

# **The Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle**

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## Committee members, others visit Gaskin Archives at OBU



Top: Items in the Gaskin Archives at Oklahoma Baptist University are arranged in neat rows of bookshelves. Bottom: Historical Commission Chairman Ron Fannin, second from left, poses a question to Paul Roberts, OBU Dean of Library Services, as Archives Committee chair Darrell Blaine, right, Commission member Leona Marion, third from right, and OBU archivist Rachel Hawkins, left, listen. The group made its annual visit to the archives on March 29. See an article about the Archives on pages 28-33. Photos by Bob Nigh.

# Why the pastor needs a council of historians

by Luke Holmes, Pastor, Tishomingo, First Member, Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission  
President, Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society

All churches have a history, but mine has a peculiar one. In July 1993, a team from our church went to serve in Florida to help rebuild houses after Hurricane Andrew. North of Tampa, there was rain and one of the vans flipped over on a slick road. Seven people were on the van, and two were thrown from the vehicle. David Craig, 40, and Jane Neese, 80, were killed at the scene. A third woman became paralyzed from the wreck, and the others faced severe injuries.

It was a terrible time in the life of the church, one that I learned about after I came as pastor. It was a difficult time to lose two church members, one 80 years old! The incident stayed with the church for a long time, and was followed by lawsuits and grieving and other things which come with that. It cast a shadow over future mission trips by the church, and even still does to this day, 25 years later.

I thought of this event when I read the recent article, "Why The President Needs a Council of Historians," from *The Atlantic*. The authors, both professors at Harvard, put forward several ideas of why the U.S. President needs a council of historical advisers. Turns out that most politicians are ignorant of much of U.S. history, especially at a policy level. Historians could serve to caution, remind, illustrate the trajectory of a policy, and more.

In much the same way, I think the pastor needs a council of historians around him. *I do think that all pastors need to study church history, but more to the point, they need to study their church's own history.* You are undoubtedly aware that your church's history did not begin with you. Regardless of the health of your church when you arrive, you have a lot to gain by studying and understanding its history.



**Luke Holmes**

## **1. You can learn from the tragedies.**

This episode in my church's history affected everyone involved. It was a tragedy and affected the decisions that were made, the policy put forward, and the mission trips in which they participated. Even still, as we discussed a recent trip to Colorado, I had to keep the Florida accident in mind, though it happened long before I came as pastor. For those who were members of the church back then, the incident always comes to mind when new mission trips are mentioned. They want to make sure every precaution is taken, that all policy is followed and that things are correct. I can't assume nothing bad will happen, because for them, the worst already has happened. Policy, procedures and people are all still affected by the incident. Learning about what has shaped your congregation over the past 20, 50, or even 100 years will give you insight into why they respond the way they do, or protect the things they protect. From this, you can know when to step lightly, when to grieve, or when to step boldly.

## **2. You can learn from the triumphs.**

Although we have had difficulties in our past, we have had our fair share of triumphs, too. That includes the churches that were started to reach out to neighboring communities, outreach to the local junior college, when they took in refugees in the 1970s, even just the fact of years of faithfulness and counting. All these things are worth celebrating, and can be used to remind a church of the good they have done, and the good that your church still can do. Celebrating past successes is a great way to honor the faithful saints in the church, and you might even find a success that can be revived again.

## **3. You can learn from the mundane.**

Between the tragedies and the triumphs in your church are a lot of average, ordinary days. There are many Sundays where songs were sung, prayers were led and the Gospel was preached. There is much to learn, even from these "ordinary" days. A church that has faithfully made disciples, supported missions, and worshiped together over the years is a testament to the faithfulness of God. No place is perfect, but they have faithfully proclaimed God's Word and cele-

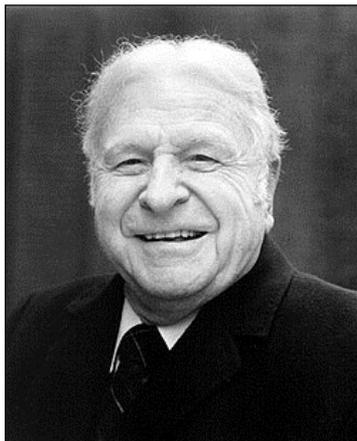
*Council of Historians*

brated the Lord's Supper probably longer than you have been a Christian. There are people who served as deacons longer than I have been alive. Learn from their faithfulness.

Where can a pastor find this council of church historians? Don't neglect digging in the church records or tracing the church history. Maybe contact the historical commission, or your state historical society. You can look in old newspapers. There is probably more out there than you think, if you look in the right places.

But above all, listen. Listen to those who have been there; to those who have been faithful. Don't ignore those who have served faithfully in the church for 40 or 50 years. They have seen it all come down the pike, and can probably teach you a thing or two.

But you have to listen.



**Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame**  
**Wallie Amos 'W. A.' Criswell**  
1909—2002  
Inducted 2018

Wallie Amos Criswell, Jr. was born Dec. 19, 1909, in Eldorado, Okla. to Wallie Amos and Anna Currie Criswell. It was not uncommon at the time for boys to be named with initials, and he was simply called, "W. A." In later years when a full name was required for his passport, Criswell used his father's first and middle names. Criswell grew up in Texline, Dallam County, Texas; the most north-westerly community in the Texas Panhandle, where his cowboy-barber father moved the family in 1915.

At age 10, young W. A. professed faith in Christ at a revival meeting; two years later he publicly committed his life to the gospel ministry. Licensed to preach at age 17, Criswell held part-time pastorates at Devil's Bend and Pulltight, Texas, before attending college. Attending Baylor University in Waco, Texas, from 1928-1931, Criswell graduated Magna Cum Laude and furthered his education at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he earned his PhD in 1937. While attending Baylor, he ministered in Marlow, Okla. and White Mound, and Pecan Grove, Texas. During his graduate and post-graduate years, Criswell held pastorates at Mount Washington and Oakland, Ky., respectively. In 1935, Criswell married Bessie Marie "Betty" Harris (1913-2006), the pianist of the Mount Washington Church and to this union a daughter, Mabel Ann, was born in 1939.

Before receiving his PhD, Criswell and his wife, Betty, made a prayer covenant with the Lord to accept the first church that called him as pastor, as they would view this as a sign from God directing him where he should go. Although Birmingham, Ala., First expressed interest in Criswell, upon advice from B. B. McKinney, Chickasha, First, called Criswell as its pastor and he accepted. While he ministered at Chickasha, First, the church grew and prospered. Every Sunday afternoon, Criswell preached on the courthouse square, and many prisoners in the adjacent jail responded to his booming voice and accepted Christ as Savior.

In 1941, he moved to Muskogee, First in eastern Oklahoma. It was in Muskogee that Criswell began expository preaching through the books of the Holy Bible, and this style would be his hallmark throughout his remaining preaching ministry. In 1944, 34-year-old Criswell was called to replace George Washington Truett as pastor of Dallas, Texas, First. His first sermon as pastor was titled, "Facing the Future with God," and Criswell served as senior pastor there for almost 50 years, preaching more than 4,000 sermons, before entering semi-retirement as pastor emeritus in 1993.

Criswell was an early pioneer of the modern megachurch phenomenon and introduced a number of innovations at Dallas, First that became a model for growing churches all over the nation. By the early 1950s, he had hired professionally-trained educational directors for each age group of the church, organized a sophisticated multi-level Sunday School program, added a full-time business manager to the staff, and broadened the church into a youth and family life center featuring a bowling alley, skating rink, and gymnasium, with a track and basketball court. He greatly expanded the church's long-standing Silent Friends ministry, creating for the deaf their own Sunday School, Training Union, Vacation Bible School, and summer camp ministries. His vigorous outreach efforts to the community included sponsoring 37 inner city missions, a crisis pregnancy center, the Good Shepherd, and Dallas Life Foundation ministries for the homeless and disadvantaged, Spanish-language chapels, and extensive television and radio ministries. Church services were broadcast locally on television beginning in January 1951, and soon were carried on stations nationwide.

During his tenure, membership of Dallas, First grew from 7,800 to 28,000, with weekly Sunday School attendance in excess of 5,000. The church expanded to multiple buildings covering five blocks in downtown Dallas, eventually becoming the largest South-

ern Baptist church in the world. The popular evangelist Billy Graham joined the church in 1953, became a close friend of the Criswell family, and remained a member of the Dallas congregation for 55 years. Ever true to his Oklahoma roots, Criswell was fond of telling his Dallas congregation that, "When Jesus returns, He is coming to Oklahoma first!" It always "made his day" when someone from Oklahoma joined the church.

Criswell's theology is best described as conservative and evangelical. He believed in biblical inerrancy, the eternal security of the believer, and Jesus Christ as the authority of spiritual truth and the sole path to salvation of sinful mankind. His theology and ethics reflected the era in which he lived. Unlike his predecessor, George W. Truett, Criswell preached dispensational premillennialism from the pulpit. Truett had reflected a postmillennial approach, popular at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, to eschatological questions, whereas Criswell drew upon the theology of C. I. Scofield. The two World Wars had dealt postmillennialism a near-fatal blow, and Criswell believed premillennialism offered a more pragmatic view of the post-war world.

In 1968, Criswell was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest non-Roman Catholic denomination in the United States, with more than 16 million members. Criswell is widely considered the father of modern conservatism in the SBC. He preached biblical inerrancy and wrote a book published in 1969, reflecting his belief titled, "Why I Preach the Bible Is Literally True," when many Southern Baptist institutions were theologically moderate or liberal. Recognizing this trend, in 1970, he founded Criswell College in old East Dallas. Criswell College's stated mission is to provide ministerial and professional higher education for men and women preparing to serve as Christian leaders throughout society, while maintaining an institutional commitment to biblical inerrancy.

Serving two times as president of the SBC, Criswell called attention to biblical inerrancy as a watershed issue in the SBC, and this began to galvanize some of the concerns that had begun to surface in the convention among conservatives. This proved to be a catalyst for a slowly developing movement that finally resulted in what is called the "Conservative Resurgence," which began at the denomination's convention in the summer of 1979. At that convention, biblical conservative Adrian Rogers was elected president of the SBC, marking the first of a long string of conservative victories and signaling the denomination's return to its biblical, orthodox roots. In the following years, Criswell's influence helped guide the movement to re-establish the SBC's biblical, historical roots of biblical authority

and stem the tide of biblical liberalism, which had plagued so many other mainstream denominations. Never one to mince words, Criswell's response to moderates at the 1991 SBC convention was, "Go shovel gravel. Sell popcorn. Work in a dime store. Don't contaminate the word of God."

During the years following his presidency of the SBC, Criswell was perhaps the most popular preacher at evangelism and pastors' conferences in America and preached extensively in mission fields worldwide. Known as a passionate expository preacher, the "Dallas Morning News" reported Reverend Billy Graham once called Criswell, "the best preacher I ever heard anywhere."

W. A. Criswell, one of the most influential Southern Baptists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, died quietly on Jan. 10, 2002, in Dallas, Texas, at the home of longtime friend Jack Pogue at the age of 92. He was laid to rest with his Bible in his hand. His death made national headlines and as a farewell honor, the city of Dallas closed off the U.S 75 North Central Expressway for the celebrated pastor's funeral cortege.

Criswell was awarded eight honorary doctorates in addition to his earned postgraduate degree and published 54 books, including an annotated *Criswell Study Bible* (in later editions the *Believers Study Bible* and *Holy Bible, Baptist Study Edition*, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

A principled man who was a passionate preacher, a powerful evangelist, and a redoubtable defender of the faith, Criswell was quoted as saying "To lift Him up, to preach His name, and to invite souls to love Him and to follow Him is the highest, heavenliest privilege of human life." A humble man, Criswell showed remarkable openness and flexibility when these traits were rare among evangelicals. He is remembered today as one of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's greatest expository preachers and the patriarch of the Conservative Resurgence within the SBC.

Submitted by Richard E. McCullough.

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**Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame**  
**Albert Alfred McClellan**  
1912-2004  
Inducted 2018

Albert Alfred McClellan was born Dec. 22, 1912 in Bowie, Texas. One of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) key staff members for more than 30 years, he died the morning of Jan. 9, 2004 in Nashville, Tenn., after a lengthy illness at the age of 91.

McClellan was editor of the *Baptist Messenger* from 1945-49, pastor of Waurika, First from 1942-45 and a rural schoolteacher for three years. He graduated from Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee in 1939 and earned a master of theology degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1941.

He authored 14 books and more than 500 articles for denominational publications.

In a Baptist Press article announcing his passing, Morris H. Chapman, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, honored McClellan for his more than 50 years of ministry saying, "As pastor, author, denominational worker, editor, historian, and scholar, he faithfully heralded the cause of Christ and reflected the heart of God."

Chapman told Baptist Press, "He gave the SBC Executive Committee more than 30 years of exemplary service in the critical areas of public relations, Convention press, and program planning.

His life and writings defined the very essence of the Executive Committee's purpose within the SBC.

"We are indeed grateful to God for McClellan's life and leadership and the rich legacy he has left us."

McClellan, when he retired from the SBC Executive Committee on Dec. 31, 1980, held the position of associate executive secretary and director of program planning. He joined the Executive Committee staff in 1949, serving 10 years as director of publications, which included responsibility for Baptist Press, the convention's news service. He assumed his program planning assignment in 1959.

McClellan had a hand in the formation of the committee that drafted the SBC's 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* statement of beliefs, and he was one of the 20-plus members of the SBC Peace Committee during the mid-1980s.

James L. Sullivan, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) from 1953-75, described McClellan as "a very brilliant man, totally dedicated to his work." Sullivan also noted "his integrity and his freedom to be himself. He didn't have anything to hide."

Sullivan told Baptist Press he had so many exchanges with McClellan over the years "that I doubt I could isolate any one of them because his work overlapped ours in various areas. We could have had a dogfight any day (about an SBC-related matter), but he was always fair, open, above-board. You knew exactly where he stood, what his objectives were, what his relationships were."

McClellan's part in the formation of the committee to draft the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* involved a meeting he and Porter Routh, then-executive secretary of the Executive Committee, had with Herschel Hobbs, then-president of the SBC, in Oklahoma City, where Hobbs was pastor of Oklahoma City, First.

The three men met to discuss controversy from a commentary on the *Book of Genesis* by a professor at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, and published by the Sunday School Board, that departed from a high view of Scripture.

The three men "decided to propose to the Executive Committee the appointment of a special committee to study the Statement of Faith that had been developed from the New Hampshire Confession of Faith and adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925" in response to controversy at the time involving the theory of evolution, Jesse Fletcher wrote in his history of the SBC published for the convention's 150th anniversary in 1995. Their plan was modified during the 1962 SBC annual meeting from a proposed

committee of seminary presidents to one consisting of the presidents of state Baptist conventions.

When theological controversy erupted again in the SBC in the late 1970s, McClellan was among those named to the Peace Committee, which issued a report in 1985 that sought to address points of contention between conservatives and moderates.

A number of quotes from McClellan's writings were printed in the program for his 1980 retirement dinner, including:

"Before I knew I was a Baptist, I was a Christian. Before I knew I was a Southern Baptist, I was pledged to God's people whoever they are. I chose the Baptists because they seemed nearer the New Testament, and because they relied on the Holy Spirit, not the decrees of men, for unity" (*The Baptist Program*, predecessor to the Executive Committee's *SBC Life* publication, October 1980).

"In a society as large as the Southern Baptist Convention, there must be a certain amount of give and take. This is not to argue for compromise, but integration. Our SBC polity being what it is, we cannot be held together by any kind of authoritative control or paper pope. Neither is it right to compromise truth" (speech to the Southern Baptist Press Association, February 1964).

"A church is not really a church unless it is in fellowship with other churches. If it tries to live alone, never cooperating with other churches in mission projects, it will cease to be a true New Testament fellowship long before its organ sounds a last note or its doors are finally shut" (*The Missions Task of a Church*, Convention Press, 1969).

"Albert McClellan was the consummate Southern Baptist on every level," said David George, McClellan's longtime pastor at Nashville, Immanuel. "As a former pastor, he had a deep commitment to the local church. He was also committed to the work of the local Baptist association, which he believed to be a vital unit of Baptist life. He worked with many state conventions, and of course, he helped to lead the national denomination during some of its most productive years.

"He was highly intelligent and widely read. He thought deeply about all things related to the spreading of the Gospel and the building up of the body of Christ. He was a remarkable person, a great friend and a faithful servant of God. He will be greatly missed by the pastor and people of Immanuel Church."

Submitted by Bob Nigh.

# JOHN BISAGNO

## 2018

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

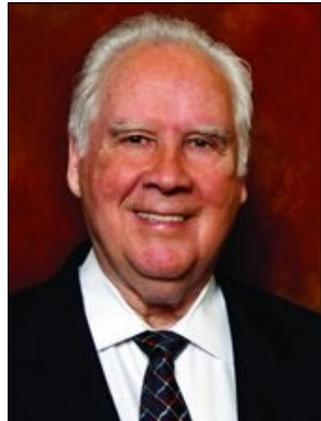
John Roger Bisagno was born on April 5, 1934, in Augusta, Kan. He passed away on Aug. 5, 2018 at Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville, Tenn. after a bout with cancer.

Bisagno began his initial service to the Lord serving in music evangelism, traveling extensively conducting crusades, and helping to win the lost to Christ. In 1959, after leading music in revivals with evangelist Hyman Appelman, Bisagno felt the call to preach.

"It was seven years before I ever preached to 100 people at one time," he recalled.

In 1965, he accepted a call to serve as pastor of Del City, First Southern, and remained there until moving into the pastorate at Houston, Texas, First five years later. Del City, First Southern experienced tremendous growth under his leadership.

Bisagno led Houston, First to move from the downtown area to build new facilities. That move increased the church's membership to more than 40,000 people, including 15,000 by baptism. In addition, it led to starting 63 local missions and three schools. During his tenure, more than 450 members of the congregation went into full-time Christian service, 101 of them to foreign missions.



**John Bisagno**

He served as the President of the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference and gained national attention as a dynamic and effective crusade evangelist and Bible teacher. He was the first preacher on the Southern Baptist ACTS Television Network. Bisagno authored more than 30 books, including the best-seller, *The Power of Positive Praying*.

He received a Doctor of Divinity degree from his alma mater, Oklahoma Baptist University, as well as a Doctor of Letters from Southwest Missouri Baptist University and a Doctor of Divinity degree from Houston Baptist University, where a "Chair of Evangelism" is named in his honor.

During his ministry, Bisagno spoke at the Southern Baptist Con-

vention, the World Congress on Evangelism, and at multiple state conventions and evangelism conferences. He also preached at every Southern Baptist seminary and conducted 37 overseas evangelistic crusades.

Current Houston, First Pastor Gregg Matte informed the church of Bisagno's passing. "You're standing on the shoulders of ... an amazing man of God," Matte told the crowd, noting the appropriateness of when Bisagno passed on. "The Lord's timing is always right," Matte said, "that he would die on a Sunday and be worshipping in Heaven with Jesus on this Sunday."

As a young man of 18, Bisagno was a talented trumpeter and Dixieland jazz musician. After touring with his band, he took some time off and returned to Oklahoma. While there, a street preacher invited him to attend Falls Creek in August 1952.

"By the fourth night," he said, "God started getting at my heart. On the last night, the preacher said, 'I don't care if just one comes tonight, but I want one that means business.' I was the first one out of 9,000 that night to walk down the aisle and get on my knees."

Bisagno later became one of the most popular preachers at Falls Creek. In 2007, the 7,253-seat auditorium in the new 129,000-square-foot tabernacle at Falls Creek was named the John R. Bisagno Auditorium. The auditorium serves as testament to his favorite scripture, Psalm 37:4, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Famous Falls Creek preacher Charlie Taylor was preaching the night Bisagno was saved, and in 1985, Bisagno tied the record with Taylor for having preached the most years at Falls Creek.

Bisagno never lost his affection for the campgrounds in the Arbuckle Mountains. He once said, "Give me 100 Falls Creeks and I can change the world."

In an address at New Orleans Seminary in 2012, Bisagno told the audience that remaining in ministry was difficult for him. A Baptist Press article told the story: "One night, he was driving home after a revival meeting where only a couple people had responded to the Gospel and he'd received a \$60 love offering. Driving home, his dilapidated car had a flat tire. After finally getting back on the road, Bisagno, discouraged from his lack of success, turned on the radio to hear an announcer say, 'From the beautiful Parisian Room atop the Roosevelt Hotel in downtown New Orleans, La., the music of Tony Almerico and the Dixieland All-Stars.' "The devil said, 'Come on back,'" Bisagno recounted.

"He immediately turned the dial to hear, "From Minneapolis, Minn., Billy Graham and the Hour of Decision." George Beverly Shea then began to sing, "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold."

"Jesus was saying, 'Follow me,'" Bisagno said. "That struggle

stayed with me for years and years and years."

Popular Baptist Messenger columnist Walker Moore recounted an encounter he had with Bisagno. Recalling the incident in his "Rite of Passage" column on Jan. 25, 2010, Moore wrote, "I had the privilege of speaking at all three services at Houston, First the first Sunday of January. I was familiar with this congregation largely because of its longtime pastor, John Bisagno. A while back, I spoke in the chapel for a youth missions conference. I could never have guessed that I would look out over the congregation to see . . . Bisagno himself.

"It is one thing to preach in a large church. It is another thing to preach in front of one of your heroes. As I took the pulpit that day, I prayed a familiar prayer: 'Lord Jesus, come quickly.' It was an incredible experience to preach before a man known for his many evangelistic crusades, his legendary pulpit skills and his renowned ability to play the trumpet. For the next 30 minutes, I focused solely on the text. I sought the Lord's leadership as I preached the sermon He laid on my heart. After I finished, I went out into the congregation to shake Bisagno's hand and let him know how much he had influenced me. As I approached, he reached out with a big smile and bigger handshake, looked me in the eye and told me, 'You are my newest, favorite preacher!'

"This old country preacher and missionary felt as if Jesus Himself had said, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.' Bisagno and I visited for the next 20 minutes. I felt as if I had known him my entire life. We talked about our families (his grandson was leading the music that weekend), missions, ministry and Oklahoma Baptists."

Bisagno's wife of 63 years, Uldine, preceded him in death in September 2017. The couple had three children, Ginger Dodd, Anthony Bisagno and Timothy Bisagno—and seven grandchildren.

# WILLA RUTH GARLOW

## 2018

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Willa Ruth Scantlan Garlow was the daughter of Samuel William and Naomi Ruth Scantlan. She graduated from Capitol Hill High School in Oklahoma City, and continued her education at Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU), where she earned a degree in Early Childhood Education. She later attended Southwestern Seminary.



**Willa Ruth Garlow**

As longtime and faithful members of Oklahoma City, Capitol Hill, Willa Ruth and Lyle—who were married for 68 years—tirelessly served the Lord and others. Willa Ruth dedicated her life to positively influencing the development of young minds, their lives and their personal relationships with Jesus Christ. She served as a motivational speaker and childhood specialist and was a keynote speaker and seminar leader in 34 states as well as Europe, Asia, Africa and South America.

A prolific writer of both prose and poetry, Willa Ruth was a well-known author of curriculum, materials and articles for LifeWay Publications and various other periodicals. She authored four books: *Outreach for Preschoolers*, *My Church*, *Jesus Is A Special Person* and *Sharing God's Love and Joy—52 Devotional Bible Studies for Senior Adults*.

She was a nationally-known conference speaker and workshop presenter on children's ministry and authored LifeWay Sunday School and discipleship curriculum for preschoolers and children in addition to writing materials for teachers, church staff and other church leaders, including Vacation Bible School, missions and Christian stewardship materials. Her broad smile, keen wit and sense of humor made her an enormously popular speaker.

Willa Ruth conducted many writer's conferences in Oklahoma and other states, and provided in-service training for kindergarten teachers in Oklahoma City and Vernon, Texas.

In 1980, Willa Ruth was presented with OBU's Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award and Profile in Excellence Award, and was

later awarded the Distinguished Service Award in Christian Education in 2003 by the faculty of the School of Educational Ministries at Southwestern. In 2014, Willa Ruth received an honorary Doctor of Religious Education degree from OBU.



In August 1992, the Baptist Indian Women of Oklahoma presented a quilt to J. Lyle Garlow at his retirement as associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. In October 2009, Lyle and Willa Ruth Garlow presented the quilt to the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Collection housed in the Gaskin Baptist Historical Library and Archives. The Indian portrait was created by Chuck-luck.

ational speaker, she lighted up every room she entered. She had a passion for life and zeal for serving her Lord. A few minutes in her presence and you would walk away feeling 10 feet tall. She and Lyle were two treasures of Oklahoma Baptists. They gave their lives in service to our Lord and Oklahoma Baptists.”

In an article in the *Baptist Messenger* shortly after her passing, managing editor Chris Doyle wrote, “She may have appeared short in stature, but Willa Ruth Garlow stood tall when she spoke and commanded the setting while doing a dramatic soliloquy in the role of Lottie Moon or other historical characters. Whether in speech or written word, Garlow knew how to get people’s attention, and she did it for her love of Baptist ministry and her Lord Jesus Christ.

Doyle continued: “Garlow was a guest writer over the years for the *Baptist Messenger*. One of her memorable articles reminded

In being recognized with this posthumous Distinguished Service Award this year, she follows in her father’s footsteps. Scantlan received the award in 1997.

Willa Ruth passed away on Feb. 19, 2018 from the effects of a stroke she suffered while leaving an event at Oklahoma City, Capitol Hill, on Friday, Feb. 16.

“Willa Ruth Garlow was an amazing lady,” BGC Executive Director-Treasurer Anthony Jordan said upon learning of her death. “An incredible preschool conference leader and inspira-

*Messenger* readers that Oklahoma Baptists give “through” the Cooperative Program not “to” the Cooperative Program. Some of her “first person” columns had catchy headlines, such as her July 17, 1997 article that was titled “When people burn you up, don’t make a fuel of yourself.” The article begins, “Let’s face it. Every one of us has experienced some unhappy encounters with people, both children and adults, who seem to have been born in a nasty, negative mood and who seem to work to make other people miserable.” Garlow advised in the article to “(pray) for yourself and for them. . . (respect) other people’s points-of-view . . . (make) sure that you are not in the wrong.”

Garlow also focused on helping parents to be spiritual leaders for their children.

“When the Bible is important in the lives of his parents and in his home, a young child can begin to be aware that the Bible is a special book and an important book,” she wrote in her Aug. 21, 1997 *Messenger* article titled “Help for parents using the Bible with pre-schoolers.”

Willa Ruth said she learned much from her mother. She provided proof of her mother’s wisdom in a short article published in the Aug. 28, 1997 *Baptist Messenger* titled, “Words of advice”:

“When I was a mother of young children, my mother gave me excellent counsel. She said, ‘Today, be the best parent you know how to be. Keep on learning about how to be a better parent. Every day, pray for your children. Help your children learn Bible truths at home. Be a partner with their teachers at church and at school. Make home a happy place for your children and their friends. Lean on the Lord and trust Him to help you raise your children.’”

## Important notice

More than two-thirds of Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society members have not paid their annual fee for several years. As of this issue of the *Chronicle*, those who have not paid will be dropped from the distribution list. If you have doubts, or can't remember that you have paid, you probably haven't.

An annual membership is only \$10 per year, and includes receipt of the two semi-annual issues of the *Chronicle*. Even better, why not consider a lifetime membership, which is only \$100?

Email [okbaptisthistoryman@gmail.com](mailto:okbaptisthistoryman@gmail.com) for more information, or mail a check in the appropriate amount to BGCO Historical Secretary, 3800 N. May Ave., Okla. City, OK 73112.

## *Discarding your library?* We want your books, other items

If you or your church is considering getting rid of its library—or possibly cutting down on the number of volumes it contains—the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission and Society would welcome the donation of any of those volumes which relate specifically to Oklahoma Southern Baptists.

This would include copies of any of the books written by Historical Secretary Emeritus J.M. Gaskin, all of which are now out of print. Gaskin's bibliography includes more than 21 books, from *The Sage of the Hills*, published in 1949, to *Sights and Sounds of Falls Creek* in 1980, to *Cartersville, Route 1: History, Autobiography, Legend and Lore* in 1999.

Other publications might include back issues of the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle*, copies of *The Two Became One: The Story of Oklahoma Southern Baptists*, by Bob Ross, biographies or books by other prominent Oklahoma Baptists and histories of BGCO affiliates.

Donations of other items relating to Oklahoma Baptists are welcome as well. These would include Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and Associational annual reports, church histories and ephemera, photographs, recordings and other items which would be of interest to researchers who visit the Gaskin Baptist Archives at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee.

To discuss a donation, please contact BGCO Historical Secretary Bob Nigh at [okbaptisthistoryman@gmail.com](mailto:okbaptisthistoryman@gmail.com), or give him a call at 405/990-0123.

# What can be done with historical church materials?

The obvious question in these days of a “throw-away society” is what should be done with historical materials?

Any writing, bulletin, or artifact related to the church should be given full consideration as to its historical value. Even the weekly bulletin may one day be the very piece of history you need for information. Boxes of bulletins or newsletters stored many years ago may make a difference in how one compiles the church history. Why is it important to keep the third Sunday’s bulletin from 40 years ago? The answer may be in who is listed as a staff member, who sang, who served in the nursery, what activities and announcements were listed for the week, etc.

Bulletins, church business meeting minutes, church newsletters, all legal documents, and all deacon and committee reports should be filed in order, by year, and kept in a safe place. Have more than one person keep a collection of such documents, and keep them in well-known safe locations apart from the other person or church records.

With modern computers there is no excuse for records of every sort to not be backed up and saved for future reference. One small “thumb drive” can hold several years of information.

The question of preserving old paper items and church records must be met with an understanding of how much a church is willing to invest in such a project. Archiving can range from very expensive to a moderate cost. One must realize the records will continue to deteriorate, but the process can be slowed greatly. Preservation must take place as soon as possible. Options include scanning and digitizing documents.

Remember, with rapid advances in technology, digitalized materials may become obsolete quickly when a “new” electronic method of storage is created. We have witnessed the evolution from reel-to-reel tapes to cassette tapes, VHS, DVDs, floppy disks and thumb drives. Once the material is stored electronically, it will require reprogramming to the more modern means as they appear on the market.

After producing a good record of the materials the church might then consider further preservation of the original documents. The ledgers, documents, or papers can be stored in acid free archival boxes, which help in pulling out acids from the materials.

Do not laminate important documents. The typical lamination process will lock in the acids, and you will one day discover your precious document has turned dark and unreadable.

## **Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society Annual Meeting Minutes – Sept. 29, 2018**

The Society met on Saturday morning, Sept. 29, 2018, at Oklahoma City, Trinity. President-elect Luke Holmes called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. He read Hebrews 11:33-39, and then opened the meeting in prayer. Ten persons attended, including three visitors, and two new members of the Society were welcomed.

The minutes from the 2017 Society meeting held on Oct. 7 at Oklahoma City, Portland Ave. were approved on a motion by Richard McCullough, seconded by Andy Latta.

Historical Secretary's Report by Bob Nigh.

Members of the Historical Commission convened for their semi-annual meeting on March 6 at the Baptist Building, updating reports and progress being made toward the annual meeting of the Historical Society scheduled for Sept. 29, 2018 at Oklahoma City, Trinity.

During the first quarter, the Historical Secretary's office handled phone requests for information concerning church anniversaries and prepared and mailed appropriate certificates to Cardin, Miami for its Centennial Celebration and to Oklahoma City, Southern Hills in observance of the service of a long-time ministerial staff member.

Nigh produced the first issue of the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle* under his guidance in April, and copies were mailed to Historical Society members. The issue focused on Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center, in conjunction with the campground's Centennial Celebration.

Notable donations to the Gaskin Baptist Archives at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee included many copies of the annuals for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and the Southern Baptist Convention, some dating back into the 1950s, several issues of Hershel Hobbs' commentaries from



Those attending the Sept. 29 meeting of the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society included, from left, Ron Fannin, Michael Dershem, Andy Latta; Luke Holmes, president; and visitors Don Baxter of Oklahoma City and Ron and Sharon Wagoner of Ardmore.

Bryan Association and a “Souvenir Edition” of the *Falls Creek News* for 1949, including all five issues printed that summer, from South Canadian Association.

Thus far this year, the Historical Secretary has personally presented or prepared certificates in recognition of the following congregations’ anniversaries—Antlers, First (125<sup>th</sup>); Bethany, Macedonia (25<sup>th</sup>); Blair, First (125<sup>th</sup>); Chandler, Southern (40<sup>th</sup>); Covington, First (100<sup>th</sup>); Fort Gibson, South Ridge (25<sup>th</sup>); Guymon, Grace Southern (25<sup>th</sup>); Lawton, Northside (75<sup>th</sup>); Midwest City, Soldier Creek (75<sup>th</sup>); Oklahoma City, Exchange Ave. (100<sup>th</sup>); Perry, First (125<sup>th</sup>); Porum, Friendship Chapel (25<sup>th</sup>); Sallisaw, Hanson First (125<sup>th</sup>); Skiatook, Lakeview Southern (25<sup>th</sup>); Tecumseh, First (125<sup>th</sup>) and Velma, First (125<sup>th</sup>). Certificates also were presented to many of the churches’ eldest member and longest-standing member on behalf of the OBHS and Historical Commission.

The autumn 2018 edition of the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle* is in the final stages of production and will go to press soon. The issue includes articles about the two men inducted this year into the Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame—W.A. Criswell and Albert McClellan; profiles of the two people to receive the 2018 Distinguished Service Award—John Bisagno and Willa Ruth Garlow; recognizing the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Chronicle* and an article about the purpose of and holdings in the Gaskin

Baptist Archives at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, among others.

The Historical Secretary continues to receive and respond in a timely manner to requests from churches and individuals for historical information. This included a request from a lady in Detroit, Mich. for articles we have about planning a church anniversary and writing a church history.

Election of Officers – Luke Holmes assumed the position as president of the Society. Ron Fannin nominated Richard McCullough, seconded by Leona Marion, to serve as President-elect. Passed by acclamation. Fannin nominated Michael Dershem, seconded by Glenda Nigh, to continue to serve as Secretary. Passed by acclamation.

## **Awards and Induction Ceremonies**

1. **Church History Awards** announced by Holmes. There was only one entry this year. This year's award goes to Shawnee, Immanuel. The church will be recognized during the Historical Secretary's report at 2018 BGCO annual meeting on Nov. 13.

2. **Distinguished Service Award** announced by Richard McCullough, Chairman of the Committee, who revealed that two persons had been selected by the committee to receive this award this year, including John Bisagno and Willa Ruth Garlow.

3. **Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame inductions** moderated by Holmes. He introduced Leona Marion, Chair of the selection committee, who said the honorees' selection was driven by each man's significant contributions to the work of Oklahoma Baptists and their leadership on a statewide and national level.

**W. A. Criswell**, former pastor of Del City, First Southern and, later, Dallas, Texas, First. See monograph on pages 8-12.

**Albert McClellan**, former editor of the *Baptist Messenger*,



Tobin Jackson, left, pastor of Oklahoma City, Trinity, provides a tour of the church to some of those in attendance at the Sept. 29 meeting of the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society.

and then one of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee's key staff members for more than 30 years. See monograph on pages 13-15.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ron Fannin. The motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

Following the meeting, Tobin Jackson, pastor of Oklahoma City, Trinity, led the group on a tour of the historic building sharing the history of the church as well as what God is doing in the church now. Leona Marion, who is also a member of Trinity, shared tours of the church's Heritage Room, which contains many pictures and other historical items.

Prepared by Michael Dershem, Historical Society Secretary, and enhanced by Bob Nigh, Historical Secretary.

# Gaskin Baptist Archives: What it is, what it offers

by Bob Nigh, Historical Secretary, Director of History

SHAWNEE—Tucked away behind a pair of massive wooden doors on the second floor of the Mabee Learning Center at Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) is a trove of artifacts and information just waiting to be discovered and delved into by anyone with an interest in the history of early Baptists in Oklahoma in general and, specifically, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO).



**Rachel Hawkins**  
**Archivist**

The Gaskin Archives is a repository for documents and artifacts “which are of significance as records or as symbols of the history, character, and accomplishments of and places or people associated with the BGCO or one of its affiliates,” states the Gaskin Archives policy. The Archives is named after Jesse Marvin (J.M.) Gaskin, director of history emeritus and president of the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society emeritus. Gaskin, from Durant, served in that position for 45 years.

As also outlined in the Gaskin Archives policy, the purpose of the Archives is “to serve as a resource for scholarly research on persons, places, and events related to the BGCO, including any and all of its antecedent bodies, and to provide historic record and reminder of the heritage that we today must build and carry into the future.”

The Handbook of the Archives—first compiled in 1989 and revised in 2009—points out that the Oklahoma Baptist Collection is the property of the Historical Commission, whose duty is to monitor the Collection regularly to determine whether terms of gift agreements are in compliance.

The curator of the Gaskin Archives is Rachel Hawkins, who recently completed the extensive requirements to be designated a “Certified Archivist” by the Academy of Certified Archivists.

The Oklahoma Baptist Collection began in the Oklahoma Baptist University Library in Shawnee in the 1950s and became a viable

operation in 1976. In 1995, the Baptist Collection was renamed The J.M. Gaskin Historical Library and Baptist Archives. The title is shortened to Gaskin Baptist Archives for convenience in usage.

Gaskin led in forming the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission in 1952, and was elected as the organization's first Historical Secretary in 1953. He was founding president of the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society in 1956, and founded and edited *The Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle* for 40 years (1958-98). In 1976, Gaskin was employed by the BGCO as the first Director of History for the Historical Commission. He took full retirement in 1998, when he was named Historical Secretary Emeritus.

The Archives was moved to the Baptist Building in Oklahoma City in March 1996, and formally renamed and dedicated April 12, 1996. Gaskin served as Archives director from its beginning until he retired. He was followed by J.D. Dowdell, and later by Glenn A. Brown. Brown was followed by Bob E. Mathews. In November 1999, Marlin Hawkins was elected Historical Secretary of the BGCO, serving until his retirement on Oct. 31, 2007. In November 2007, Eli H. Sheldon, retired pastor from Crown Heights Church in Oklahoma City for 28 years and adjunct OBU professor of Baptist history, was elected Historical Secretary. He resigned on Dec. 31, 2016, and Bob Nigh, who served as managing editor of the *Baptist Messenger* for 18 years, was named Historical Secretary and Director of History in February 2017.

“According to several sources, the Oklahoma Baptist Collection was established in 1955 through the joint effort of OBU President John W. Raley and T.B. Lackey, (then) BGCO executive secretary-



One of the items which catches the eye of visitors as they enter the Gaskin Archives is the Old Bokoshe Pulpit, which was handmade by the pastor of Old Bokoshe church, circa 1900-1905. The pastor's name has passed into history and is unknown. The pulpit was where J.M. Gaskin, longtime BGCO historical secretary, was licensed to preach and later ordained on Aug. 30, 1936 as a 19-year-old.



A discerning eye will settle on an unobtrusive artifact against a wall in the Gaskin Archives: the hiking poles used by Falls Creek co-founder W.D. Moorer as he, “Roamed in the Arbuckle Mountains, especially the Falls Creek area, from 1910-1921.”

Treasurer,” Hawkins said. “The collection was housed at OBU until 1996, when it moved to the Baptist Building in Oklahoma City. In 2010, the collection returned to OBU, and is located in the library.”

“The Gaskin Archives is the property of the BGCO, and the nine-member Historical Commission, headed by the Historical Secretary, exercises administrative control of the Archives. Gaskin has significantly and prolifically contributed to the preservation of Oklahoma Baptist history. In addition to his role as Historical Secretary for 45 years, he has written more than 20 books related to Oklahoma Baptist history, and was the creator/editor of the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle* until his retirement.”

The Archives is essential to the preservation of, in the words of Paul Roberts, OBU Dean of Library Services, “the history of God’s work among His people” in the state of Oklahoma.

The Archives contains several book collections, including the J.M. Gaskin book collection, the Herbert M. Pierce book collection and the J.B. Rounds collection.

“We have print copies of the *Baptist Messenger*, the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle*, BGCO annual reports, and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annuals,” Hawkins said. “The BGCO annuals also are available online on the BGCO web site, and the SBC annuals are available online through the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives and Baylor University. We also have several church histories, association histories and some materials on BGCO entities such as Falls Creek.”

Hawkins said items which are unique to the Archives include:

A large collection of Oklahoma Baptist association annuals from the late 19th Century to the present.

Annuals from different Baptist conventions in Oklahoma before the BGCO was established in 1906.

The Gaskin Archives holdings also include information regarding:

The Baptist Convention of Indian and Oklahoma Territories, 1898-1899.

The Baptist General Association of Western Arkansas and Oklahoma Territory, 1883, 1887, 1889, 1892, 1894-1895, 1897.

The Baptist General Convention of Indian Territory, 1901-1905.

The Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention of Oklahoma and Indian Territories, 1885-1897.

The Baptist Territorial Convention of Indian Territory, 1883-1884, 1900.

The Oklahoma Baptist Convention, 1899 (succeeded the Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention of Indian Territories)

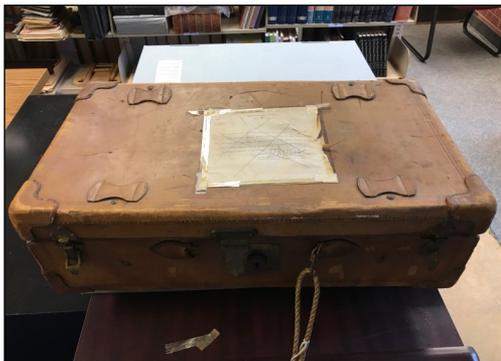
The Oklahoma Baptist State Convention, 1896, 1898, 1900-1905.

*The Indian Missionary* newspaper, 1884-1891.

*The Indian Orphan* newspaper, 1905-1912, 1914.

Copies of the unpublished manuscript, *The Story of Oklahoma Baptists*, by L.W. Marks, the first historical secretary of the BGCO (1906, 1909-1920).

Photograph collections depicting various aspects of Baptist life and ministry in the 19th and 20th centuries.



A well-traveled suitcase which belonged to Thaddeus Howard Farmer (1891-1965) is an interesting artifact housed in the Gaskin Archives. Farmer was a pioneer leader in Sunday School, Baptist Young People's Union (BYPU) and Baptist Student Union (BSU) work in Oklahoma. He came to Oklahoma as BYPU secretary in 1924 and was manager of Falls Creek Assembly from 1925-36. In 1933, his title was changed to Secretary of Sunday School and BTU Work in Oklahoma. In 1934, BSU was added to his duties. Farmer traveled across the state—by car, train or buggy— to churches large and small with this suitcase. It was donated to the BGCO upon his death in 1965.



A four-drawer filing cabinet once used by Falls Creek Assembly co-founder J.B. Rounds contains items such as past issues of the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle*, items about SB history and heritage, SBC Annual Reports from the 1950s and 1960s, copies of the *Baptist Messenger* from 1969-1975 and issues of the *Biblical Illustrator* magazine.

- A large number of doctoral and master's degree dissertations.
- Hundreds of church histories.
- An extensive collection of Baptist biographies.

The Archives' "Statement of Purpose" lists criteria for acceptance of personal collections:

"The prime characteristic which determines the Archives' interest in a personal collection of materials is that there be some BGCO connection, whether the individual may be a staff member of BGCO, Oklahoma Baptist church or association, a board or committee member, leading lay person or someone who has otherwise influenced the development and work of the BGCO.

"The individual should also be a "prominent personality," that is, one whose contributions to a chosen field of endeavor have been sufficiently significant to cause scholarly interest in manuscripts, personal papers, books, artifacts, photographs and other non-print media, paintings, memorabilia, etc. associated with that person."

An example is the recent donation to the Archives of Edna McMillan's personal library.

The collection in the Archives is extensive, including:

—More than 5,000 books, covering a range of Baptist history. Additionally, there are books on philosophy, theology, Indian culture, Chinese history and culture and a variety of other topics.

—More than 11,000 Annuals of associations, the SBC, BGCO and other state conventions.

—Periodicals, originals and microfilm. These include many which are no longer published.

—The oral history collection includes hundreds of recordings, reel-to-reel, cassette and video.

The Archives has more than 45 “special collections” of past Oklahoma Baptist leaders. Among these are items belonging to Gaskin, Herbert M. Pierce, M.E. Ramay, J.B. Rounds, Sam Scantlan, T.P. Haskins, T.B. Lackey, Joe L. Ingram, Augie Henry, Robert S. Scales, Andrew Potter, J.P. Dane, E.E. Lee, L.W. Marks, Rosalee Mills Appleby, Anson Justice, Porter Routh, William G. Tanner and E.W. Thornton.

Memorabilia on display includes the Murrow Press (In the Mabee Learning Center’s entrance), used by Joseph Samuel Murrow, early-day missionary to the Indians; a collection of church anniversary plates; the books of Helen Thames Raley; historic gavels; antique typewriters and communion sets.

The Gaskin Archives is open to all patrons interested in scholarly research on Oklahoma Baptist history. The Archives is open by appointment, Monday through Friday. To schedule an appointment, contact Hawkins at 405/585-4520 or at [rachel.hawkins@okbu.edu](mailto:rachel.hawkins@okbu.edu).

To donate materials to the Archives, contact Bob Nigh, historical secretary and director of history, or Hawkins, and they will inform you how to proceed.



Tape recordings of services held at Falls Creek in years past fill seven shelves of a bookcase in the Gaskin Archives. A project to digitize the old reel-to-reel tapes is underway.

**The history of Shawnee, Immanuel was selected by committee members as the winner of the 2017 Gaskin Baptist Church History Award.**

## **GASKIN BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY AWARD**

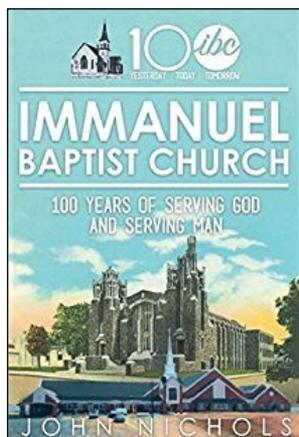
*Immanuel Baptist Church: 100 Years of Serving God and Serving Man*, by John Nichols, has been named the winner in the 2017 Gaskin Baptist Church History Award competition. The winning entry will be recognized during the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, Nov. 12-13 at Edmond, First.

Nichols comments in the forward of his book, “For one hundred years, Immanuel Baptist Church has been a beacon of truth and hope to the community of Shawnee and to the world. God has blessed Immanuel Baptist Church in many and indescribable ways through those years as the church earnestly sought to adhere faithfully to the Bible as the Word of God and to the Great Commission.

“This book tells the story of the church for a century—its leaders, programs, accomplishments, and challenges—and how, through ups and downs, in the midst of a rapidly changing world, it never faltered in its faithfulness to God and His Word. For a century, Immanuel Baptist Church has shown that a church is not a physical building or a location, but a church is a people called out by God to be salt and light to the world.”

Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission members have approved a change in the selection process for the winners, creating larger church (250-plus members) and smaller church (Less than 250 members) categories.

All Oklahoma churches are welcome to submit their histories (3 copies) written or compiled this year to be considered for the 2018 Gaskin Baptist Church History Award. Entries should be submitted to Bob Nigh, BGCO Historical Secretary, 3800 N. May Ave., Okla. City, OK 73112-6506.



# Chronicle observes 60th anniversary

by Bob Nigh, Historical Secretary, Director of History

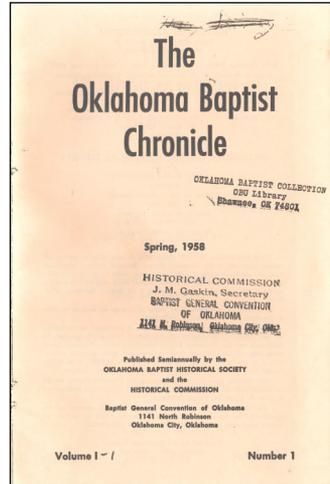
The first issue of the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle* was published by the Oklahoma Historical Society under the direction of editor J.M. Gaskin in the spring of 1958. Gaskin concluded his comments in the preface of the new publication by writing, "The first number of the *Chronicle* comes to you with the best wishes of your official leadership in Oklahoma Baptist history, and with the fondest hopes that it may be the beginning of a long series of such publications. It represents a needed work long overdue."

Indeed, the creation of the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society, itself, was a laborious process, taking almost 50 years to come to fruition. When the Society was organized at Beverly's Hideaway restaurant in Oklahoma City at 5 p.m. on Wed., Nov. 14, 1956, it was the fulfillment of a dream that traced its roots back to the infancy of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO).

On Nov. 4, 1907, 49 years earlier almost to the day, Historical Secretary W.D. Moorer urged in his report during the BGCO annual meeting the creation of the Historical Society.

"I recommend that . . . we create the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society, which shall set itself the task of gathering, classifying and preserving not only all our written records and statistics, but before it is too late, shall try to secure the record of the many facts of human interest, and further that one section of the program of the day before the Convention be given to a paper dealing with the history of our work in Oklahoma, especially the early days," Moorer said.

Moorer further stressed the need for the Historical Society, by commenting, "I have found a great wealth of historical material, full of the most thrilling human interest which is going to waste. Men, money, members, dates and other statistics make up but the skeleton of



our history, but the thousands of thrilling incidents of devotion and heroism amid almost overwhelming difficulties, are the flesh and blood and very soul of our denominational life in Oklahoma.”

Decades later, a nine-member BGCO Historical Commission was authorized on Nov. 12, 1952. Gaskin, as Historical Secretary, was designated as chairman of the Commission. On Sept. 10, 1957, Commission members—who included Frank A. Balyeat, Norman; Carlos Berry, Purcell; J.P. Dane, Pawhuska; Roger D. Hebard, Bartlesville; Robert S. Jackson, Poteau; Jess D. Kirkley, Konawa; Harry M. Roark, Blackwell; Lee B. Spencer, Shawnee and W. Leonard Stigler, Tulsa—voted to authorize the publication of the *Chronicle* with Gaskin as editor.

The Commissioners further urged that the *Chronicle* “should be a magazine-type publication, issued semi-annually. . . .”

The initial, 24-page issue of the *Chronicle* outlined the birth of the Historical Society, printing the group’s “Organizational Minutes,” which indicated there were 89 people present at the first meeting at Beverly’s. During that gathering, T.B. Lackey, executive secretary of the convention, expressed his pleasure at the formation of the Society and urged its support.

Vol. 1, No. 1 of the *Chronicle* also contained the Constitution of the newly-created Historical Society, outlining the Society’s name, location, purpose, membership, officers, executive committee and meeting requirements. Also included was a list of the Society’s charter membership roll, which included six lifetime members, three institutional members, and 131 annual members.

Gaskin masterfully wrapped up that first issue with a 10-page article titled, “Baptist Beginnings in Oklahoma.”

Drawing from L.W. Marks’ *The Story of Oklahoma Baptists* (1912), Gaskin pointed out that “The history of Oklahoma Baptists prior to the organization of the General Convention in 1906 can be roughly divided into two periods: the period of early settlement and the period of growth in organization. During the first period (1820-1860) the population of the land which was to become Oklahoma consisted almost entirely of Indians and their few Negro slaves. . . . The second period (1865-1906) saw the organization of more churches and the growth of organized mission work . . . .”

In the six decades since the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle* first appeared, the six editors of the publication—which has not missed an issue since—have stayed true to the original intent of its creators, profiling outstanding Oklahoma Baptist leaders, documenting happenings of historical significance and celebrating the dedicated efforts of devoted men and women who have followed the inspiration of God to serve Him in spreading His Gospel across the state of Oklahoma and beyond.

# Memorial Gifts

On Sept. 8, 1998 by vote of the Historical Commission, a memorial fund was established whereby a gift of \$25 or more may be made to the Gaskin Historical Archives and Library Forever Fund in memory of a deceased relative or friend. Gifts received thus far include:

*Ramona Allen*, Wilburton  
Given by John and Pat Hart

*Ramona Allen*, Wilburton  
Given by Delmer, Charity and Tim Allen

*James Ball*, Claremore  
Given by Lemuel Ball

*Margie Ball*, Claremore  
Given by Lemuel Ball

*Bob Burrows*, Amarillo, Texas  
Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

*Pluma Cantrell*, Sallisaw  
Given by Del and Ramona Allen

*Rose Chronister*, Wilburton  
Given by Sans Bois Baptist Association

*E. Farrell Dixon*, Tulsa  
Given by Curtis and Betty Dixon

*Donald R. Dunn*, Chickasha  
Given by Jimmie L. Dunn

*Jack Everhart*, Oklahoma City  
Given by Del and the late Ramona Allen

*Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle*

***Betty Farris***, Muskogee  
Given by Del and Ramona Allen

***Virginia Ann Fry***, Claremore  
Given by Lemuel Ball

***Helen Isom Gaskin***, Durant  
Given by Patricia A. Roberts

***Joseph Alexander Gaskin***, Cartersville  
Given by J. M. Gaskin

***Jim Glaze***, Montgomery, Ala.  
Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

***George Hill***, Coalgate  
Given by Margaret Hill

***George Hill***, Coalgate  
Given by J. M. Gaskin

***Mrs. Carrell Hooper***, Durant  
Given by J. M. and Helen Gaskin

***Carleen Jones***, Oklahoma City  
Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

***Norma Jordan***, Bartlesville  
Given by the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission

***Nadean Justice***, Oklahoma City  
Given by J. M. Gaskin

***Murray Leath***, Plano, Texas  
Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

*Memorials*

***Dick Lovelady***, Bethany

Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

***Clara Luedecke***, Weatherford, Texas

Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

***Carl Mackey***, Kingfisher

Given by Jonell Crawford

***Charles Mackey***, Durant

Given by Mrs. Robert Mackey

***Burl Mackey***, Kingfisher

Given by Jonell Crawford

***Robert Mackey***, Durant

Given by Mrs. Robert Mackey

***Lee McWilliams***, Durant

Given by Patricia Roberts

***Maye McWilliams***, Durant

Given by Patricia Roberts

***John H. Morton***, Durant

Given by Bill J. Morton

***Emma L. Shoemate Morton***, Durant

Given by Bill J. Morton

***Wenonah Willene Pierce***, Fayetteville, Ark.

Given by the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission

***Wenonah Willene Pierce***, Fayetteville, Ark.

Given by Del and Ramona Allen

***John D. Riggs***, Durant

Given by J.M. Gaskin

***Todd Sheldon***, Dallas, Texas

Given by the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission

***Todd Sheldon***, Dallas, Texas

Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

***John L. Smith***, Marlow

Given by Winfred Knight

***William G. Tanner***, Belton, Texas

Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

***James Timberlake***, Atlanta, Ga.

Given by Kathyryne Timberlake

***Thelma Townsend***, Oklahoma City

Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

***Lawrence Van Horn***, Oklahoma City

Given by Marlin and Patsy Hawkins

***H. Alton Webb***, Anadarko

Given by J. M. and Helen Gaskin

***Almeda Welch***, Durant

Given by J. M. and Helen Gaskin

***Hazel Marie Williams White***, Wilburton

Given by Del and Ramona Allen