

HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Baptist history did not begin with the organization of the American Baptist Association in 1924. The General Association, an association organized by many of the same leaders who led in the early days of the ABA, held its first annual session in 1905. These associations were both founded on the principle that a national association must recognize the authority of each local congregation in fulfilling the Great Commission.

is the largest and oldest national association based on the Landmark principles espoused by J. R. Graves, J. M. Pendleton, when applied to Baptists, the term "Landmark" denotes a set of beliefs that place a strong emphasis upon the local church as its primary activity. Characteristic beliefs of Landmark Baptists are:

• Succession of Baptist-like churches from New Testament times until the present,
• No pulpits, no union meetings and the receiving of alien immersion.
• Baptist is the concept of "conventionism," that is, a centralized denominational organization that sets policy and initiates practice restricted or "closed" communion, limiting participation in the Lord's Supper to the membership of each local church.

• This form may be found in earlier Baptist groups, they were first formalized in June of 1851 in the famous "Cotton Grove" meeting. J. R. Graves, editor of the Tennessee Baptist.

The 75th anniversary, published to commemorate the 75th meeting of the association in June, 2000 examines our roots, then explains how the same United Baptists, and eventually Missionary Baptists. That published history included carefully selected excerpts from resolutions to help us understand the nature of associated work that recognizes church equality in missions, publications,

through this association is the publications work and missions. Today the promotions of chaplains, two youth camps, the History and Archives committee are also part of the focus of this associated work.

By visiting the church pages on this website, one can easily see that many churches fellowshipping in the American Baptist Association pre-date the convention movement. The White Oak Baptist Church in Nancy KY founded in 1801 and part of our fellowship clearly state in their current materials that they have never been associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. The Bethel Association, the first Association west of the Mississippi River, was organized in 1816. The Association was an outgrowth of the Bethel Baptist Church, the second church organized in Missouri Territory, but the first permanent church. These are just two examples of how scriptural associations predate modern attempts to centralize authority under hierarchical boards.

The History and Archives Committee produced the History of the American Baptist Association to commemorate the 75th meeting of the Association in June, 2000. The following statements were in response to a request made by Bro. Steve Reeves, Director of Publicity for the A. B. A.

Perhaps the most compelling desire was that all pastors and churches, as well as prospective pastors, would be able to understand the reasons the founders had in mind for first organizing a national association of Missionary Baptist churches. I felt this could best be done by delineating the situations that existed when the call was made for a meeting to discuss the organization.

Another strong desire was that the actual inter-workings of the association of churches would be demonstrated. Therefore, the sections on missions and publications received considerable attention. In addition, the carefully selected resolutions presented to the messengers were intended to indicate responses to situations that were of importance.

A further objective was biographical information on some of the early leaders. Previously, little was known about J. A. Scarboro, H. B. Pender, and J. T. Moore. The biographical sketches show the tremendous influence those men exercised.

Finally, many have asked just what was the importance of Ben M. Bogard? Why was he honored by the adoption of the name Bogard Press as the official name of our publications? Hopefully, the section on the influence of Ben M. Bogard will answer those questions.

It is my personal conviction that every A. B. A. pastor, and ministerial student, should be familiar with the contents of the history to understand the nature and purpose of the association. Every church library should have a copy as a reference to those interested in the associated work.

--Robert Ashcraft, General Editor

STATE AND LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

year		mm/dd	
1707	Philadelphia Association		other older association
1751	Charleston Association		Alabama
1758	Sandy Creek Association (NC)		Arkansas
1760	Ketocton Association (VA)		California
1765	Kehukee Association (NC)		Florida
1767	Warren Association (RI)		Georgia
1784	Georgia Association		Kentucky
1794	Hephzibah Association		Louisiana
1799	Sarepta Association		Missouri
1801	Tate Creek		Mississippi
1803	Savannah Association		Oklahoma
1806	Missionary State Association		Oregon
1809	Cumberland River more		Texas
1816	Bethel		
	Beckbee		
1818	Louisiana Baptist Association		Contact Us
	Cahaba		
1819	Union		
	Alabama Association		
1820	Pearl River		
	Bethel		
	Muscle Shoals		
1822	General Baptist Association of Georgia	6/22	
1824	Little Rock Association of Regular Baptist		
1825	South Concord		
1826	Buttahatchie		
1829	Spring River	11/14	
1834	North River United Baptist Association		
1835	Missouri State Association		
	Suwannee		
1836	Saline	4/02	
	Mississippi State Convention	12/23	
1837	General Association of Kentucky		
1840	Rocky Bayou		
	Union		
1842	Florida Baptist Association		
1843	Sabine		
1847	West Florida (also contained Alabama churches)		
	Alachua		
1848	Arkansas State Baptist Convention	9/21	
	Baptist State Convention of Louisiana	12/02	
1850	Bartholemew	10/05	
		10/26	

1853	Mt. Vernon	9/03
	First Columbia	10/01
	Bethlehem (churches formerly associated with the Black River Association in SE Missouri)	10
1854	Judson	
	Florida Baptist Convention	11/12
1857	Mt. Zion	
	Pacific Baptist Association	8/01
1858	Richland	
1859	Arkansas State Baptist Convention (charter approved)	2/12
1860	Yellow Creek Baptist Association	11/24
1861	Pine Bluff	6/7
1870	Clearlake Baptist Association	10/07
1873	Eastern Baptist Association of California & Oregon	10/10
1881	Shelby County	
1882	Hopewell	
1891	Arkansas Valley Association of Missionary Baptist Churches	
1892	Baptist Convention of Eastern Oregon	8/05
1901	Baptist Missionary Association of Texas	
1902	General Association of Arkansas Baptists	
1912	Cedar Creek Missionary Baptist Association Central Association of Missionary Baptist Churches	
1919	Red River Missionary Baptist Association	
1920	Florida State Baptist Association	
1921	New Baptist Convention	
1926	Baptist General Assembly of Oklahoma	10/26
1927	Alabama State Missionary Baptist Association	10/22
1932	California State Missionary Baptist Association	7/31
1950	Missionary Baptist Association of Texas	
1952	Cooperative Association of Missionary Baptist of California	2/12

Quote from History and Archives Committee State Association of Missionary Baptist Churches of Arkansas, *Pioneer Faith: The History of Missionary Baptist Associations and Churches in Arkansas from 1818 to 1920*, Texarkana: History and Archives Committee, 1994, page 35:

Early associations were different than contemporary associations. The early associations usually started on Friday or Saturday, and continued through Monday. More time was allotted to praying and preaching. The reports were emphasized, and more discussion was made. Sometimes two or three preachers preached at one service, one following the other, often preaching an hour each on the same text, and this was done at least at eleven and at "early candle lighting." And they preached on doctrine with all the power possible and with a ring that produced conviction. Most associations featured a "circular Letter" that dealt with some doctrinal or moral problem. This letter was sent to every church shortly before the association met.

The associations sent what they called a "corresponding letter" to sister associations." They also welcomed corresponding messengers, and the preachers from other associations and their messages were welcomed. These features were important in maintaining uniformity of doctrine and practice because the churches were scattered, and communications were limited.

E. Glenn Hinson summarized (pp. 12-13) the importance of local associations for these pioneer churches:

1. annual meetings offered an occasion for fellowship. In this period the paucity of members in individual churches heightened the need for fellowship.
2. they supplied inspiration and edification through prayer, singing, and preaching,
3. they helped establish Baptist identity among member churches,
4. associations assisted one another in evangelism and missions.

Hinson also attempted to characterize (p. 39) services of these early churches, "Services consisted chiefly of preaching, singing, and praying. Baptist preachers, typically uneducated farmers with prejudice against educated and paid ministers, relied heavily upon experience. In their sermons and exhortations they issued dire warnings about death and the judgement to come. Among these converts of the frontier awakening exhortations probably figured more prominently than exposition."

Information for the page was compiled primarily from Ashcraft, Robert, General Ed., *History of the American Baptist Association*.