

LEGACY, as the monthly newsletter of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, has as its mission to highlight the *legacy* forged by the people, churches and events in Florida Baptist history. During the next several months this newsletter will feature those churches and their leadership who between 1821 and 1849 contributed to the development of the Florida Baptist State Convention. Each monthly issue will feature at least one church established in the 1820s, 1830s and the 1840s respectively. **While dozens of Baptist churches were established during these decades, most have not survived time. The featured churches continue to function in 2020.**

## Florida Territory Missionary Baptist Churches Established in the 1820s

We have concluded narratives on all the known churches organized in the 1820s that continue to function in 2020

## Florida Territory Missionary Baptist Churches Established in the 1830s

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## Florida Territory Missionary Baptist Churches Established in the 1840s

### **Cottondale (Jackson County): Bethlehem Baptist Church -- 1847**

The organizational documents for the Bethlehem Baptist Church of Jackson County are likely lost to history. However, based upon oral tradition and a published WPA document dated 1939, affirms the organization date of the Bethlehem Baptist Church as 1847. Additionally, the church cemetery with headstones dating to the late 1700s, confirms the likelihood that a church was established and functioning. More importantly, the church continues to function in 2020 which lends credence to its faithfulness to God in this rural community for the past 173 years.

What is known by oral history is that the church was organized by a small group of faithful Baptists whose livelihood was derived from farming cotton and field crops. Given his active ministry in Jackson County during this period, itinerant missionary Joshua Mercer likely was among those responsible for helping to organize the rural church.

### **Fort McCoy (Marion County): First Baptist Church -- 1847**

The actual organization date is unknown for the Fort McCoy church. However, oral tradition and a published WPA record dated 1939, affirms the church was established in 1849 near a former military fort that was originally called Fort MacKay. MacKay and MacCoy were both families that settled in the area during the Second Seminole Indian War. However, some Baptist historians, based on fragmentary information, place the organization date as being earlier in 1844.



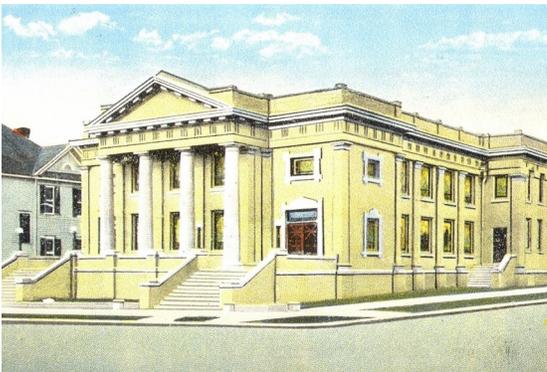
A church building was built near the Fort McCoy cemetery as a joint effort to pool the limited financial resources of the Baptists and Methodists. The shared facility initially was called the Union Church. During weekdays the church building was used as a public school and on the weekends used by the two congregations. Several years later the Baptist congregation was able to construct its own building near where the first public school was re-located. This Marion County church continues to thrive today 173 years after its founding.

One pioneer church member reportedly recalled that the first pastor was a man named Stanley. However, based upon Alachua Baptist Association and Florida Baptist Association records, the pastor more likely was named Samuel T. Stanaland (b. 1806; d.1891) who until he was ordained in 1848 was a lay-preacher-farmer in present-day Marion County. In the several Baptist publications, land sales registrations and census records, Stanaland's name also is recorded as Stanland and Standland, which upon pronunciation may sound like "Stanley."



### **Tallahassee (Leon County): First Baptist Church -- 1849**

The Florida Baptist Association annual minutes recorded the following: "The members of the Florida Association greatly rejoiced in 1849, when it was announced that a Baptist church was organized in Tallahassee, the Capital of Florida." The church was organized November 10, 1849, by nine persons. These charter members included: James E. Broome, Theodore W. Brevard, Hugh and Sarah Archer, Robert B. Hilton, Mrs. E. Swicord, Mrs. C.E. Brevard, Mrs. M. S. Corley, and Miss Catharine Smith. James Broome, who was one of the first deacons, later became the third governor of Florida



serving 1853 to 1857. Elder J. T. Zealy, who served as a part of the organizing presbytery, was selected as the first pastor who served until 1852. By 1860, the church had grown to have the largest Baptist church membership in the state with 382, of whom only 16 were Anglo and the remainder were indentured African-descendants. For the next 20 years the church struggled to survive the Civil War and its aftereffects.

Finally, in 1882 the Florida Baptist State Convention's State Board of Missions sent missionary-pastors A.C. McCants (who served 1882-1892) followed by Dr. S. M. Province (who served 1892-1902) to minister and grow the church.

In a move to construct a church building "worthy of a church in the state capital city," the members rallied to raise funds. Thanks in large part to the financial assistance provided by the State Board of Missions and the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board, the fund's goal was met. In 1915 the dedication was held for the building (pictured) described as "built of cream brick," featuring 92 stained glass windows. Now 171 years later the church continues to minister to the capital city.

### **Greenville (Madison County): Greenville (formerly Shilo) Baptist Church -- 1849**

The Shilo Baptist Church was organized May 7, 1849, in the Sandy Ford community of Madison County. The ten charter members included Hardy and Rachel Griffin, S. W. Creswell, A. Y. and Eliza Hampton, Mary W. Whitlock, L. J. Harvard, Mary S, Mabry, Francis A. Cresswell and E. E. Barclay. Elder S. C. Craft, a pastor in Monticello who served as a part of the organizing presbytery, was called as the Shilo Church's first pastor. Craft in 1854 was a member of the delegation from the Florida Association who participated in the organization of the Florida Baptist State Convention.



The church members decided they needed a more fitting facility to serve the needs of the growing now-called Greenville community. Moving into its second facility in 1888-1889, the church changed its name to the Greenville Baptist Church. Three decades later the church undertook construction of a brick and mortar edifice in 1921 on a hill overlooking present-day U.S. Highway 90. As a result of its re-location, the Baptists became known as “the church on the hill.” To ensure every member financially participated in the cost of the new building, the church members voted to direct the church clerk to “notify all members not attending or supporting the church financially to appear before the church on the fourth Sunday in August, and show reasons why the church should not withdraw fellowship from

them.” Subsequently 27 members lost their fellowship with the Greenville church. The Greenville church in 2020 continues to minister in its rural community.

### **The Passing of Three Florida Baptists who left a Legacy in their Own Right**



**O.E. Boals**, who was one of the longest serving pastors in Florida, died at age 107 at a nursing facility in Archer, on October 16, 2020. He was born in Lacrosse, FL on October 9, 1913. During his 89 years of ministry service Boals was a bi-vocational pastor of 15 various small churches in North Central Florida who continued to preach up to one year before his death. To support his family, Boals worked as a meat cutter, managed small grocery stores and bought and sold cattle and horses.



**Nancy Hinson Sullivan**, married for 65 years to John Sullivan, retired executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, died Aug. 12, 2020 at the Memorial Hospital in Jacksonville, Fla. The 83-year-old had suffered a heart attack in June and then a stroke a week prior to her death. After serving alongside her husband in churches for 32 years, she became Florida Baptists’ first lady when John Sullivan was elected to lead the state convention in 1989. Until he retired in 2015, Nancy Sullivan crisscrossed the state, traveling to churches alongside her husband. One of her ministries was to support and encourage other ministers’ wives both in Florida and across the Southern Baptist Convention.



**Jack E. Brymer, Sr.**, editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* from 1984 until 1994, died Oct. 28, 2020 in Birmingham, Ala., at the age of 84. A journalist and ordained minister, Brymer “brought a new perspective to the *Witness* in that he came primarily as a journalist. His concern for fairness, full disclosure, honesty, and integrity is in the tradition of our best kind of Christian journalism,” said Jerry M. Windsor, retired secretary-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Historical Society in the article “An Imperative Necessity,” published in *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage* in 2005.