

# The General Association Of The U.S.A.

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Arkansas History Commission

By the opening years of this century, the Landmark Baptists of America — so called because of their stand for traditional Baptist doctrines — had severed all ties they might have had with the convention system of mission and benevolent activities, which had grown up in this country in the nineteenth century. In 1900 the Baptists of Texas divided over the question of church versus convention sovereignty. Those who believed that the church was the basic New Testament unit organized the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas. The Baptists of Arkansas underwent a similar division in 1902, this time over the question of a paid executive secretary. The State Association of Missionary Baptist Churches of Arkansas was thus formed. These actions were soon followed by the creation of independent Landmark associations in Mississippi, what is now Oklahoma, and several other states. All of these associations were referred to as "general associations." They were so called because representation in each was based upon the principle of church equality, rather than upon a money or church-size basis which characterized the Southern Baptist Convention. They were simply state-wide

associations, operated as Baptists had always operated their local associations.

Many of these state associations supported state and foreign missionaries. The brethren of Texas developed an extensive mission work in Brazil, while the Arkansas brethren supported a work in Cuba. In the fall of 1904, a number of former Southern Baptist foreign missionaries, who had been ousted by the Mission Board because they disagreed with its high-handed methods, visited these new state associations. Notable among them were Said M. Jureidini from Lebanon and I.N. Yohanon, from Iran. They were accompanied by a number of staunch Landmark leaders, among whom were J.N. Hall, J.H. Milburn and J.A. Scarboro.

It was agreed by all that enough mission work was not being done through the existing state organizations. Landmark Baptists were united in faith and practice, but there was no vehicle for their whole-hearted cooperation in the tremendous task of carrying the Gospel around the world. At the Arkansas State Association, Dr. Ben M. Bogard of Little Rock offered a resolution which called for a cooperative effort between the state associations of

Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma, in raising funds for putting some of these missionaries on the field. A few days later, a similar call was sounded by the General Association of Oklahoma. A few weeks later, a brother from Texas published a call for the organization of a new south-wide Baptist body, one which would be based upon, "a purely church basis."

Several sites and dates for the organization of this new body were suggested. However, on Jan. 29, 1905, the Bethlehem Church in Little Rock, of which Dr. Bogard was a member, believing, as they said, "that the time has come when these should be organized a General Association of Landmark Baptists for the United States," issued a call for a preliminary meeting, whose purpose would be for, "consultation, and if thought best, for organization," of such a body. The call was for the meeting to be held on March 22, 1905, at Texarkana, astride the Texas-Arkansas border. Each church working in harmony with the state associations was to elect one messenger. This meeting was to be governed by two principles: scriptural church cooperation and church equality.

On the date appointed, the meeting was held in the Miller County, Arkansas, Courthouse in Texarkana. Fifty-two churches were represented, together with brethren from Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Missouri, Illinois and Louisiana, and of course

Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma. A tentative organization was effected and several foreign missionaries placed on the field. After a lengthy debate, it was decided to address a memorial to the upcoming meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, so that that body, "might have a chance to decide if the unscriptural things that are derisive and hurtful would be corrected." This memorial, "called the Convention's attention to the dissatisfaction that prevailed and asked that the money basis of representation be eliminated and that a church basis be adopted instead."

A committee of seven, including Dr. Bogard, was appointed to compose this address. "Our sincere desire," they wrote, "is for peace and harmony among Baptists, but we want this . . . on Bible principles and methods. We love peace, but we love principle better. First pure and then peaceable." The convention sent the following reply, "it would not be for the best interest of the work of the Convention . . ."

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acceded to (these) petitions . .  
" Thus the desires and  
beliefs of thousands of  
Landmark Baptists all across  
this country were dismissed  
out of hand.

Therefore, messengers  
from about 100 churches,  
from 12 states, met in  
Texarkana Texas' First  
Baptist Church on November  
24, 1905, for the permanent  
organization of the General  
Association of the United  
States. During the nineteen  
years of its life, the  
Association supported  
missionaries in a number of  
foreign countries. In 1916 it  
acquired its Sunday School  
and book publications  
business. In 1924 the General  
Association united with the  
B.M.A. of Texas to form the  
American Baptist  
Association.

- From Baptist Trumpet

Note - As noted in the foregoing article, the General  
Association of Baptist Churches was continued as the  
American Baptist Association in 1924. After a division  
of the body in 1950, a majority of the churches of the  
American Baptist Association met in Little Rock, Arkansas,  
in May of the same year, re-organized and continued as  
the North American Baptist Association. The name was changed  
again in 1969 to Baptist Missionary Association of America.

The General Association (national) must not be confused  
with (state) General Association in Mississippi, or such  
other state bodies in other states as at one time existed  
among Landmark or Association Baptists. - L. S. Walker