in Rhode Island and the First Baptist Church in America," was born July 24, 1600 at Cornwall, England. As it was the religious affiliation of his parents, Roger Williams in infancy was confirmed into the Episcopal Church. Early in life it is said of Williams that he came to know "Christ as his personal Saviour." Religious intolerance held a heavy hand over Williams' mother country and in pursuit of religious freedom he and his wife Mary came to the new country we know today as our beloved America. Ordained to the ministry of the established state church in Salem, continuing controversy with the Episcopal Church eventually led to his expulsion from the colony.

MOVES TO PROVIDENCE

In the wake of the expulsion of Roger Williams from the church of his infancy, Williams relocated at a place now known as Providence, Rhode Island. Others from the Plymouth colony joined Williams and a

new township was chartered. It was this setting at Providence where Williams, during March, 1639, influenced a number of followers to engage in the organization of a church. One of these followers, Ezekiel Holliman, himself without scriptural baptism, immersed Williams in water, and Williams in turn immersed eleven others as a formation of a local congregation.

Roger Williams nor his followers, although credited as beginning the first Baptist church in America, never had true Baptist baptism and the church at Providence soon ceased to function. Williams lived forty years after the organization. Reliable historians say that he never united with a Baptist church or attended any Baptist church for the remainder of his life.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ADVOCATE

The late renowned Dr. Samuel Adlam, who is listed as the 13th pastor of the First Baptist Church at Newport, Rhode Island (1849-1864) wrote of Roger Williams: "It is greatly to be regretted that it ever