

From J. A. Davis Library

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It is accepted by historians that the first church to be organized in Mississippi was Salem Church, about eighteen miles from the present city of Natchez, in the year 1798. Two years later, New Hope Church in Adams County and Bethel Church in Wilkerson County were organized. In the years 1805 and 1806, the Ebenezer Church and New Providence Church in Amite County were organized. These were the original five churches in the Old Mississippi Association, in the year 1806. Thus, it is seen that we had a Regular Missionary Baptist organization before the Southern Baptist Convention, and eight years before the "Triennial Convention of America."

The Ebenezer Church and Old Mt. Nebo Church are still doing business for the Lord. These are the first churches organized and the first associations organized in the State of Mississippi.

Reading from "Abstract History of the Mississippi Baptists" we find that Dr. J. R. Graves, who was pastor of a church in New Orleans, La., which was for some time in the old Mississippi Association for two years, 1864-1865, and it is refreshing now to note that it was through the writing of Dr. Graves probably that we received the nickname of "Landmark" Baptists.

Old Mt. Nebo Church was organized in 1803. She has never been affiliated with the Convention, neither has she ever failed to do MISSION WORK. She had been doing business for the Lord eleven years before there was a Baptist Convention known on the earth. The Triennial Convention of America was organized in the year 1814, eleven years after the organization of this church, and I repeat for the sake of emphasis, that she has never cooperated with the Convention and she stands today as a true old-fashioned Missionary Baptist Church.

The churches of early organizations cooperated through the various local Associations in mission work until about the year 1853. When the old General Association of South Mississippi was organized, this association was organized of messengers from the churches composing the Harmony, Mt. Pisgah, Pearl River, Biloxi, Ebenezer, Liberty and Bethlehem Associations. This association continued in the interest of mission work and through her as our medium for state and foreign work.

Leavell and Bailey in their "History of Mississippi Baptists" list the outstanding men of the old General Association in the year 1874 when the body met with Union Church in Smith County on the 24th of October, as Eld. James P. Johnson, I. Anderson, N. L. Robertson, N. L. Clark, William Thigpen and J. L. Cochran.

Notes found in the library of Rev. J.A. Davis

N. L. Clark was president, William Thigpen was vice-president, James P. Johnson, 2nd vice-president, B. Thigpen, Secretary, and P. T. Howse, Treasurer.

In 1886, quoting from the history we find the General Association defending a misrepresentation in a historical statement made in Cathcarts Baptist Encyclopedia. This correction was made in defense of the statement that criticized the Association as being organized in "Oposition to the state convention." The defense states that the Association was organized in 1885 to support destitution in the southern part of the state, a long neglected territory. (Leavell and Bailey, page 1357.) Quoting from same history, page 1362, quoting for the year 1891, showing that our missionaries were Elders Abner Walker, J. P. Johnson, and G. W. Boyd. They had also in the Indian Field, Elders Jackson, Johnson, Williamson, Baken and Thomas. But in the year 1893, there was a motion 'recommending that the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention set apart one Missionary to be supported in part or in whole by the Association.' This was the entering wedge that caused the churches that now compose the Mississippi State Baptist Association to leave the Old General Association. Our churches severed their relations in part or in whole on or about the year 1900. This severing of the relationship was because of turning the Foreign Mission work over to or sending all funds through the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Our churches continues without a medium of cooperation until 1908. In December of 1907, the General Association of America (now the American Baptist Association) met with Little Rock, Arkansas. (At the meeting, Brethern John Rogers, Bay Springs, Miss., Dr. Harrelson, Sylvarene, Miss., and Eld. G. W. Boyd, Laurel, Miss., attended this association and were seated as visitors. They publicly requested that someone be sent to Mississippi to bring the churches together in an organized capacity. Brother Boyd stated to the association that they had associations in Mississippi, (Landmark--now the Big Creek) that could be used as a nucleus to begin the work.

The General Association by unanimous vote requested Elder Ben M. Bogard to go to Mississippi as an Interstate Missionary, and if possible, do the work requested. Bro. Bogard accepted the work and came to Mississippi to attend a fifth Sunday meeting at a church near Purvis, Mississippi. Quoting from Bro. Bogard's record, 'I arrived at Purvis, Mississippi, about 2 A.M. and did not have any money to get a bed or breakfast, only ten cents in my pocket, and knew no one. I went to the hotel and no one was up, but a light was burning in the office, and I lay down on a lounge and rested until day. Then the train from Laurel pulled in bringing Brethern John

Rogers and A. J. Ford from Bay Springs and Louin respectively, and Brother Boyd paid for my breakfast, and after breakfast, a wagon came in to take us to the meeting; from that I made the work finance itself.'

Brother Bogard preached four sermons at this meeting in the last of December, 1907, and outlined the work, looking to the organization of the Mississippi State Association. The messengers at this meeting voted to have, if possible, a State Association, and the messengers from Bay Springs agreed to go home and have the Bay Springs Church call for such a meeting to be held in the spring following. The messengers at the fifth Sunday meeting agreed to route Bro. Bogard through the southern part of Mississippi; he was to go from church to church, and advocate the organization.

Quoting again from Bro. Bogard's record, 'During January, 1908, I visited and preached in 44 churches and schoolhouses, and at each place announced that there would be a meeting at Bay Springs in the spring to organize a State Association'. And so far as possible, he got these churches to agree to send messengers to Bay Springs for that purpose, and the majority did. During the month of January, Bro. Bogard's record shows that he collected \$107.43 above expenses, thus more than paying the salary promised by the General Association.

Bro. Bogard's record shows that in February and March he preached in 16 churches, and held a debate with a Mormon at Van Cleve, Miss. Preached 27 sermons and collected \$75.00 above expenses. While Dr. Bogard was thus working, he had the assistance of the preachers and many outstanding laymen in central and south Mississippi. These brethren labored unceasingly for the bringing together of the churches in Mississippi. While the preachers preached and advertised the meeting, the laymen were also engaged in stirring up the churches to the necessity of a medium of cooperation, thus it was that the churches were made ready for the organization. So, in answer to the invitation extended by the Mt. Nebo Church of Bay Springs, the messengers met on November 27, 1908.

The first officers to serve the association were Elder Abner Walker, Moderator; Asst. Moderators, Eld. M. Walters, Brethern E. B. Cox, Clerk; F. H. Bush, Asst. Clerk; S. F. Thigpen, Treasurer; J. C. Rogers, Asst. Treasurer.

From the very beginning of the association, they were missionary in spirit and in practice. And from the organization until this present date, this association has been doing mission work on the Bible plan, supporting fully and freely every phase of the work taught in the Word of God.

There has not been a year since the organization that the association has not maintained in the mission work by keeping men actively engaged on the state field. Also, the churches have actively supported the interstate and foreign mission through our national bodies, to wit: ~~The American~~ *ABA* Baptist Association (successor to the Old General Association of America.)

We are happy in the work and extend to all Regular Missionary Baptist Churches an invitation to join us in the furtherance of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

This article is sent forth without malice, or the intention of doing any person an injustice, but to set forth facts to help correct the erroneous idea that we, the Regular Missionary Baptists are something new, and to set forth the fact that we are doing business for the Lord many years before the conventions as such were known. Then further, to acquaint the Baptists of Mississippi with the truth as to those taking the lead in bringing into being the Mississippi State Association, and to give due credit and recognition to those outside of our state who gave of their time and means in this endeavor.

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The Southeastern Association was organized in 1875. In 1895 it met with Pilgrim's Rest Church, with ten churches represented.

In 1890 the Leaf River Association met with Pleasant Hill Church, with 16 churches and 16 pastors represented. In 1908 it met with Pleasant Hill Church with 19 churches and 9 pastors represented. Part of the churches voted to cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention. Met in Lucedale in 1909 and at Sand Hill in 1910.

In August 1914, the Washington Association was organized with 6 churches.

- 1 Washington
- 2 Fairhope
- 3 Mt Pisgah
- 4 Sand Hill
- 5 Halmes
- 6 Sumner